

Social Knowledge and International Policy Making: Exploring the Linkages

Prompted by Louis Emmerij's in his e-mail regarding "Silly Questions.."

"Dear Mr. Drucker, It was very nice to meet you during the UNRISD Conference and even nicer - if that were possible - to read your paper. It contains very interesting and pertinent suggestions drawn from experience. I wonder if you have the paper available electronically and if so, could you send it to me. I ask you this because I feel that the paper is valuable enough to find a place on our website or at least a reference to it. Kind regards, Louis Emmerij"

I replied:

"Dear Mr Emmerij, I much appreciate your interest in my "Silly Questions" paper and pleased that it can be used in the works on UN history... It was written pre-computer days back in March 1981 but I attach a scanned copy. It was originally circulated in a UNICEF in-house newsletter. Reprinted in Teaching Aids at Low Cost (TALC) Institute of Child Health, Tropical Health Unit, University of London UK, 1984: and a modified version in "Community Management; Asian Experience and perspectives" ed. David C. Korten Kumarian Press 1986 where the reviewer in Development International July/Aug 1987 accorded it "superb"!!! (I retain the copyright). A mutilated version "It was our decision" appeared in the Japanese Organization for International Co-operation in Family Planning, (JOICFP) Review vol. 1, Tokyo, Summer. 1981.

I thought you might be interested in the attached which places "Silly Questions" in context and are examples from my experience of what is called for in the

UN Intellectual History Project

"The oral history guidelines ask if ideas were "... promoted, distorted, abandoned, or implemented?"

"Some possible factors to consider that may have impacted on it are:

- c) Institutional rivalries or coalitions, including tensions between the UN ...institutions,
- and d) Quality of the international civil service, including its leadership".

"Explorations.... (1971/72)" and the Mobile Training Scheme (MTS) (1973/76)

The antecedents to "Silly Questions"

The grass roots examples in Silly Questions relate to my "bottom-up" work in S.E Asia throughout 1976/81 in India, Thailand, Bangladesh and Burma within the framework of programmes and projects of WHO (SEARO) and in Burma, and Thailand with UNICEF (EAPRO). Those endeavours describe some modest, yet (I believed and still believe) potentially fundamental ways of translating the participatory aspects of the "social" into development. They can be traced directly through the thinking and wide ranging concepts to be found documented in **Explorations..** and the **Mobile Training Scheme**. Explorations examined the emergence of "social" related to Development and the education and training of social workers to operate in the field. The Mobile Training Scheme implemented the approach and concepts advocated in **Explorations**, and demonstrated necessary connecting links between community action and social policy.

1) 1) “Explorations of the curricula of social work in some countries in Asia with special reference to the relevance of social work education to social development goals”

David Drucker. ECAFE/UNICEF.1972.

(The full publication and the summary document remained on the shelves of UNICEF’s archives when I was last in New York)

This work was produced from my major assignment jointly sponsored by the UN Social Development Division ECAFE, and UNICEF East Asia and Pakistan Region throughout 1971/2. It examined the nature of the newly coined “Social” in Development, and what teaching and training of social workers was currently said to be to producing the relevant skills and roles. Explorations described findings and recommended ways and means for effectively contributing to the Social Development goals.

2) The Mobile Training Scheme (MTS) emerged from the

“UNDP/ECAFE Project Development Mission’s “Report to the Office of Technical Co-operation on a Mobile Training Scheme for the Training of Front-Line and Supervisory Developmental Personnel in Land-Locked and Least Developed Countries of the ECAFE Region.”

Yasas, Drucker and Basnyat. ECAFE Bangkok Thailand Feb 1973

MTS became implemented in Nepal from Nov. 1994 to Nov. 1995. It set up acknowledged “unique” methods of developing trainers and produced indigenous community level planners. Potentially more significantly, it demonstrated co-operative and co-coordinated ways of bringing together international agencies, a range of operational government Ministries, departments and officials, and constructively relating community planning to national programmes and policy.

“Explorations...” origins, a response to international concern

The assignment which produced Explorations had arisen from concerns such as:

a) In New York at the United Nations International Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare 1968, where eighty-nine countries had;

“.. laid particular stress on the high priority which should be accorded the developmental and preventive functions of social welfare”.

and then endorsed the recommendation that priority be assigned:

"..particularly in developing countries, to the developmental tasks of social welfare and therefore, to orienting social welfare training toward preparation for such tasks."

b) In Manila at the United Nations First Asian Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare, 1970, where the Asian Ministers extended this orientation more specifically:

"Curricula on social work training should be geared to social development goals and constantly examined, reviewed and evaluated in the light of the countries' changing needs".

c) In Manila at the same time (1970) were held the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) conferences. Two years earlier Asian social work educators, administrators and planners in their Report of the Seminar on the Relationship of Social Work Education to Developmental Needs and Problems in the ECAFE Region (1968) had stated :

"..that professional social work and social work education were still (sic) **not sufficiently attuned to developmental needs and problems** as currently defined in the plans of the countries in the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) region, and that greater efforts should be made to improve that situation".

At these 1970 conferences the in-thing was to exult at the prospect of social work operating "in the corridors of power" as the "challenge of the 70's". They seemed to commit the profession to **Social** Development as their major cause. This would mean vigorously gearing the professions' wide-ranging functions (from which it claimed direct hands-on knowledge of the poverty, problems, injustices and aberrations within society) towards effectively contributing to national and international policies, programmes and projects.

It was within this heady ambiance that I undertook Explorations the year long inquiry and discussions (study/research?) throughout Korea, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Pakistan, Thailand and Burma, along with correspondence contacts in Indonesia, India and elsewhere.

The attempt to define "Social" Development

Explorations struggled with trying to define what Social Development might really mean, and what methods to utilize in examining what was actually being, and should be, taught. Pragmatically I eventually settled for taking the currently repeatedly pronounced key phrases (buzzwords?) to see what they actually represented to the social work educators and professionals in terms of the roles to be taught and undertaken. These were:

- (1) Social policies and planning in development
- (2) Ensuring social justice (with particular reference to more equitable distribution of national wealth)
- (3) The essential need for participation by the people in policy formulation, planning and implementation
- (4) Improving the social and cultural infrastructure by institution building

Where to place what were the currently existing social work methods in this prospective developmental framework? was approached as follows:

(5) Social work helping methods

The situations dealt with by social workers very often illustrate the malfunctioning of our societies and the gaps and inconsistencies in our policies and programmes. The social worker's role is to be alert and sensitive to this and to systematically report these matters, thus contributing decisively to policy and planning in the normal course of their "helping" activities.

Curriculum and Confusion

In the course of the Explorations study, the importance and the outlining definitions of these roles were emphatically agreed upon by the Asian educators and professionals as fundamental to developmental social work. Surprisingly, most believed that they were already being taught somehow, somewhere. However, on closer investigation it was not found possible to identify coherently what was actually taught directly in relation to these roles, and remarkably little in terms of application, especially to the overwhelming majority of the rural poor. (It might be noted that "Eradication" of poverty, not (the more recent) 'alleviation' or 'reduction', was the resounding terminology of the time). Much of the teaching and even of training that was examined seemed to be collections of 'subjects' and a broad variety of fragments gleaned from Western culture's behavioural-based theory.

A cultural divide was also reflected in a paragraph Ways of Learning. Explorations drew attention to the significant nature of the differences in the West and Asia where "...a high degree of self-responsibility for learning and independent study habits was unfamiliar" It was also pointed out that attitudes to authority differed greatly in these divergent cultures. (Asia had not had four hundred years of the European experience of the Reformation to filter down and undermine the authority of man-made institutions). In Asia it was widely agreed that students in the Region differed a great deal from students taught in Western cultures:

Suggestions were made for tackling these differences.

In trying to come to some coherent conclusion from my year-long explorations regarding the nature of a social development and a relevant curriculum I found myself in a state of considerable confusion. However, somewhat as a revelation came the serendipitous discovery that the words "curriculum" and "curse" had the same generic Latin base!

"Curriculum" and "Curse"

"The word "curse" derives from the Latin cursus, 'a running' - especially circular running as in a chariot race - and is short for cursus contra solem. Thus Margaret Balfour, accused as a witch in sixteenth-century Scotland, was charged with dancing widdershins nine times around men's houses, stark naked; and my friend A.K. Smith (late of the Indian Civil Service) once accidentally saw a naked Indian witch do the very same thing in Southern India as a ceremony of cursing."

Robert Graves The White Goddess
Faber and Faber, p. 443

Widdershins: In a direction opposite to the usual; contrary to the direction of the sun; considered as unlucky or causing disaster.

Curse: an utterance consigning a person or thing to evil; a thing which blights or blasts.

Curriculum: a course of study derived from the Latin source of the word "currere" - to run, as in the running of a course in a chariot race.

Roman chariot races were murderously run nine times around the stadium anti-clockwise (backwards, against the nature of things). This image appealed to me as analogous to how I was witnessing the social work profession being taught theory/practice, especially in Asia.

Curriculum Building and Links between Social Knowledge, Policy, and Programmes

It can be discerned from the above vantage point how I began to turn emphatic attention to indigenous field experience as the focus and basis for curriculum construction and selection of content from the vast range of diverse theories of human behaviour (social, cultural psychological, philosophical/religious values, economic, political, historic artistic etc.) that could be identified as most relevant to professional practice. I came to believe that, for acquiring the necessary skills, and adapting and applying theoretical concepts, teaching and training should be activity learner-oriented rather than, the only too common, academic subject-encapsulated oriented.

In addition Explorations also concluded that:

"The fact of the matter seems to be that the current machinery linking schools, supervisors, agencies, professional associations, policy makers, planners, etc. is not adequate to the task of producing personnel for the important developmental roles which are currently being canvassed. This lack of coherent machinery constitutes the major problem confronting the schools and the profession"

Drucker, 1972

(Later, these perspective would lead to incorporating such concepts into the construction of the Mobile Training Scheme (to be discussed below) which followed on from Explorations and was to demonstrate the links to be created and institutionalised between social knowledge (derived from the field) to influence policy and implementation of programmes).

A way ahead - 1972, the recommendations

To move towards an organised process of applying social work to interdisciplinary developmental activities, the first set of Explorations recommendations was addressed to the United Nations itself (especially the Social Development Division and UNICEF).

It was argued that:

"...probably the single most effective thing that international social work might do is to help devise ways for nationals of the countries concerned to move into action with a sense of belonging to an international professional community to offset the sense of isolation within their own country.."

It was recommended that a Standing Regional Committee be established;

"..to identify priorities in social work education and training and to indicate what resources will be provided by whom on the basis of a ten-year, five-year, and two-year plan of operation, with machinery to be set up to provide for the on-going collaboration..."

Such an organized function and responsibility of itself was envisioned to become an effective demonstration of social work's institutional capacity building to make a contribution to international efforts towards a long-range formulation of social policy and planning for action.

It anticipated:

"..the strengthening of the role of the United Nations support system, including that of the Regional Adviser heading up an itinerant team as required....essentially to build up a workshop

machinery so that each country will begin to strengthen its long-term capacity... getting projects firmly placed within national planning and within 'plans of operation' for external aid purposes".

The further intention was for institution-building within the profession itself – by helping to set up and strengthen social work Associations in each country. (At the time only one country in Asia had a full-time professional servicing an Association.)

On-going country-based workshops would be supported, which:

".. should have clearly stated work to do with specific targets to be fulfilled and followed through by the participants. All workshops should be extensively prepared for by the participants; attendance at workshops should be dependant upon the individuals' preparatory work having been successfully undertaken; and future participation at workshops should be dependent upon the shown results of the previous ones".

This insistence that work shops actually produce an operational-agenda-directed product was to modify the common practice of the too familiar (even today 2004!) poorly focused mainly talking shop with no sustained work plan and follow-through into action.

. There were a whole range of further Explorations recommendations, including:

The see-saw approach, which envisioned professional careers revolving regularly from practice to teaching and round again.

It was seen that if social workers were really going to operate in the development arena, to coherently teach knowledge and sophistication of skills in relatively unprecedented situations arising in societies undergoing ever-increasing rapid change (such terms as 'globalisation' have surfaced perhaps twenty-five years later) they would need to locate themselves in new and unfamiliar settings.

It was proposed that staff members of the schools themselves be assigned to try out possibilities of the envisioned developmental social work activities. This would entail an exploration of the dimensions of the tasks and identify realistic assignments which might be set up for students eventually. The staff member would explore and practice the social work role and from first-hand experience draw up as detailed a job description as possible, based on an analysis of the tasks involved. Objectives and goals of the service or agency and the learning objectives and goals that students might be expected to achieve would be spelled out. In the course of the practice the staff member would keep a detailed record of happenings, to be developed into case material.

In identifying the theory, knowledge and skills required to function in this position, the staff member would check whether and where such matter appeared in the school curriculum and would prepare to supplement the teaching, together with teaching materials, either to reinforce what was already being taught or to introduce new content. After perhaps a year the staff member would have paved the way for the introduction of students into the practice role, having prepared the setting and the agency staff to receive them.

The second phase of the school staff member's activity, having fulfilled the role himself, would consist of supervising the students' practice and learning. The staff member being familiar with the service requirements and the knowledge and teaching base, could then concentrate on the educational diagnosis of the student and the students needs. The staff member would then introduce a

worker designated to take over the supervisory role in subsequent years by means of an apprentice-type training. As the fieldwork and supervisory role diminished, the staff member would prepare to move back into the teaching role in the school.

Ideally it might be arranged for two members of staff to address the same areas of work. One would be moving through from practice, on to supervision and back to classroom teaching, while the other was moving in the opposite direction - thus the idea of a see-saw.

Of course it was realised that there were dozens of problems inherent in such a proposal career-wise and within university and agency structures. However, if we were seriously to consider the role of institution-building, social policy, planning and so forth, we would need to demonstrate our ability to manage change within and between those institutions and structures of which the profession is an integral part and over which the profession has some control and can participate in decision-making, before we could make any claim to competence outside our main domain.

Research

Everywhere students at that time were expected, in the main required, to choose their own "research topics" and this was considered a virtue and good educational practice. The student 'theses' rarely had any meaningful analysis leading to suggested application and more often than not went unsummarised and uncatalogued to gather dust on obscure shelves. Amongst this fossilised material there existed very little descriptive information of the social work taking place in Asian countries in terms of activities, problems and processes. It was not clear whether the research was for knowledge or an imposed initiation ritual.

Explorations argued that Social Workers should be primarily taught **"Research" as consumers of knowledge for application:**

"...the primary responsibility for identifying research topics belongs to the profession in general and practitioners in particular. It is the practitioners in their daily work who are faced with questions that require answers... which are better than guess work".

"These answers are required not as fundamental truths but for practical application. This is not to denigrate 'pure research' but to argue that students neither have the time nor can be expected to have the resources, experience, or capacity for posing and effectively tackling such matters".

"...the Association of Schools and individual schools should be responsible for collecting from the professional practitioners lists of...subjects for research, clearly stating the problem and indicating the practical implications which are likely to flow from an investigation.... It would be the responsibility of a research group to examine these subjects and sketch in the broad lines of method best fitted to the matter under consideration and judge whether it is appropriate for a student to undertake".

"...The range of topics thus identified is likely to give a student a much broader and practical view of social work and its priority professional concerns than can be expected from those with limited experience in the field as is the case with most students.

"There are important implications here for the profession and for organising practitioners in such a way that appropriate dialogue takes place with...the schools, in order to produce this

professional agenda for research. The need for relatedness of the research to the profession's progress, and the relatedness to the teaching to professional practice cannot be over-emphasised".

A detailed research sequence was recommended to the schools:

Social Work Research questions should arise directly from the practioners via their Associations. Students could be required to understand and contribute to teams undertaking the different stages of a range of researches in progress, in order to prepare for becoming career-long identifiers and reporters of important questions and "consumers and implementers of research findings. This was to be the goal, rather than what was then familiar, that in the limited time at their disposal as students, to be expected to propose and determine their own topics and complete esoteric academic-oriented ritual pieces for certification requirements. (Explorations had found that inordinate amounts of effort had been spent by students on going-nowhere abstractions which perished on library shelves mainly unsummarised, unclassified, undistributed and unapplicable).

Students should be seen as needing to become primarily professional "consumers" of research. (Few will want to go on to become full-time researchers.) For this they would need to be familiar with the range and limitations of social research methods.

Within the limited time available to students they would not be expected to initiate and complete their "own" research, but would be expected to be taken through all the stages of research, adding a step to work in progress. They would start from examining the need and purposes of a practitioner's identification of research, through to action and implementation of findings and recommendations. Each stage would be taught as a sub-course in its own right. (See endnote¹).

In this way it was anticipated that the professional practitioners and the Schools would be drawn together in identifying need, pursuing research, creating and contributing knowledge, enhancing professional skills, and translating it into action. From the students' perspective, they have experienced how questions from the field are taken through all the stages to action and final evaluation. The students themselves have had a role to play, having been taken through each stage with its specific focus. Although they would not have had to take responsibility for any one topic from start to finish, they would have begun to appreciate the practical pay-off of research, precipitated organised action, and savoured the excitement of having contributed to knowledge and change. They would understand the importance of providing research topics from the field when they become practitioners and where they belong in contributing to an overall professional identity.

Ideas and Impact? (Institutional rivalries/tensions)

In this respect the fate of Explorations is of interest.

The UNICEF Regional Director was much impressed with Explorations and decided to extend the consultancy (beyond the UN bureaucratically significant 11-month duration) for me to work on the Regional Seminar which was planned, for almost a year later in November 1972, to fully examine Explorations. I was to implement my suggestion that instead of a talking shop it should become a WORK shop. The work for this seminar consisting of schools in the Region taking up one or other of the recommendations of Explorations, initiating them as projects and presenting in advance of the workshop a description and critique of the practicality and value, or otherwise, arising from their actual experience.

Personal

Having been brought back down to Bangkok and being assured that the new full time contract was in process of being prepared, I signed a 12 month lease on accommodation for my family' I began to set up my first-hand support of the relevant institutions and agencies. However, after some ten weeks or so UNICEF's Bangkok Director told me that agreement had not been secured with New York's Social Development Division. Despite his official and I believe, personal extensive correspondence, UNICEF Bangkok were not able to honour their undertaking.

I then recalled that I had sensed some hierarchical internecine tensions between the two agencies when I had first arrived. In an "oral history" perhaps it is allowed to provide undiplomatic indications regarding some elements in the relations, both in Bangkok and New York, between UNICEF and the Social Development Division (headed by a lady who had been junior to the UNICEF Bangkok Regional Director when he had been his country's Minister of Social Welfare). However, whatever the inter-agency's rivalries and relationships, fortunately my own relationships with working colleagues on all sides had been most rewarding.

Throughout 1972 I had committed myself (I had believed officially) to activities in the Philippines, Korea and Hong Kong. I then felt it professionally and organisationally damaging not to do what I could to follow-up and explain the change of plans. I decided to arrange in my own time and at my own expense, to keep my promised support to the schools and institutions. UNICEF Bangkok did their best for this purpose by adapting my return air ticket the long way home to the UK via the Pacific with the necessary stopovers.

Incredibly, when I reached New York hoping to discover what had gone wrong, Newton Bowles at UNICEF Headquarters told me they were not familiar with Explorations or what Bangkok had intended. Three days later he offered me "a corporate apology", asking how soon I could get back to Bangkok, and discussed possible ways of compensating me. I waited around in NY for 17 days for resolution of these unexpected events. I had then been away from my family and young children for almost three months and eager to join international conferences in Amsterdam to further muster support for the intended work back in S.E Asia. It was agreed that UNICEF would contact me back in the UK and arrange for my continuation. I was eventually to learn that Bangkok despairing of securing my return, had in the meantime used other funding to secure two short-term consultants for the seminar itself but would be inviting me in November as a Resource Person.

The Explorations Regional Seminar

The November ECAFE/UNICEF Seminar on Development Aspects of Social Work Training Curriculum took place and is fully reported in

"Problems and Prospects in Schools of Social Work Contributing to Development in the ECAFE Region" E/CN.11/SD.SWT/L.3 Bangkok 14-25 November 1972.

Although experimentation of Explorations recommendations had not been implemented or documented for the seminar as previously planned, a range of recommendations were endorsed - A Standing Committee; on-going planning; and UN Regional support for implementation projects. In addition there emerged proposals for the establishment of an Asian Centre for Training and Research in the context of social development, and a proposal for a follow-up meeting after three years to examine progress and problems

Impact?

Subsequently such a Centre was to be created in Manila but soon was discontinued; the three year on follow-up did not take place. What remains of Explorations after these thirty years it is not possible to say. However, in "Problems Affecting the Indigenisation of Social Work Profession in Asia" (Indian Journal of Social Work Oct. 1993) Meher C. Nanavatty wrote:

"Some schools adopted .. 'floating field work' others the 'see-saw approach' shifting the faculty and the student body to rural areas for one full term, adopting the rural base in learning theory... and integrating field work to rural requirements. This most effective effort at indigenisation did not last long in the urban culture of the profession". A number of meetings and conferences were held by UN ESCAP, the IASSW and the ICSW "... to relate social work to regional requirements. The most deliberative effort was made in Drucker's study of Explorations (1972). Unfortunately the impact of these deliberations has been marginal".

Immediately following upon the November 1972 Seminar, ECAFE's Social Development Division contracted me to join the UNDP/ECAFE Project Development Mission out of Bangkok,, travelling with two Social Development Division colleagues through Nepal, India, Afghanistan and Laos.

Mobile Training Scheme (MTS) Origins:

There had been grumblings at the United Nations General Assembly that the poorest countries were not getting their fair share of international assistance. The United Nations came up with a designation of "The Landlocked and Least Developed Countries" (oddly, in ECAFE these included the island States of the Maldives and West Samoa). The word went out for suggestions of what might be done for such neglected areas. In response to United Nations General Assembly resolution 2564 (XXIV), the Social Development Division proposed the idea of "Training of Front-line and Supervisory Developmental Personnel". So, quite unexpectedly an excellent opportunity arose to put some of my Exploration ideas to the test in a new dimension where very little or nothing to date of Western social work education had been introduced. I was instrumental in designing the Regional project, the Mobile Training Scheme which would attempt to set up a process which might become a basis for changing the focus of Asian social work and beyond to meet development needs

MTS recognised that development planning took place conceptually and geographically far removed from the people at the village level. The people who, now newly targeted by the growing call for "social justice", were supposed to have their conditions of life elevated, had little voice in the schemes invented by remote planners. The planners had perspectives and priorities derived from their particular technical and sectoral expertise. This more often than not bore scant relationship to the people's needs, wishes and capacities to absorb and sustain what the planners had in mind.

The challenge to MTS was to invent training to produce workers at the village-level and supervisory staff located strategically so as to be able to contribute effectively in linking village-level realities with the political, technical and administrative structures. Methods had to be explored that would be adaptable to the very different situations existing in the countries of the region.

The task in hand therefore was conceived as oriented to finding ways in which the people at the grass-roots could themselves identify their priorities and become active participants in development planning and projects. Social work, with its claim to being people-oriented and skilled,

should have something to offer in working out how to make this bottom-up, support-down vision of development a reality.

The project was intended to create, and leave behind in the region, local training cadres in each country with a self-generating competence and capacity in the skills of designing curricula and training front-line and supervisory levels of personnel for any kind of field-level project. The local trainers who had acquired and demonstrated the necessary skills in indigenous curriculum building in their own country would become on-going members of the Mobile Training Scheme. They would be organised to share their skills and experience with the trainers in other countries, so that a core of competence and expertise in training would be developed and shared cross-culturally as a permanent regional resource. It was this sharing of the resource across the region which gave meaning to "mobile" and would contribute to social work institution-building.

Diagnosis by the Project Development Mission in February 1973:

"Cumulative experience in Asia in social welfare and community development education has clearly shown that many of the curricula are not based on actual field problems in the communities or countries served or on the actual analysis of the jobs to be performed by front line and supervisory level personnel":

"...over-reliance on Western models and theories still exist, both regarding what subject matter goes into the curricula and insufficient indigenisation of Western experiences by trainers from Asia who may have been educated in the West. First-hand observation and evaluation of the local problems is often neglected or not clearly seen as the raw building blocks of both training programmes and social theory. Ideas currently fashionable in Western social sciences and social work are used for analysing the complexities of tradition-laden countries in Asia, whose problems differ not only in magnitude but also in quality";

"...most trainers have not had enough in-depth experience at the grass-root levels in their own countries as front-line and supervisory workers";

"...most trainers do not generally possess the necessary skills of how to devise a training programme for front-line supervisory staff based on actual local problems to be tackled and the analysis of skills and jobs to be performed, there is very little knowledge and skill of how one gets at the indigenous curriculum or social theory in one's own country".

UNDP/ECAFE Project Development Mission, "Report to the Office of Technical Co-operation on a Mobile Training Scheme for the Training of Front-Line and Supervisory Developmental Personnel in Land-Locked and Least Developed Countries of the ECAFE Region.

Yasas, Drucker and Basnyat ECAFE Bangkok Thailand Feb. 1973

(It was often the case that training was not seen as a skill and occupation in its own right. Frequently it was a soft short final posting for officials just before retirement, or for up-and-comings awaiting the convenient moment for being inserted into politically strategic positions).

Implementation (an example), WHO Planning, Primary Health Care, MTS and the JTAs

(Some aspects of the structure and methods of MTS are to be found in an endnote)².

What follows here begins with illustrative events similar to those community activities described in "Silly Questions". However, the following account relates how MTS in Nepal had not only come well along in producing the experiences, teaching materials and content for training, and finding a structure in which social work could play a major role in community development, but how MTS was promising to become an **integral part of Policy in the mainstream integrated development Policy of the Government of Nepal and the United Nations joint agencies' support programmes.**

In Kathmandu (1975) the Nepal Resident Representative of the World Health Organisation telephoned and asked "David, what do you think of the idea of training the JTAs in some basic health matters as the first step in introducing Primary Health Care in the Himalayan villages?" At the time I was based in Nepal as a member of a three-man United Nations' team implementing the (MTS).

I had come to the attention of WHO in the course of putting together material provided by village-based 'Panchayat Secretaries' who were under MTS training to take on a village-level planning role. Panchayat Secretaries were assistants to the 'Pradhan Panch' (the village leader). The Secretaries generally had had no more than six years of elementary education and their main qualification was to be able to read and write (which frequently the Pradhan Panch could not) and to attend to village records required by the government administration.

MTS Survey/Research? findings.

In the course of the MTS demonstration project the Secretaries were assigned the task each three-week period, to put together a 'Village Profile'. For example, they were asked to draw a map of their village and its surrounding features; to describe the year round agricultural activities; to describe the marketing of village produce and purchasing arrangements, etc. The Profiles were not formal surveys, no questionnaire schedules were provided; the Secretaries were encouraged to write in a narrative style. Standards of objectivity were not insisted upon. The trainers would take the material as it came to them and so get a realistic assessment of the level of sophistication of the trainee. Much could be learned and taught by the trainers and us, the United Nations MTS members, from these profiles

A Village Health Profile

During one of the recurring three-week periods in their villages the Secretaries were set to ask about the existing general health support situation in their villages. "Who had been sick in the last year? What kind of sick? To whom did they go for help? and "What happened?" - a Village Health Profile.

The material produced by these barely literate workers was astonishing. The translated language was grammatically tortured, but it had a poetic and biblical quality and, more importantly, produced the authentic voices of village people whose whole cosmology of what sickness was, causes, and what needed to be done (treatment/healing), bore very little or no resemblance to anything discussed in Ministries of Health and by professionals.

Quotations from this rich source were divided up into six boxes: The Economics of Health; Medicines and their Availability; Childbirth; Attitudes; Health Posts and Services; and Conjurors, Magicians, Physicians et al. An introduction was written to where this material had come from and some of its social implications, all of which seemed relevant to any planned attempts to introduce community-acceptable modern medical provision.

Mantras and Medicine for Development: A Panchayat Village Level Task Group Approach to Primary Health Care, D. Drucker, July 1975, was distributed to those likely to be interested.

WHO.Country Health Planning

It transpired that a WHO. planning/research group had arrived in Nepal to test out new concepts of methodology for Country Health Planning. WHO policy was beginning to promote Primary Health Care in poor rural areas in contrast to what had been called the “disease palaces” focus of health services in relatively affluent urban centres. Health was also being conceived as a multi-disciplinary multi-sectoral matter and not just the responsibility of Ministries of Health. So it was that the WHO group had called on the Minister of Agriculture to discuss such things as irrigation and water resources providing breeding grounds for mosquitoes/malaria etc. Apparently on the wall behind the Minister’s desk was a map of Nepal covered with red dots (somewhat like measles?). On enquiry the Minister explained that the dots represented the JTAs that “covered the country”. JTAs? Junior Technicians in Agriculture. Their job was to regularly visit the villages providing support in terms of improved methods, seeds, fertilisers, herbicides, etc., (in Nepal such village workers had boot allowances as they spent much time reaching areas where there was no other transport for villages other than their own legs). The WHO group suddenly had the idea that here were community level officials already in place and respected by the villagers. Why, to begin with, invent a new (and finance requiring) cadre for health inputs when possibly the JTAs as potential multi-purpose workers might be assisted to gradually introduce the eventual establishment of village health workers?

WHO knowing of the work of MTS to structure attempting integrated village level planning, through “Mantras ...” had prompted the “David, what do you think of the idea of training the JTAs in some basic health matters ...?” I had replied “Never mind what I think, give me a few days and I will tell you what we KNOW”.

For security and other purposes, outsiders entering villages were ordinarily required to declare themselves to the Pradhan Panch. MTS had instituted a requirement for the 50 or so Secretaries under training at that time to maintain a daily diary to provide a village-eye view, which included recording all outside official visitors, who they were, why had they come, what had villagers thought of them, and what if anything followed as an outcome of the visit. Although our 50 diaries did not “cover the country” in any respectable survey sense, we did come up with an 100% finding that no one had ever seen a JTA in their villages! Some villages had claimed to have seen a Yeti (the abominable snowman) but no JTAs. We joked that if anyone ever saw a JTA perhaps we could secure a Conservation Order on such a rarity!

Gaps and Inconsistencies

This situation was precisely of the kind that gave us insights into what was built into our project - identifying at the grass roots **the gaps and inconsistencies** in programmes and policies. Such examples the training groups would routinely explore (in this case to find out where and what the JTAs actually did (which indeed turned out to be very revealing) and fully document the information according to the range of options that were examined regarding the best way to improve such discontinuities between expectation and reality. For example, was this JTA situation one for the Minister of Panchayat to discuss informally/formally? with the Minister of Agriculture? To take up the findings with the local District Agricultural Officers? Initiate wider research? Involve the media? and so forth.

There were a number of significant gaps and inconsistencies that we learned (stumbled upon?) from our village-eye diaries, as for example, was the way in which an internationally funded project of small dams and irrigation channels had not at all consulted the local long-time traditional occupants of the land through which the channels would be cut. Nor had there been discussions regarding how labour both in constructing and eventually managing the irrigation system was to be handled which would involve the locals. Nor did the villages have any idea of what expected benefits might accrue to whom. All of which was fermenting social and political unrest. We discovered numerous volumes existed on the engineering aspects, nothing on the social. In addition the four-year project was almost three years behind schedule because realistic calculations had not been made anticipating how long it was likely to take for materials to be delivered to the irrigation site coming through from the Indian docks in Calcutta, thence transported across the intervening terrain and through the usual bureaucratic customs and political hold-ups at Calcutta and on the Indian/Nepali frontier.

Findings like these were certain to embarrass and it was the task of the groups to chart the most productive way of getting grass-root findings through to the appropriate authorities and decision makers. MTS believed that village level planning must be stimulated and could only be sustained by experiencing that what they did at the village level would count all the way up. Ambitiously, the training aimed at the Secretaries assisting "task-groups" in their communities to know, and be responsible for, systematically utilising the most productive available channels of communication to and from the authorities and decision makers (participation).

Impact? On Policy?

For MTS (and later for me personally) these aspects of our work were to have quite remarkable consequences. Our JTA knowledge we provided to WHO following upon their specific request, and of course it was not altogether immediately welcomed by all those involved. However, such MTS visibility resulted in firm offers of support coming separately and in time (almost uniquely between the agencies) **jointly** from UNDP, (who for good reason had not exactly welcomed this Regional-conceived project), WHO and UNICEF. In concrete terms this MTS project that had been launched with a revised budget of \$400,000 for three countries over a period of two years, was within eight months of our operation being offered a combined total of well in excess of \$1,500,000 for continuing the MTS community work in Nepal alone. Incidentally in my opinion a sum too large for short and medium-term purposes of MTS, and certain to arouse too much attention and likely opposition from other fund-seekers. **Beyond UNDP's promise of its funds and the co-operation with WHO and UNICEF, potentially more important still was UNDP's serious intention to work with the expressed agreement of the Nepali Government Planning Commission to place MTS formally in the structure of the coming Five-Year Plan.**

The success and potential of MTS was exhilarating; its implications for Asian social work in development seemed obvious and ready for promoting widely by the United Nations Social Development Division.

Disintegration

However, this was not to be. Unbelievably, through a series of almost farcical events, the Social Development Division (this time in Bangkok) and its Chief (who was in the process of retirement, erstwhile my strong supporter and always on very friendly terms) failed to act in fulfilling

their necessary political/organisational regional responsibilities, resulting in the deadline of the Nepali Planning Commission being missed. The national institutionalisation of MTS was not realised.

In addition Bangkok decreed that MTS move on to Afghanistan on the basis that the two-year three-country MTS project implied eight months in each country. This was specifically not what had been intended. For nearly two years since New York designated MTS a priority project, I had been consulted in the UK via Bangkok and New York to fully explain the concept of the "Mobile" in MTS. This had meant that the intention was to set up a multi-national, multi-cultural (from the three countries: Hindu, Muslim Buddhist) cadre of trainers in the MTS approach which would become an on-going and sustained team. I had understood that it was agreed that, for example, suitable MTS-experienced national trainers from Nepal would join the United Nations MTS staff in introducing the MTS method in the different conditions in Afghanistan. Subsequently, in turn Afghani MTS-experienced trainers would move on with the cadre to Laos etc. It had been planned that this intended assembled multi-national Asian MTS-experienced cadre would gradually influence countries throughout the region and possibly beyond.

However, with only one member of the three experienced Nepali United Nations MTS ("culture-carrying") team left for Afghanistan and later Bangladesh. **The principles and integrity of MTS were fatally compromised, its intention to create an on-going cadre (a vital piece of institution-building for people's participation in policy and planning in the region) abandoned.** The exciting possibilities were catastrophically lost not merely for MTS in Asia, but perhaps for developmental social work altogether.

Resignation

I came to the opinion that despite the considerable achievements attained, given the problems emanating from Bangkok, indeed even before our arrival in Nepal (not dwelt on here) this fundamental compromise of MTS objectives were unacceptable. If all the damage limitation efforts that had succeeded with the excellent understanding of the Nepalis, would have to be repeated the Afghanis would justifiably reject us. I decided that I had no alternative but to resign from the MTS project. The response from ESCAP's Social Development Division in Bangkok was professionally shameful, from which I concluded that any further career satisfaction with the UN and in Asia was at an end.

On advice, distributed to all concerned, I formally submitted:

Defeat of Endeavour. A Typescript of a Narrative Account of the Administration of the ESCAP Mobile Training Scheme, 1972 -1975. D. Drucker Nov/Dec 1975

(The multiple copies of which seemed to be untraceable in 1982 in the ESCAP archives).

Impact, Some Plusses.

Nevertheless, the MTS training approach (which is to be found in the endnote below) had its impact, not least, in the real endorsement, enthusiasm, (despite some initial objections and problems) and pleasures (professional and personal) deriving from the MTS training period in Nepal (one of the poorest and professionally unsophisticated countries in the world). Subsequently much has been written of its methods. It might be illuminating here to quote from trainers reflecting (evaluation? in part) on what they had learned from the MTS experience in Nepal.

"The methodology of the MTS is very different from the old methodology. Before we taught subject matter; now we know we have to find out what the villagers' needs and problems are, and we have learned how to do it. Skills I learned were: how to assemble a village profile, how to get to know the habits, culture, needs and problems of the people and what they want; how to maintain a daily diary and get a project history; how to find out why previous projects in the village succeeded or failed and how the villagers liked each project."

"The methodology was useful because field-oriented instructors and trainers were together and had to find out the field problems together... the focus in teaching has now shifted from material prepared by the trainer to local materials prepared by the trainees and used in the class-room... MTS has brought a real change in our minds. I feel I can use this method in any system."

"The reason why training programmes have not been effective in the past was lack of local training materials. What I learned in the MTS was how to develop local teaching materials, which were job-oriented. I learned how to do a role analysis. We can't know what kinds of knowledge, attitudes and skills are needed unless we know what roles are to be performed... I have learned how to develop teaching materials from the streets, from the dust-bins."

"If in the future I am to teach, it will be job-oriented and related to village life I know how to find teaching materials. I know knowledge is for use. Skills are not just for skills but for action."

"I learn role playing, how to conduct a village meeting. Before we never went to the villages to collect project histories or profiles. It is quite necessary to do so."

"We have learned how to get problems from the field... We can give suggestions to the Government on policy inconsistencies found in the field. This should be the role of the institution. We can do this by position papers..... we have some idea of how to do it."

A Personal Indirect Impact?

WHO, learned in some disbelief of my resignation from MTS, and immediately (in a most extraordinary week-end) the WHO Resident Representative asked if I would be interested in joining them. On the Sunday I received a cable from New Delhi, on the Monday I flew down, and on the Tuesday I was contracted initially for two years, (probably prior to more or less permanently as I understood it) to the Regional Country Planning Team. I was to be the "bottom-up" social scientist member among the systems analysts, epidemiologists, statisticians, economists, etc. "covering" from Outer Mongolia and North Korea, through the Himalayas to the Maldives. It is from my work in this territory and later with UNICEF that the examples in "Silly Questions" have been drawn. Other examples can be found in signed and some unsigned articles I incorporated as guest editor in:

UNICEF NEWS No.124 Dec. 1986 (English, French, Spanish, German, Japanese editions).
Community participation: now you see it, now you don't., D. Drucker

Signed articles: "Community participation: now you see it, now you don't". "Listen, listen to the people. Klong Toey Slum, Thailand". "Of latrines and video cassette recorders, Pakistan". "Human oneness: traditional healers among Cambodian refugees". "Experts on tap, not on top".

Long-term Impact

As for the long-term active professional institutionalisation of either “Silly Questions” or MTS 1975 there must be real doubts.

In 1981 Shankar Pathak had written:

"It is surprising that even though it is now more than forty years since formal post-graduate education in social work began in this country, there is not a single book dealing with the historical development of social welfare in India.....It was thus inevitable that a student of social welfare would know details of the history of social welfare in the UK and USA because of the preponderance of available literature and remain blissfully ignorant of the rich heritage of social welfare of his own country."

Social Welfare. An Evolutionary and Developmental Perspective, Shankar Pathak.

Macmillan India Ltd. 1981

No doubt taking up Gunnar Myrdal's “Asian Drama” 1968 themes of the need for change in institutions, social values and removal of social inequality, Marshall Wolfe from his Latin American base, wrote optimistically in his prescient entitled Elusive Development that “ .. the removal of poverty is acquiring a major thrust of developmental programmes, giving rise to the integrated approach to development combining social with economic”. :

Elusive development, Marshall Wolfe

UNRISD and Economic Commission for Latin America, 1981

In 1988 P. Ramachandran echoed “elusive professional development of social work”

“Social workers will continue to lack training to deal with masses because the profession is still individual and small group treatment oriented and greater emphasis is laid on remedial measures. This will continue to be so not because of a lack of potential or latent dynamism but due to certain politico-economic forces. The profession at present seems to reflect the sad state of society today – talking about change, and yet manipulating to keep people where they are.

Perspective for Social Work –Beyond 2000, P Ramachandran

Indian Journal of Social Work, Vol 49, Jan. 1988

Tom Brigham, in Asia once more in 1984, compared five developing countries which were predominantly rural and continued to find the anomaly that they:

" .. had adopted American urban models of social work education without adequately indigenising social work curriculum and body of knowledge to ensure its relevance to local culture" “..social work arose in the West to help a few marginal people to adjust to society; whereas, in most of the developing countries the poor are the vast and significant majority!"

Social Work in Five Developing Countries in Education for Social Work Practice: Selected international models, Thomas Brigham.

IASSW, Vienna 1984

In 1991 the international social work associations at the international deliberations by the Inter-University Consortium on Social Development (IUCSD) once again:

"concluded in one form or another that the profession of social work should no more confine exclusively to strengthen the coping mechanisms of individuals and groups through counselling to adjust to the existing socio-economic and political system, becoming the confirming arm of administration, but participate actively in strengthening and promoting the process of development in all countries, especially the developing and the least developed. Removal of poverty and promotion of social change should be the main objectives...".

Changing Perspectives of Social Work – Report on Three International Conferences on Social Work, Washington D.C. 1991, Meher Nanavattiy. in Mainstream, New Delhi, Oct.1992.

In 1993 The Indian Journal of Social Work, produced a Special Issue, the Social Work Profession in Asia, Tata Institute of Social Sciences,. Deonar, India.Vol. 1V, Oct 1993.
The proposal for its special theme declared:

"Indigenous social work knowledge is a must for indigenous social work education and professional practice...Whatever literature has been developed in the Asian countries it has not been successfully disseminated even among the Asian countries. As a result, the exchange of knowledge has not taken place (except at seminars and conferences.)".... "Western concepts have irrelevantly dominated Asian social work."

(I had a very strong sense of déjà vu. We had been here before! I noted too that none of the supporting references provided in the proposal included an Asian name!)

Pathak wrote in 1997 in, yet again, a Special Issue, The Indian Journal of Social Work, this time on Social Work Literature. Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Deonar, India,.Vol 58, April 1997:

"The term 'social development' gained popularity in social work in the 1980s " .. it is not clear what social workers mean when they define social development. A few social workers have published articles and there are two volumes of edited publications on social development." In relation to Indian social work authors he says they "... can take legitimate credit for their substantive and pioneering contribution to the emergence of development perspectives of social welfare both nationally and internationally, and their pioneering work of conceptualisation of social development roles, tasks, and functions." In commenting on the lack of recognition and significance of this he notes *".. the total absence of references to Indian authors in a lengthy list of more than two thousand references by Midgley (1995)* in his recent book on the subject of social development and social welfare"*

*J. Midgley, Social Development, Sage Publications, London , 1995.

Most recently, in 2003 I myself wrote:

"The July 1999 issue of the International Social Work (ISW)journal and the letters celebrating the profession's American centenary in the November 1998 issue of Social Work (SW) provide a contemporary gold mine of interesting material and at the same time a minefield of macro issues and challenges. They raise profound questions over what kind of a profession social work has been, believes itself to be and really wants to become.

Apparently our journals, according to the ISW editor, mostly focus on micro issues and, although we claim "many of our colleagues spend their professional lives with relief and humanitarian agencies", they have not shared and taught the "accumulated bodies of knowledge . . . effective in situations of extreme, large-scale human need" (Turner, 1999: 260).

Perhaps this is a powerful indicator of the actual nature of the predominantly micro vision and practices of our profession?"

Whither international social work? : A reflection, David Drucker

International Social Work 46(1): 53-81, Sage Publications: London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi 0020-8728[200301]46:1;53-81; 027596

Perhaps, as epilogue, I should add that my MTS thinking remained and continued to be adapted in subsequent years with UNICEF in Burma, Thailand, Pakistan New York, and Geneva, with USAID and Care International in Indonesia, with UNHCR throughout all the refugee camps in Thailand, in Somalia, Sudan, Zaire and Geneva, with the south-south Domestic Development Service (DDS) of UNV throughout Africa, back in Asia including the Philippines and across the Pacific Island States, short assignments with UNRISD related to Children of War in Cambodia, with a WFP Assessment team in the Gujarat India earthquake area, and in more recent times launching University community fieldwork programmes in Lithuania and the Czech Republic.

D. Drucker, Geneva, May 2004

¹ Suggested Research courses ::

Appreciation of the objectives of the proposed research on the list compiled by the professionals;

Identifying the appropriate research method for a selected topic and devising work plans and schedules; these would become the task of students (or where appropriate for a group of students) the following year.

The collecting of data on a research topic for which the method and work plan had been devised by a previous intake of students; devising the method and schedules takes up much time and most student theses seemed to rush through the collecting stage because there was so little time left to them as their courses proceeded.;

Analysis of the data collected by earlier students;

A Social Policy and Programming Planning Seminar; this analysis would determine what had been learned from the research and its implication for social work:

Implementation seminars to devise strategies and specific work plans to follow upon what emerged from the research; as in the normal course of events the research topic had been proposed by

a practitioner, the relevant agency (agencies) would of course have a role in working through this phase with the students;

If appropriate for a student worker, the activity would become the subject of a subsequent year's fieldwork assignment;

Finally, learning the skills in evaluating such projects from topic proposal to completed action.

² The MTS began with three international "core" members, able to bring in support staff as required, and a group of nationals responsible for training programmes. Each member served on a number of groups, depending on their particular skills and experience. The notion of a hierarchy was avoided so that a genuine participatory attitude of each contributing what he could do best would infuse the relationships of trainers to trainees, and trainees to the people they served. Along with government advisers, MTS established a number of interacting functional groups:

1) A steering group;

2) A role-performing group, to actually operate at the village level and devise suitably simple ways for the secretaries to report their activities, experience, and thinking that would be of significance. (It was with some surprise and a little resistance that trainers were persuaded to live in the villages and experience the roles they were intending to teach later. They found it hard to dispense with the feeling that they knew better and to avoid authoritarian attitudes!);

Derived from this experience there was formulated:

3) A job description and role analysis group, to spell out in great detail the task analysis of such workers, on the basis of observation and careful collection of descriptive material;

In due course, secretaries (two to each village, for exploratory purposes in the first group of trainees) were placed in the work locations. They spent three-week periods at a time in the villages, coming to the training centre every fourth week. As there were two, it was arranged that from the trainers' point of view they received a group of the secretaries from each village every other week and had a week between each group to examine the written material, reflect on the group discussions, and prepare content and goals for the second group and so on. These materials were developed by:

4) A teaching materials group, to collect, collate and sophisticate materials for teaching purposes and develop teaching/training notes for each.... Compile annotated bibliographies and an index of research materials from each of the participating countries... and make a collection of cross-cultural examples of particular themes or training points;

5) A teaching methods group, to provide examples and demonstrations of various methods and relate them to specific aspects of the training programme;

6) An action research group, to systematise on-going record-keeping, ..analyse the wealth of material and monitor and evaluate the MTS process, ..identify problems, place them in social context and provide research designs in order of priority ("what difference will it make operationally to know what..");

7) A projects and technical co-operation group, to collect examples of links to departments and agencies etc,...to spell out the social aspects of technical projects and identify the social skills to be exercised and needed to be built into project planning and implementation, and provide "position papers" for these purposes;

8) A policy development group, to collect all examples of gaps and inconsistencies in policy and programmes as observed from the village perspective,...to identify the options for dealing with such situations and prepare the documentation for discussion and consultation with the appropriate bodies.