

**`SELF-EDUCATORS' AND `COACHES' AT A SCHOOL OF DEVELOPMENT  
STUDIES: A CASE STUDY OF THIRD WORLD PROFESSIONALS IN EUROPE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Development studies focusses on the Third World but emerged within the First World and is often located there. Thus considerable self-education is involved when students from the Third World relate development studies to their lived experience. Is development studies 'teachable' and what is the role of faculty? We apply Schön's ideas about 'educating reflective practitioners' (using 'tacit knowledge', 'self-education' and 'coaching') to schools of development studies. We draw on the narratives of 124 people from 27 countries who studied at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague over 45 years, and look closely at eight cases. Some practical applications are discussed.

## 1. INTRODUCING THE DISCUSSION AND THE CASE

We need a clearer understanding of how students relate to development studies curricula -- this became apparent to me in the course of research on Third World professionals who had graduated from a school of development studies in Europe.

'Our courses were too theoretical,' complained some, elaborating that they had not been able to see links to familiar situations nor how abstractions could be applied. Others thought that their curriculum had not been theoretical enough and had lacked depth in discussion. Similarly, study programmes on development were criticized both for going too far in the direction of multidisciplinary, leaving gaps in the analysis, and for not going far enough in this direction. Development studies programmes were also often perceived as falling on one side or the other of ideological lines -- either not radical enough, or too radical (George 1997a: 211-16).

Those quoted here were not talking about a range of institutions that offer development studies. They were all former students of a *single* institution over a period of forty five years. The differences in their views did not mainly reflect changes in the curriculum over time. Often their divergent opinions were about the same curriculum and course so that, unlike the blind men and the elephant, they were not referring to different parts of one totality. Instead they were experiencing contact with 'the same thing' (a particular curriculum) in different ways, feeling the elephant as it were with hands of different textures and sensitivities -- hands that in turn were the product of different orientations and life circumstances, as the hands of an artisan differ from those of a nurse or a poet.

Revising the curriculum based on 'feedback' from one section of such a constituency, for example the equivalent of the poet, would only alienate the artisans and nurses. Instead we have to take account of a multiply heterogenous constituency of students -- where for example the artisan-equivalents differ greatly among themselves in the materials and methods they have been used to -- as well as of a multiply complex curriculum.

Donald A. Schön's well-known work on *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) led him to reflect in turn on how such practitioners were shaped by teaching and learning processes. His ideas, embodied in *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987), stimulate useful insights into the relationship between development studies curricula and the diverse constituencies of students drawn in by schools of development studies. Schön

provides many rich and varied formulations, and this paper focusses on his discussion of 'self-education' and 'coaching', with reference to a case study.

We shall apply Schön's work on educating reflective practitioners to the life narratives of 124 individuals from twenty seven countries who were engaged in development work and development studies. These narratives were elicited through research on alumni and students commissioned by the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague.

The Institute often describes itself as Europe's oldest school of development studies. It was established in 1952 as part of a restructuring of relationships between the Netherlands, its former colonies and other parts of the Third World. The Institute's 'mission' was to provide those engaged in development practice with useful material from the social sciences -- through multidisciplinary, 'problem-focussed' and 'policy-oriented' courses that would be more directly relevant than those offered by conventional universities.<sup>1</sup>

Again unlike universities, those who attend the Institute's courses are generally professionals in mid-career, not adolescents and young adults who lack significant work experience. Students at the Institute are often called 'participants' to signify that they contribute their experiences and perceptions to discussions of development issues. Whereas Dutch universities generally enroll local students, the Institute caters mainly to civil servants, academicians and activists from Third World countries (many of whom have scholarships from the Netherlands ministry of development co-operation). The Institute uses English as its working language.

For its fortieth anniversary in 1992, the Institute commissioned an 'alumni study', and asked me to travel to two countries each in Africa, Asia and Latin America, in order to interview as many former students as possible about the relevance of their studies at the Institute to their professional lives. The countries chosen were Colombia, Ghana, India, Mexico, Thailand and Tanzania, and I spent some ten days in each capital

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<sup>1</sup>Courses offered at the Institute in the academic year 2000-2001 are: agricultural and rural development, economics of development', employment and labour studies, the politics of alternative development strategies, population and development, public policy and administration, local and regional development, and women and development. These are master's degree courses, requiring fifteen months of coursework and a research paper. In the same year, the Institute also offered diploma programmes of six months duration in development planning techniques, international relations and development, international law and organizations, and rural policy and project planning. In addition the Institute hosted an annual eight-week course in human rights, and a four year Ph.D. programme.

city.<sup>2</sup> In addition, I interviewed Dutch alumni and those from other countries who now worked in or were passing through The Hague. In all, I collected 112 autobiographical narratives from eighteen countries. This was not intended to be a statistically representative sample -- the emphasis was instead on generating insights and sensitivity to variation. My analysis focussed on the relationship between formal development education at places like the Institute and informal development education through life and work in developing countries (George 1997a).

A later and smaller study, commissioned by the Dean's Office at the Institute, centred on a sample of participants from the eleven master's and diploma programmes, in the academic year 1996-97. Participants in each programme had elected a class representative (and one programme had elected two): these twelve individuals constituted the sample, which -- it turned out -- was almost equally divided between men and women and between the major regions of the Third World plus two rich countries. It included people employed in government, academia and activist organizations. Three from this sample were from countries already covered in the alumni study: the total number of countries spanned by both studies is thus twenty seven. The interviews were conducted at two points in the study period, first early on and then towards the end. (I quote at length from these interviews below but also do my best to protect identities and privacy by withholding details.) The study described the experiences of these individuals at the Institute as mostly 'best case scenarios' that exemplified (1) considerable personal motivation and clarity of purpose, and (2) what institutions of development education can achieve with self-driven student achievers (George 1998).

These studies were not originally intended to be related to Schön's framework. Nevertheless they appear to fit it well. The 'alumni study' solicited the view from the field on the relationship of education to real world practice; the twelve case studies of students further elaborated on this relationship, but this time within a framework of development studies in progress.

Section 1 below picks up Schön's ideas, and argues that development studies -- like the professional fields he discussed -- exemplifies inquiry based on reflection-in-action. Yet development studies has complexities not manifested by planning, archi-

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<sup>2</sup> India, Mexico and Tanzania were selected because of the large numbers of students from these countries who had studied at the Institute over forty years. Thailand, Colombia and Ghana were chosen to give an idea of variation within a continent.

ture and the other areas that were Schön's focus. In addition to the dual curriculum of 'reflection and practice' that Schön described, development studies straddles other dualisms, for example, between the Third World and the First World. Its curricula can be described as multiple: multidisciplinary, multi-regional, multicultural... This is discussed in section 2.

Section 3 argues that Schön's descriptions of learning processes hold good despite the greater complexities of the setting. It extends Schön's ideas about 'worldmaking', 'tacit knowledge' and 'self-education' to development studies.

- The use of 'worldmaking' here suggests that development studies is a 'constructivist' endeavour that explores perceptions, and is not (only) the 'objectivist' pursuit of facts.
- 'Tacit knowledge' has a key role to play in development studies, since this relatively new field has not yet realized its ambitious geographical and historical scope. Students have therefore to draw on their own and their classmates' experiences to fill some gaps, and must therefore work to make 'tacit knowledge' explicit.
- Such work is one part of a wider process of 'self-education', as individuals strive to relate their perceptions in the real world to the texts of development studies.

Section 4 then follows Schön in arguing that faculty at schools of development studies are 'coaches' in self-education, rather than the 'teachers' found in more conventional university departments. We then explore various strands of the relationship between 'coaching' and 'self-education', using cases from the field study. The focus here is on research papers and the dyadic interaction between 'supervisor' and 'supervisee', seen as 'coach' and 'player'. Section 5 moves to the classroom where the 'coach' must relate to several players simultaneously: we round off the paper by addressing some practical implications of Schön's ideas, with regard to classroom interaction and course evaluation.

Applying Schön's ideas to development studies deepens our understanding of the kind of learning involved when professionals from the Third World attend courses on development in Europe. In the early 'development decades', centres for development studies were set up in former colonizing countries with apparent intentions that Third World students should learn -- from their teachers in the First World -- how to manage economies, politics and societies in rational and efficient ways. Subsequent decades have been marked by sharp criticism of such frameworks, both in the First and Third



Worlds. My interviews with former students of one such centre for development studies demonstrated that (right from its inception in 1952) the learning that took place in this setting was not simply transmission from the `developed' to the `developing'. Instead the processes involved were much closer to what Schön describes -- learning through stimulus, through juxtaposition and even (or especially) through provocation and confrontation, with much self-education involved and with the best teachers playing the role not of transmitter but of coach.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT STUDIES: REFLECTION AND ACTION

Schön's *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* focusses on 'university-based professional schools' (1987: xii), notably the departments of city planning, architecture and urban studies familiar from his teaching career, with some reference to social work and education following Glazer's (1974) discussion of the 'minor professions'. Although Schön makes no reference to schools of development studies, his arguments are strikingly relevant to such centres of development education as the Institute of Social Studies.<sup>3</sup>

Schön is concerned with student populations whose life work will not so much involve highly abstract concepts or matters of routine administration but intermediate 'problems of real-world practice... that present themselves... as messy, indeterminate situations' (1987: 4). Development studies examines problems of vital relevance to the everyday world -- poverty, hunger, inequality, powerlessness -- to which straightforward and easily implementable solutions are not forthcoming, because they concern 'situations that are problematic in several ways at once' and are characterized by 'uncertainty, uniqueness and value conflict' (*op. cit.*: 6).<sup>4</sup>

All those engaged in development studies can be described as practitioners to some degree because they address real world problems, whether we speak of a civil servant who has taken study leave for a six month diploma in regional planning or an academician who writes extensively on environmental sustainability. Such an academi-

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<sup>3</sup> Cooke (1997) and Joy (1997), writing more than a decade after Schön, hold – in contrast to him -- that good schools of `medicine, social work, clinical psychology, education and... management' (Cooke 1997a: 338) are able to maintain intellectual rigour at the same time that they train effective practitioners. They argue that development studies can learn from these professional schools. They do not however elaborate such arguments.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards (1996) also applies this part of Schön's analysis to development studies.

cian is far closer to real world practice than those who work in conventional university departments: indeed, some conventional academicians may question the academic status of anyone who advises development agencies, teaches civil servants and activists, and does not keep within traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Schön would describe conventional academicians as inhabitants of the university 'high ground', characterized by 'research-based theory and technique', whereas development studies abuts the 'swampy lowland' where 'messy, confusing problems defy technical solution' (1987: 3). Academicians who attended a school of development studies thereby moved temporarily from the 'high ground' to the lowlands near the 'swamp', and often saw their major gain as exposure to practice: "I added policy orientations to my theoretical interests..." "The period exposed me to development studies, in addition to my earlier disciplinary focus" (cited in George 1997a: 254). Such excursions left them with some mud on their boots and appeared to satisfy a desire for exposure to the real world. Universities could provide 'consolidative' learning within existing paradigms, but a school of development studies offered 'confrontational' learning across paradigms (Mann 1999: 108, quoting Boisot 1996).

One such academician elaborated on her experience at the Institute:

'I liked my course, it was useful. It tried to combine theory and practice, as well as to relate different theories and approaches. It didn't have a very high theoretical level -- it couldn't, because of the way it was, with people from various backgrounds, with anthropologists sitting next to economists -- it had to be at a level at which all of us had access. There were people in the class who hadn't studied for a long time [civil servants and activists], even ten years. So there were limits to academic rigour, compared with a university. The courses that were known for their rigour tended to be those with participants mostly from one disciplinary background. Yet the combination of people in our class was most interesting and discussions with fellow participants could be more educative than some readings' (cited in George 1997: 211).

Schön (1987: xi) talks of the 'dilemma of rigour or relevance'. The case just cited suggests some of the trade-offs that are possible in the course of an academic career that moves between the high ground, the lowlands and the swamp, as with many academicians who work in development studies.

Coming from the opposite direction, those engaged in practical development work need exposure to ideas and reflection that go beyond an orientation towards real life problems -- in other words, they benefit from reverse forays, from the swamp to areas adjoining the high ground. Some practitioners felt that a period out of the mud would help them work more effectively when they were back in it, especially if that

time was spent on a lower slope well situated for observation of and reflection on the action below.

When such people who were generally engaged with practical issues sought exposure to ideas, they frequently thought that a school of development studies would be a more suitable environment than a conventional university. In their words:

'Traditional universities are too traditional to do justice to development studies. They are carved up into disciplines and departments... I thought that a specialized institute would be less fragmented, and more adaptive to new thinking in development studies. For example, I didn't find universities offering courses in alternative development.' 'I already have a master's degree from a conventional university. I don't need another and don't want another. What I was looking for was a post-graduate diploma that was not narrowly academic' (cited in George 1997b: 7).

The need to reflect as well as act in development work was highlighted by activists and those employed by non-governmental agencies, who often took time off on their own initiative to study at a place like the Institute. For example:

'I wanted academic exposure to theories of participation, and time to organize my ideas.' 'I needed a theoretical background in labour studies.' 'I required exposure to theory in order to handle women's issues better'... 'I felt that what I needed was not technical training as such, but a perspective on values and ethics' (cited in George 1997a: 153).

Schools of development studies are thus points of confluence: between such 'reflective practitioners' as civil servants and activists, and academicians who directly address real world problems.

The Institute of Social Studies was not characterized by tensions between students who were 'practitioners' and 'academicians': they appeared to be linked by (a largely tacit) complementarity and overlap. Tensions seemed more common between different kinds of practitioners, notably between civil servants and activists, and were expressed largely by the latter: "'The two of us from India who came from progressive organizations didn't have much in common with the Indian bureaucrats. In fact there was a gulf at the Institute between the few programmes that took in people like us and most other programmes that trained civil servants'" (cited *op. cit.*: 194). No similar 'gulf' could be identified between master's programmes that took in academicians or practitioners, although many practitioners spoke of divergences in perspective between themselves and the Institute's academic staff .

Yet when academicians and practitioners narrated their life stories they frequently opposed reflection and practice.

'You don't make history writing technical things in government offices. Life is human passions as well as facts. You have many things in your head which you have to tell others. In Colombia, especially, things have been evolving so fast that if you don't write about them they are going to overwhelm you. That's why I hope to have the opportunity some day' (cited *op. cit.*: 125).

'It was a relief moving from an academic institute to government service. I was dealing with real issues, policy decisions, no longer with highly simplified bookish examples...' 'I was planning things and implementing things, not just doing research. I was working with rural people and helping them find things that they had wanted for a long time...' (cited *op. cit.*: 123-24).

Many however had wished to combine the reflective and the active streams, and some had deliberately chosen to study at a school of development studies because it straddled the academic and the applied (George 1997b: 6).

It is in this context that we should assess reports that a course in development studies -- sometimes even the same course -- is either 'too theoretical' or 'not theoretical enough'. These should not be treated as objective comments on a curriculum, to be responded to simply by adding or subtracting 'theory' or 'practical exercises': such responses will inevitably prove frustrating and self-defeating. Instead these comments indicate subjective perceptions that are relative (rather than contradictory) to other perceptions. Perhaps a curriculum that appears 'too theoretical' to practitioners and 'not theoretical enough' to academicians achieves a difficult balance better than one that practitioners find too practical or academicians too theoretical. If the space between the high ground and the swamp appears too muddy to inhabitants of the former and too dry to residents of the latter, this is a clear indication that both have ventured out of familiar territory.

One practitioner illustrated the distance that could be travelled in the course of an academic year. When he was first interviewed five months into his study programme, he aired some dissatisfactions:

'In our programme, even good quality teaching doesn't adequately respond to those participants who are more oriented towards policy and practical matters. A balance is not struck, and the practical relevance of what is taught is not made clear...' (cited in George 1998: 18).

At the end of the fifteen month master's programme, his views were somewhat altered:

'At the master's level, you need the theoretical background, it's difficult to make the link to practicalities. Our lecturers tried to show what is happening in the labour market, but these things are hard to demonstrate at a higher level of academic training. At the end of the year, most people were satisfied with the content of the course, even those who found it too theoretical at the beginning of the year. The courses we did later answered many of our questions, if not from the practical point of view then with reference to the world outside...' (*ibid.*).

A school of development studies is therefore what Schön describes as a 'space in between' the high ground of conventional social science as carried out in university departments and the swamp within which development professionals address the exigent problems of everyday life. Development studies thus has a great deal in common with the practice-based-yet-theory-linked disciplines that Schön discussed: people who work in this field are as much 'reflective practioners' as those he studied.

The Institute (like many other schools of development studies) exemplifies what Schön calls a practicum: 'a virtual world, relatively free of the pressures, distractions, and risks of the real one, to which, nevertheless, it refers. It stands in an intermediate space between the practice world, the "lay" world of ordinary life, and the esoteric world of the academy. It is also a collective world in its own right, with its own mix of materials, tools, languages, and appreciations' (1987: 38).

### 3. MORE THAN A 'DUAL CURRICULUM'

I now highlight some important *differences* between development studies and the professional subjects that Schön discusses. These differences require that we not only apply his arguments here but extend them. They are:

- a sharper disjuncture in development studies between practice and reflection
- a greater interdisciplinarity (in many if not all cases)
- a multicultural setting, that is related to the following characteristics:
- a multi-regional student constituency
- a political dualism between First and Third World
- an informal curriculum of participant observation by Third Worlders in the First World
- an informal curriculum of 'vicarious experience' in other parts of the Third World through classmates
- a dialectic between 'here' and 'there', i.e. between immersed involvement and detached reflection.

Development studies may be marked by *a greater distinction and opposition between reflection and practice* than the fields Schön discusses (such as planning and architecture). This greater distance may then generate increased stimulus when those who reflect and those who act are able to share experiences. Our discussion of the con-

fluence between reflective and active streams in development studies has no parallel in Schön's book, where academicians and practitioners do not share a classroom in the same way.<sup>5</sup> Schön's reference to a 'dual curriculum' (1987: 16), that spans 'research-based models' as well as the 'phenomenology of practice' (*op. cit.*: 321), needs some adaptation here because of a possible greater duality between practice and analysis in development studies.

We must also take account of the sometimes wider *multidisciplinarity* in development studies, which can draw on more subject areas than does planning or social work or education or psychoanalysis or counselling. We can speak of a 'multiple curriculum': the Institute's faculty, for example, includes anthropologists, economists, geographers, lawyers, planners, political scientists and sociologists, further subdivided by specialization -- not to mention those who represent fields such as 'international relations' and 'women's studies' that are themselves amalgams.

In another sense, too, development studies involves a 'multiple curriculum' as well as a dual one. The 'professional schools' that Schön contrasts with theory-focussed, monodisciplinary university departments are set well within the boundaries of a single nation and its layered cultures. *Development studies, however, has a global span both in its subject matter and in the constituency it draws on for its students.* We visualize Schön's classroom of reflective practitioners as drawn from certain sections of American society, with perhaps a sprinkling of international students. The duality reflected in their curriculum is that between practice and reflection, but not also between the cultural self and other. Schön does not consider the problems of (say) a school of planning in Thailand that relies mainly on American textbooks, and the more complex relationship between reflection and action in such a learning situation. He certainly does not talk about an international school of planning with a global constituency and overview -- let alone a school where such planning education runs parallel to and intertwines with global approaches to development economics, labour relations, public policy, gender... If he did, he would be closer to discussing a school of development stud-

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<sup>5</sup>Schön in fact appears to see considerable potential in the kind of situation that prevails in classrooms at the Institute: 'In order to build bridges..., the practicum should become a place in which practitioners learn to reflect on their own tacit theories of the phenomena of practice, in the presence of representatives of those disciplines whose formal theories are comparable to the tacit theory of practitioners. The two kinds of theories should be made to engage each other... to encourage researchers in academy and practice to learn from each other' (Schön 1987: 321).

ies such as the Institute, where each year students come from some sixty or more countries.

In this further sense, too, the Institute's curriculum is multiple as well as dual, catering to *various and diverse regions*, with complaints sometimes heard that the case studies of the curriculum focussed too much on one region at the expense of others -- and inevitably at the expense of the region that the complainant came from (George 1997a: 210). But although participants at the Institute wanted case studies that would aid introspection on their region's problems, they also learned through interaction with those from other regions:

'I sometimes felt more rapport with Latin Americans than with fellow Asians, and I discovered commonalities in our national histories. Latin Americans made me aware of the importance of political economy and could give analyses of the Philippines that made me feel inadequate.' 'I tried to learn their way of thinking from my African and Asian friends at the Institute. They had been educated in English, and not in Spanish like us Latin Americans. They think more clearly than we do, more rigorously, more formally. We Latins have complicated patterns of thinking, because we are such a mixture. I would like to be straightforward and not so complicated' (cited *op. cit.*: 198).

Schön's own words can be adapted to describe the dualism here between the "whole" and the "unit", the global and the local', between which 'attention must oscillate'; 'the global experiment in reframing the problem'; 'the shifting stance... from involvement in the unit to consideration of the total'; 'to see the unfamiliar situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one'; 'to appreciate the character of that place in contrast to its surroundings'; 'what happens when people with similar and different ways of framing reality come into collision' (*op. cit.*: 56, 58, 65, 67, 201 and 322). One master's student at the Institute commented:

'If I had done this research paper at home, I might have attended a few seminars on... global aspects... but I wouldn't have got the deeper understanding of the issues that I have got here' (interview notes<sup>6</sup>, November 1997).

Within this geographical multiplicity, there was another dualism that was absent in the educational situations that Schön discusses -- a political dualism. The three main regions of the 'developing world' often saw themselves as different and competing for

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<sup>6</sup> Wherever 'interview notes' are referred to in this paper, these are my notes from interviewing in depth a small sample of twelve individuals who studied at the Institute in 1996-97 (George 1997a and 1998). 'February 1997' refers to the initial round of interviews with all twelve, and 'November 1997' denotes exit interviews with eight people who were enrolled in the master's programme. (The exit interviews of the four who were studying for diplomas took place in June 1997 but are not referred to separately in this paper.) In quotations from these interviews, details such as country of origin have often been deliberately withheld in order to protect the speaker's identity.

the attention of development studies, but they could unite on one side of a different axis of opposition and integration, formulated as between '*developing*' and '*developed*' countries or *the Third World and the First World*, or *South and North*. The Institute was located in a European country, the students were largely from the Third World and the faculty mainly from the First World -- a complex pedagogical situation.

'For all that I benefitted from my time at the Institute, I wonder if it wasn't an unnatural environment for discussing Third World problems. Our problems aren't theirs and their problems aren't ours...' 'Some of the faculty had a different attitude from us participants to structural and social problems in the Third World, an attitude that I found paternalistic. These were problems that we felt strongly about' (cited in George 1997a: 227).

Those from the Third World who were in Europe to study development issues used the opportunity to educate themselves informally as well, *by observing everyday life in the 'developed' society* that they found themselves in. Their curriculum was thus dual in this additional sense. 'One of the most important things people get from doing a Masters in the USA or Europe is the chance of seeing these places and their cultures at first hand. This experience dispels many myths about 'First World' and 'Third World', and allows them to draw their own conclusions about the cultures which dominate... the world today' (Slim 1996: 205). Some observations were in favour of 'developed' societies and some not:

'Here in Ghana we take our environment for granted, unlike Holland where land is limited and used in a very orderly way and where no space is wasted. Here our priorities are different and the central control of space and housing is a bit lax. In Holland, utilities are metered and people have to pay, so there is much less waste than there is here. I was impressed by how the Dutch government allocated housing on a welfare basis. Here a big family may be crammed into one room, but no-one bothers' (cited in George 1997a: 184).

'People in a highly developed society become automated, they lose the touch of being flexible, of adapting to circumstances. They have a book and they try to follow it all the time'... 'The stories about battered women were shocking -- in the midst of such wealth'... 'I once saw junk being destroyed by a man with a machine. I was shocked, because many of the things were perfectly good and usable...' (cited *op. cit.*: 185-6).

A dual curriculum of the formal and informal in turn involved further complexities. *Informal exposure to life in various countries of the globe through classmates from these countries* went on side by side with informal exposure to the Dutch society around. The Institute was located in western Europe, but it was also a global microcosm and a meeting place for people from around the Third World:

'It was so enriching, to hear different viewpoints from first-hand experience. You don't find this knowledge in books" (cited *op. cit.*: 190). 'A friend from Myanmar gave me a sense of the repression there. Many people here in Mexico have never met anyone from Myanmar, let alone come to know them well,



but I've shared a key political experience with one of them' (cited *op. cit.*: 210).

The development studies curriculum at the Institute can therefore be compared to an iceberg, with the formal visible tip resting on a substratum that complements it in vital ways. The analogy also captures the risks and demands of the informal curriculum: exploring submerged parts of an iceberg involves the shocks of immersion and suspension of breath in an unfamiliar medium, and suggests the stresses that accompany learning from peers who are strangers with odd ways from distant lands:

'I had difficulty in making contact with people, communicating with others, understanding other cultures, whether it was dealing with unfamiliar food or unfamiliar people... So at first I mixed only with other Latin Americans and even that wasn't easy' (cited *op. cit.*: 192).

The informal curriculum gained in significance because of the nature of development studies, which combines relative newness as a field of study with an extremely ambitious global and historical span. In consequence, there are large gaps in any formal curriculum offered in development studies: situations in various places on the planet have yet to be described and analyzed, and much knowledge remains to be systematized. *An informal curriculum of discussion with peers from elsewhere* -- whether about the features of a particular situation or on wider issues -- contributed to filling in some of these gaps.

'Once in a class, the professor gave some figures and someone in the class contradicted him and said, "That's wrong -- I was there". Voices like that are important here' (cited in George 1998: 10). 'The other day in class we were looking at the literature on famines. An Ethiopian classmate was able to speak from first-hand experience and could present empirical evidence that challenged the literature' (cited in George 1997b: 14).

Informal learning through discussion with peers involved further dualities: it meant drawing not only on the professional experiences of classmates in mid-career but on their *everyday exposure to life in developing countries*. Most participants at the Institute were from such countries and therefore had not come to grips with development issues for the first time in a classroom. In the words of a young Latin American,

'I was used to seeing development processes as part of life, not in the academic terms I encountered when I went to study about development in Europe' (cited *op. cit.*: 21).

For those for whom 'developing countries' had all their lives been 'home' and not some object of detached analysis, taking leave from employment and families in order to travel far away and study was *a useful forced detachment that allowed distance and perspective* -- a 'pause in the midst of action...., a "stop-and-think"' (Schön *op. cit.*:

26, quoting Arendt), what Mann describes as 'to get out of the box... to be able to stand back and 'objectify' the pattern of their reality' (1999: 109). Looking anew at the everyday and the familiar required some discontinuity in experience, however inconvenient and dissonant this might be. As a Mexican at the end of his career said of his time at the Institute,

'I saw some things about Mexico more clearly, thinking and writing about Mexico from a distance. I think I gained a better understanding of Mexico's history and contemporary society, studying about it from outside, looking at things here from there' (cited in George 1997a: 40).

Systematic *reversals of the 'here' and the 'there'* appeared beneficial in development studies. The Mexican's experience (echoed by many) of "'looking at things here from there'" during the period of study at the Institute complemented earlier learning through "'being here and reading about foreign countries'", as a Tanzanian woman put it (cited *op. cit.*: 308). Informal education during the study period at the Institute allowed (a) reflection from a distance on development issues at home, (b) some observation of 'development' as exemplified by everyday life in a developed country and (c) learning from the life experiences of peers from around the globe.

A variant of the reversal between 'here' and 'there' is illustrated by one of the relatively few Dutch who studied at the Institute, a woman who attended a master's programme there after a long period of development work in Bangladesh:

'There was not much enthusiasm there [at the Institute] about taking in students from developed countries. I questioned this. Development wasn't only for the Third World. Transformation is global. My place was in the Netherlands, not in Bangladesh' (cited *op. cit.*: 45).

A few others interviewed were neither from the Netherlands nor from developing countries but from other parts of the 'developed' world. Their journey between 'here' and 'there' during study at the Institute involved not only exposure to issues of Third World development but to a 'developed' society that was different from their own. A Canadian commented,

'I'm impressed by Dutch society... It struck me as a pretty decent, fair society, more so than some other western countries. It takes better care of its poor, its members accept a higher level of income distribution, the government tries to balance capital accumulation and redistribution. At the same time their rigid sense of order and their attitude of moral superiority can drive a foreigner mad' (cited *op. cit.*: 188).

One layer of detachment at the Institute, and part of the dialectic between 'here' and 'there', was the *retreat from practice to reflection*:

'I appreciate the time I've had here to read and to study. I've been exposed to different issues and perspectives. At home my life is consumed by day-to-day activities and there's no time to analyze anything deeply, life is so activity-based. I'm going home revitalized.' 'I spend so much time by myself here, even though I have friends, am seen as "social"... Here you're often alone in your room, it gives you time to reflect, it can be dull but that element of time is important both scholastically and personally...'(cited in George 1998: 4).

We now return to Schön's ideas, after adding to and multiplying them in the case of development studies: many of his arguments apply in this case as well, despite the greater complexity inherent in the 'multiple dualities' of a development studies curriculum.

#### 4. 'WORLDMAKING', 'TACIT KNOWLEDGE' AND 'SELF-EDUCATION'

Schön outlines 'objectivist' views of reality: 'facts are what they are, and the truth of beliefs is strictly testable... All meaningful disagreements are resolvable... by reference to the facts. And professional knowledge rests on a foundation of facts' (1987: 36). Schön contrasts such approaches with 'constructionist' views: 'our perceptions, appreciations, and beliefs are rooted in worlds of our own making that we come to accept as reality' (*ibid.*).

Goodman's use of 'worldmaking' is cited by Schön as an example of constructivism. Practitioner communities are worldmakers: 'Through countless acts of attention and inattention, naming, sensemaking, boundary setting, and control, they make and maintain... the world... [through] usually tacit processes' (*ibid.*). If practitioners' daily work involves such tacit worldmaking through reflection-in-action, a period at a school of development studies allows reflection *on* their earlier reflection-in-action (*op. cit.*: 43). This is especially so in an environment that encourages 'constructivist' rather than 'objectivist' pedagogy, where study consists of reflectively 'framing' experiences as well as 'learning the facts'.

At schools of development studies, practitioners gain opportunities to converse reflectively with the materials of their situations (*op. cit.*: 217). They meet academicians engaged in reflective conversations with similar materials and in more explicit 'world-making'. Further, development studies has a strong emphasis on *remaking* the world.

In this setting, new entrants -- whether 'doers who think about development' or 'thinkers who think about how development is brought about' -- must go through the following steps:

- They work on a problem, a process that Schön describes from a constructionist viewpoint: 'If they are to get a well-formed problem... they must construct it from the materials of a situation that is... problematic. So problem setting is... a form of worldmaking' (*op. cit.*: 4); 'they must... reconcile, integrate, or choose among conflicting appreciations of a situation so as to construct a coherent problem worth solving' (*op. cit.*: 6).
- Reflecting on this problem involves 'accumulating, probing, and developing' ideas 'until the precipitate of an interpretation seems ready to form' (*op. cit.*: 240). Students carry out what Schön calls 'frame experiments': 'they impose a kind of coherence on messy situations and thereby discover consequences and implications of their chosen frames. From time to time, their efforts to give order to a situation provoke unexpected outcomes -- "back talk" that gives the situation a new meaning. They listen and reframe the problem' (*op. cit.*: 157-58).

At the Institute, this process of inquiry is carried out during interaction with faculty and peers from all over the world: 'With their different ways of framing the situation, they tend to pay attention to different sets of facts, see "the same facts" in different ways, and make judgements of effectiveness based on different kinds of criteria. If they wish, nevertheless, to come to agreement, they must try to get inside each other's point of view' (*op. cit.*: 218). Schön calls this 'frame reflection':

We may still talk about true statements and effective actions, but only within a frame... When we think of truth or effectiveness across frames, however, things become much more difficult (*ibid.*). In order to come to agreement, they would... have to try to enter into the other's world to discover the things the other has named and constructed there and appreciate the kind of coherence the other has created... In such a process of frame reflection, each might discover how arguments compelling to him seemed utterly inconclusive to the other... ..often, the more we work at trying to understand one another, the more profoundly we experience the differences among our ways of seeing things. And the image of frame-reflective entry into one another's world suggest the experience we have (much less often) of passing from misunderstanding to mutual understanding (*op. cit.*: 230-31).

Such a description of the 'steps' from constructing a problem through frame experimentation to shared reflection should not suggest a smoothly unfolding process. Schön describes 'the very feelings of mystery, confusion, frustration, and futility that many students experience in their early months', here illustrated by one of the eight master's students in my 1997 sample:

'After a couple of months in, I questioned my decision to come here... It was partly the unfamiliar structure: I was used to courses that went on for one or more semesters, whereas here some last only a few weeks. I was miserable in

personal terms... Also, this year it's been a bit of a scramble in our programme... But...I have learned a lot, put things together. I enjoy the debates in class. I like the orientations of our faculty and I've built up a relationship with some of them... I'm looking forward to the research paper. The whole point of the experience is that you come in as a person, you change, rethink your ideas and orientations, even who you are' (cited in George 1998: 3).

Schön's descriptions of the learning process ring true here, whether of 'he', 'she' or 'they':

he frequently asks himself what he is to learn, whether it is worth learning, how he can best learn it... Typically he does not resolve such questions once and for all in a burst of clarity but gradually comes to see things in new ways and make new sense of them (1987: 298).

Their discoveries did not progress in a straight line. It was as though they periodically returned to the same issues, at different levels of difficulty, by reflections on class discussions... (*op. cit.*: 284).

And as she learns..., she also learns to learn... (*op. cit.*: 102), both in the particular task at hand and in the generic process it illustrates (*op. cit.*: 112-13).

[Students] seem to learn here to observe in a finer-grained, more differentiated way. [They are] initiated into a process of self-education... (*op. cit.*: 153) -- to become aware of the choices implicit in what they already know how to do (*op. cit.*: 182).

...the boundaries of reflection... have been stretched (*op. cit.*: 242).

Schön quotes a student: 'It was not easy. It was good. There are dilemmas you must experience' (*op. cit.*: 336).

We now discuss some essential features of learning in the setting that is our focus: 'tacit knowledge' and 'self-education'.

**Tacit knowledge.** Informal learning through interaction with peers from a range of 'developing' countries was very important for those who studied at the Institute, as was observation of the 'developed' society where they were temporary residents. Schön, following Polanyi, discusses 'tacit knowledge' -- that which we know but do not know that we know; 'learning... sometimes takes the form of making explicit what one already knows' (Schön *op. cit.*: 87). 'Tacit knowledge' is especially relevant, as we have seen, in the case of development studies, with its ambitious agenda of global coverage and analysis as yet barely spanned by a web of loosely systematized knowledge. Some of the many lacunae and spaces within formal curricula at a place such as the Institute of Social Studies were filled in through discussions that drew on individuals' own 'tacit knowledge' and that of classmates (George 1997a: 60, 297).

'Tacit knowledge' becomes 'vicarious experience' when one person's perceptions are communicated to another who would not otherwise have access to the situation observed: 'the best substitute for direct experience probably is *vicarious experience*' (Stake 1987: 83, emphasis given). 'Free of the need to make our ideas explicit to

someone else, we are less likely to make them explicit to ourselves' (Schön *op. cit.*: 300). At the Institute of Social Studies, insider perceptions were communicated *across* national and cultural boundaries:

‘I wasn't even sure where Nepal was when I went to the Institute. Now if there is anything in the newspaper about Nepal, I read it because of what my classmate told me about the situation there.’ ‘I had friends from West Asian countries that were at war with each other. So I heard both sides and it was difficult to take a polarized position’ (*op. cit.*: 201).

‘Tacit knowledge...’ Stake tells us. ‘... is that which permits us to recognize faces, to comprehend metaphors, and to know ourselves’ (*op. cit.*: 6). ‘Tacit knowledge includes mental maps and underlying assumptions projected as unspoken "givens" onto the world’ (Mann *op. cit.*: 113). For such knowledge to be shared, to be transformed into ‘vicarious experience’ for someone else, it has to move from the realm of the tacit to the conscious and articulated -- and the very process of sharing experience with those from a radically different background forces formulation, explication and elaboration of the tacit. ‘Globalization... raise[s]... awareness of the relationship between explicit and tacit knowledge’ (Mann *ibid.*).

One definition of tacit knowledge is “knowing more than we can say” (Schön 1987: 23, quoting Hainer<sup>7</sup>): debating development issues with peers from all over the planet stimulated and goaded individuals to greater efforts to say what it was that they knew. Schön also quotes Socrates: “This knowledge will not come from teaching but from questioning. He will recover it for himself”, as ‘the learner “spontaneously recovers knowledge that is in him”’ (*op. cit.*: 85). Close questioning by peers -- whether in a classroom, coffee lounge or shared kitchen in a student residence -- probed deep into underlying strata of tacit knowledge, and into the ‘subsoil of the mind’ (*op. cit.*: 168). ‘When people share tacit knowledge, they might speak from the heart and the soul -- from *mythos* more than *logos* -- and rely upon figures of speech and rich *in vivo* images to express the subjectivity and serendipity of their lives’ (Mann *ibid.*).

Much knowledge remained tacit, and processes of interaction continued between the tacit and the articulated (between subsoil and soil) -- but in a richer way, because of the processes of conscious elaboration at work. The ideas engendered were stimulating for the individual involved as well as for those others who benefitted from ‘vicarious experience’, through tacit knowledge made explicit.

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<sup>7</sup> Also see Schmidt 2000..

Those who taught formal curricula had to keep lines of communication open between the layers of a dual curriculum. If they did not draw on 'tacit knowledge' and 'vicarious experience' in the classroom, there would be complaints:

'I'm not happy with the teaching methodology. I know there's limited time, but the people sitting in class aren't involved enough, their participation isn't encouraged in the generation and recognition of knowledge. There are attempts to do this but they are not adequate' (interview notes, February 1997). 'Our teachers concentrate too much on knowledge that is already recognized as such and embodied in books. They need to encourage the generation of new knowledge, based on actual experience' (cited in George 1997b: 7).

Classroom teaching also required that faculty make their own 'tacit knowledge' available as 'vicarious experience':

'The great majority of lecturers have experience outside the Institute, in developing countries. They don't speak in a vacuum, or based only on books.' 'When lectures draw on someone's experience and not just on what he has read, this brings issues to life and inspires confidence' (cited *op. cit.*: 8).

Formal education at the Institute took some account of this need to share knowledge and to 'excavate' the tacit:

'When we were at the Institute, the class met around a table instead of the usual classroom layout. Every session was divided into two halves, one for a good lecture and the other for lively discussion' (cited in George 1997a: 221).

Students 'tend to think differently about the theories offered by researchers when they realize that they hold comparable tacit theories of their own' (Schön 1987: 324).

**Self-education.** When discussing the role of faculty, Schön makes a critical point about education for reflective practitioners or -- in our case -- development practitioners: 'Others may help her, but they can do so only as she begins to understand for herself... And although they may help her, *she* is the essential self-educator... this... is consistent with an older and broader tradition of educational thought and practice, according to which the most important things... can only be learned for oneself' (*op. cit.*: 84, emphasis given). He quotes Carl Rogers on the significance of "'self-discovered, self-appropriated learning'" (*op. cit.*: 89), and Thomas Cowan on the difference between 'training' and 'education': education is 'the self-learning process' and training is 'what others make you do' (*op. cit.*: 92). These ideas were echoed in interviews with former students of the Institute of Social Studies:

'...for a mature student teaching is less important.' 'I had lots to teach myself' '...I prefer an open university to the lecture system, so I liked the Institute's format of reading and discussion' (cited in George 1997a: 221-22).

At the Institute, coursework was followed by a research paper that seemed to be a major vehicle of self-education (TAFTE 1994). It was a key exercise in which participants applied their skills in argument and their command over substantive material to a problem of their choice, in a paper of some 15,000-20,000 words (or approximately 30 pages). In general, individuals from the Third World had 'brought with them' the problems that they examined in their research papers. Some had tried to make sense of earlier experience in a development agency, parastatal or the civil service; others had tried to anticipate future concerns in their careers; another category had focussed on a problem of interest in what was now clearly to be their field. Academicians and activists -- in contrast to 'practitioners'-- had often chosen some broader developmental issue to work on for their research papers, rather than specific problems associated with work in organizations: these broader issues were frequently related to questions of power and the control of resources (*op. cit.*: 235-36).

A few of those interviewed had selected a problem on the basis of powerful lectures delivered by faculty who were passionately involved with their research (*op. cit.*: 234). However for most, as we have said, self-education involved bringing along a problem from the Third World to be reflected upon at a distance, during study leave at a school of development studies in Europe: such a problem was the grit in the oyster, worked on and overlaid during months in a shell of reflection. Work on the research paper meant viewing a particular problem in 'my country' through the filter of what had been learned during coursework in the preceding months -- reflecting on and rethinking 'experience' as well as reflecting on and rethinking coursework. The research paper denoted *individual* exploration of 'analysis' and 'experience', in contrast to earlier months of shared coursework and discussion.

That such self-education took place in a new environment was crucial. 'Here I had only my studies -- at home, it's several projects at work plus family life plus life in general. Here it was a respite from the general chaos that life is at home...' (cited in George 1998: 6). A cocoon of absorbed reflection that took shape in this distant environment could be qualitatively different from one that might have been spun at home:

'It would have been possible to write this paper in the Caribbean, but it would have been far more difficult. Sometimes when you are far away from the home environment it is easier to concentrate on certain issues... Here you get to sit and think in an environment that's different and yet related to the problem that's being studied' (cited *op. cit.*: 6-7).



The period in the cocoon was important preparation for the flight home, when new wings would be tentatively tried out.

To pursue further the theme of self-education, we now focus on the eight master's students who were interviewed in most depth both early and late in their period of study (George 1997b and 1998). All had arrived at the Institute intending to investigate further a specific development issue: poverty and inequality; the politics of sexuality; rural industrialization; structural adjustment and the labour force; the politics of world trade; labour-capital relations; environmental politics; and the relationship between 'development' and 'happiness'.

Such abstract issues had a live edge for these individuals, sometimes because of primary life experiences:

*Poverty:* 'I grew up relatively well-off but not part of the elite, in a country with a lot of poverty. That makes you think.'

*Sexuality:* 'My sexual orientation is not easily accepted. Gradually I became aware of the political dimensions of this.'

*Happiness:* 'I come from a rich country but when I travelled in poor countries somehow people seemed happier.'<sup>8</sup>

*World trade:* 'My father was a banana grower, in an economy dependent on the banana trade. I wondered what the new trade agreements boded for people like him'

*Labour:* 'My father trained as a teacher, but when we migrated to a Western country he had to work as a manual labourer. My university education has helped me back across the line, but I wonder about the issues involved.'

(Interview notes at various times in 1997, condensed.)

In two other cases, particular issues had become compelling at one remove or more from everyday life, requiring more explanation:

*Rural industrialization:* 'We had family farms in southern Thailand, we visited them occasionally. So when I couldn't get into medical studies, I opted to study 'agro-industrial product development' at engineering college, and found it very interesting. But then I joined the student union and went on excursions to rural areas. I saw many agro-industries there but people were still poor'.

*Environmental politics:* 'From the time I was young I've always liked plants, I had this feeling of 'Me and Nature', I wanted to save trees. I studied environmental biology in college, but also sociology, which became a passion. In the vacations I worked with local environmental projects and realized the connections with policy -- something that was lacking in my study of biology. So I became an environmentalist, not an ecologist. I've moved through my work and studies to 'Nature and me for what and how?' I no longer focus on the environment as such, it's now part of a social and economic perspective' (*ibid.*).

The final case exemplified an issue that had become engrossing later in life, in the workplace:

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<sup>8</sup> This case is discussed in some detail below.

*Structural adjustment and labour relations:* 'Before I came here to study, I worked in the human resources department of a parastatal. Under the new government's liberalization policy, parastatals were forced to be more competitive and commercial. There was some hiring and firing aimed at increasing productivity and profits... The human resources department was expected to contribute to this change, to take it up as a mission, to draw up business plans. So now I'm interested in looking at new management systems in a liberalized economy, but critically' (*ibid.*).

These individuals had travelled to the Institute on a trajectory of self-education, each bringing along a problem of absorbing interest, choosing courses that were relevant to this problem, and with expectations that the research paper would allow them to pursue it more fully. When questioned early in their period of study about levels of satisfaction, they often answered that they would only be able to deliver a final verdict when their research papers were finished. At the end of the academic year, they answered yes, they had benefitted from study at the Institute because they had been able to examine in some detail the problems that engrossed them. Now many were considering following those problems still further through a doctoral dissertation, at some point in their lives, although they were also involved in related practice or activism.

Towards the end of his book, Schön raises the issue of 'students' capacity to manage their own education', and 'the self managed movement of ... students across field and academic careers' (1987: 341). He goes on to say that 'a reflective practicum of the sort we tried to create [through curriculum reform] may most appropriately occur, not at the beginning of a student's professional career, but in the midst of it, as a form of continuing education' (*op. cit.*: 342).

The students just quoted were attending an institute that recruits mainly those in mid-career. The Institute does not overtly share Schön's emphasis on 'self education', but spaces are left open for 'participants' to pursue their interests. Our eight masters' students illustrate what Schön calls 'students' active management of their own learning' (*ibid.*). The report based on interviews with them described their stories as 'best case scenarios' (George 1998: 2), about 'students who arrive at the Institute with a clear idea ... of what they intend to do there' (*op. cit.*: 6). In the context of Schön's discussion, we now look at these students as 'reflective designers of their own education' (1987: 341):

At some point in their careers, many of them learned how to stage a dialogue between their field and classroom experiences and used this discovery to direct and control their own learning. Seeing their courses as pieces of a larger educational puzzle, they used their movement between classroom and field to build up a sense of the... competences they wanted to acquire. They sized up what they needed to learn and weighed the value... of the knowledge they were getting at school. Similarly, they used the movement between field and class-

room to test their career goals and their visions ... In their discovery of the possibilities inherent in the dialogue of field and academic careers -- limited, to be sure, by their understandings of both -- they created a reflective practicum of their own' (Schön *op. cit.*: 339).

## 5. COACHING

If development practitioners who attend schools of development studies in mid-career are 'designers of their own education', what is the role of faculty at such schools? Is development studies 'learnable but not teachable by classroom methods' (Schön 1987: 157)? Schön makes a distinction here between a 'teacher' and a 'coach': 'the interventions most useful... are more like coaching than teaching' (*ibid.*). 'The student cannot be taught what he needs to know, but he can be coached: "He has to see on his own behalf and in his own way... Nobody else can see for him, and he can't see just by being 'told', although the right kind of telling may guide his seeing and thus help him see what he needs to see"' (*op. cit.*: 17, quoting Dewey 1974: 364). We can then say that development studies is not 'teachable', but is 'coachable': 'students learn by doing, with the help of coaching' (*op. cit.*: 209).

Our eight 'self-educators', master's students at the Institute, each one of whom had brought along a problem for further investigation, did not arrive there intending to work alone. Where they did mention solitary work, it was a default option: "I wasn't sure if the Institute was a good place to study women's history and sexuality. My friends said, go and give it a chance, if you don't find what you want there you can always read for yourself" (interview notes, February 1997). This speaker went on to say:

'I was looking for someone to supervise the research I wanted to do. When I'd studied for BA at a Western university, my experience with supervision was negative, the faculty weren't familiar with the Third World situations that I worked on. I knew that A [on the Institute's faculty] had written on theoretical approaches to sexuality, plus she had done research in my region. Some of my friends knew her, they 'certified' her' (*ibid.*).

Yet the speaker had not come across the world to sit at the feet of some Great Teacher: 'I'd assumed A would supervise my research if I worked on sexuality. But in my early months here I felt that it wouldn't matter so much if some other member of faculty supervised my work instead' (*ibid.*). A supervisor was wanted, but there was no fixation or dependence on any individual member of faculty. This student had self-confidence and self-direction. She was a player in search of a coach -- not a satellite drawn towards a sun.

When another of the eight master's students considered whether to enroll at the Institute for self-financed study, he did not have a particular faculty member in mind as supervisor: but he did go through issues of the journal edited at the Institute, and he also searched for articles written by faculty in the study programme he planned to join (George: 1997b: 17). He was trying to estimate the general intellectual calibre of those from among whom he would be assigned a coach.

One student interviewed placed supervision within the context of the self-education process, by talking about 'supervisor management':

'Both my supervisors were good and capable people. They gave clear direction, even though one was away for quite some time. The problem that many people here face is that they wait for their supervisors to approach them. I had a time frame, I went in for 'supervisor management', I submitted chapters to my supervisors and made specific appointments by phone to meet them' (interview notes, November 1997).

Why does a self-educator require a coach? Schön describes a coach as 'a paradoxical teacher who does not teach but serves as... midwife to others' self-discovery' (1987: 92). What self-educators need is not freedom -- which they temporarily surrender when they join a professional school -- but 'disciplined freedom' (*op. cit.*: 125). The student's role also has paradoxical aspects: (s)he must temporarily 'give up freedom... in order to gain the freedom that comes with new levels of understanding and control' (*op. cit.*: 123).

The need for a supervisor was temporary, related to this phase of life, the brief sojourn in a school of development studies, before students went on their way, either back into the real world of the swamp or further up the slope into academe. The stage of self-education under supervision was one chapter in a longer story of self-education, 'serv[ing]... primarily to set the stage for later more nearly independent learning' (*op. cit.*: 170).

Those who attended the Institute moved between study and real world involvement. In contrast, those whose lives are spent largely on the academic high ground (for example people who move from undergraduate to graduate studies and then settle into teaching or research positions in conventional university departments) may not be self-educators in the same sense of coming to terms as individuals with diverse experiences in the real world and in academe. A life spent largely in academia requires less personal reconciliation of divergent imperatives, and therefore less self-education and more conventional education: universities thus seek teachers rather than coaches. Universities are

in a sense closed worlds, coherent enough to provide firmaments where professorial stars shine and attract doctoral students. So-called 'mature' students at university may, however, have more in common with the self-educators described here. Students who attend conventional universities in the Third World and are exposed to paradigms developed mainly in the First World may also be stimulated towards 'self-education' in efforts to reconcile these paradigms with their lived experience.

What is the difference between a coach and a teacher? One answer is that a teacher focusses mainly on substance or on 'product', whereas a coach directs energies more to 'process'. The nature of 'coaching' was illustrated by two master's students, who spoke of their supervisors as collaborators in the learning process rather than as founts of knowledge:

'When I return home... I'll keep in touch with X [supervisor at the Institute], I enjoy bouncing ideas off her. She's my other mind. E-mail will be great for the purpose...' (interview notes, November 1997). 'The relational sense is important, my supervisor listens... I would like to stay connected to him and to the Institute, at least through e-mail contacts' (*op. cit.*, November 1997).

These quotations suggest another difference, between a more lateral relationship with a coach and a more vertical relationship with a teacher. As Schön puts it: 'the relationship constructed was... of partners in inquiry' (1987: 181); coaches 'take up a position next to the student, sitting side by side with her before the shared problem' (*op. cit.*: 213). The coach's stance is: 'I will become your co-experimenter, helping you figure out how to do what you want, demonstrating for you how you might achieve your goals' (*op. cit.*: 153). Where the process works well, student and coach become 'engaged in a dialogue of increasing intimacy and effectiveness and... reciprocity' (*op. cit.*: 207); 'the coach listens and then responds with criticisms, questions, advice, or demonstration; and coach and student engage in a dialogue' (*op. cit.*: 209).

Schön quotes a 'coach': "I want to help them make a description that enables them to get hold of what they already know and then to criticize it, to contrast it with other possible descriptions" (*op. cit.*: 181). The coach 'communicates the idea that technique is not a matter of following rules but of trying out and evaluating alternative methods of production' (*op. cit.*: 213). Schön also quotes a student describing a coach: 'he works with your own ideas and never imposes his own except in the most positive way of helping you to extend and see the implications of your own ideas' (*op. cit.*: 122). 'Through qualitative description, technical instruction, and demonstration... [the coach]

shows [the student]... how to make *more* of what is there' (*op. cit.*: 190-91, emphasis given).

One student at the Institute described this process:

X's supervision has been very useful. I wrote the main chapters [of my research paper] and then X went through them and drew out the major concepts and asked me to develop them, she showed me what could be tightened. I could have done this myself but I was lost in reading. The paper wouldn't have taken the same form if I'd worked without her. As I said, she's my other mind (interview notes, November 1997).

Schön describes a coach's role: 'A coach has many ways of "telling". He can give specific instructions... He can criticize a student's product or process, suggesting things the student needs to do... He can tell the student how to set priorities... He can propose experiments the student might consider trying, analyze or reformulate problems, and deliver reflections about the process he has demonstrated' (*op. cit.*: 102).

Such a role is clearly illustrated by one master's student:

'I haven't finished my research paper yet. My general topic was quite broad, my research design was more focussed but still quite broad. Z who is my second supervisor said so. I had a more or less complete draft at my next seminar, but Z suggested that I change the emphasis, not just polish that draft. She said that it was too ambitious to try and study the impact of social policy... through a theoretical framework that extends to things other than policy. She suggested that I take a different focus and deal with theoretical and methodological issues and applications to social policy, using the existing studies on poverty and income inequality in my country. It took me some time to figure out how to implement these suggestions -- two weeks after the seminar I was still thinking about how to restructure my paper. Now I have half of my final draft, three chapters are done and three are left' (interview notes, November 1997).

The importance of a lateral relationship between coach and student clearly emerged in one case: 'My supervisor would have made a good headmaster for a kindergarten, putting forward his opinions as gospel. It's his personality. It's not that he's a Westerner -- I know lots of Westerners who know how to listen. Listening is a difficult skill, people have to graduate from hearing to listening' (*ibid.*). Work on a research paper under these circumstances was predictably problematic:

'I submitted the outline... My supervisor gave me substantive comments and I resubmitted a revised outline... This outline wasn't approved but I don't think there were enough grounds for rejection. I was told that there wasn't enough data and I was made to change the topic... I asked for a change of supervisor' (*ibid.*).

This case would fall under what Schön would describe as 'the teaching and learning processes gone wrong' (*op. cit.*: 119-156). Teacher or student or both 'strive... to impose his or her way of seeing on the other rather than enter the other's world so as to understand'; 'each... perceives the interaction as a conflict rather than as a failure of

understanding'; 'each perceives the other... as defensive and as unilaterally bent on winning' (*op. cit.*: 134-36). The teacher may seek to exhibit 'mastery' and cloak the research process in 'mystery' (*op. cit.*: 132).

The student may 'engage... in an ideological battle with... her teachers' (*ibid.*). 'Some students feel threatened by the... [supervisor's] aura of expertise and respond to their learning predicament by becoming defensive. Under the guise of learning, they actually protect themselves against learning anything new' (*op. cit.*: 119) Or: 'Some students expect to be told what to do at each stage of their journey and become panic-stricken or enraged when a coach fails to meet their expectations' (*op. cit.*: 299).

The problems described take on additional twists in development studies, where teacher and student may not only differ in personality or orientation (to research or praxis) but often come from two different hemispheres. A student from the Third World may question how much a supervisor from the First World knows about the situation under discussion. This happened in the case just described: 'I showed my research paper outline to a Ph.D. student here from my own country, he didn't see any major problems with it' (interview notes, November 1997). This student thus questioned his supervisor's credentials.

Coach and student climb an upward spiral together rather than pull each other down, and the coach's behaviour usually exhibits two key features. First, the coach adapts to each student, 'tailor[ing] his understandings to the needs and potentials of a particular student at a particular stage of development. He... give[s] priority to some things and not to others. He must decide what to talk about and when and how to talk about it' (Schön 1987: 176). 'A different student with a different mix of strengths and weaknesses might have elicited very different responses' (*op. cit.*: 202). 'He may treat one student with gentleness and indirection, barely hinting at issues that call for change; with another, he may be direct and challenging' (*op. cit.*: 107); 'a good... coach has at his disposal and is capable of inventing on the spot many strategies of instructing, questioning, and describing -- all aimed at responding to the difficulties and potentials of a particular student who is trying to do something' (*op. cit.*: 105).

Many of Schön's points were reiterated by one of the master's students interviewed, who did not know Schön's work and sometimes used other terms to convey the same ideas:

'Some of my class mates had problems with their supervisors. Some supervisors gave negative comments without constructive suggestions -- one said "I don't like your research paper at all". Others seemed to think that their role was just to edit the paper, and this dissatisfied participants who saw the research paper as a learning process with a chance to improve. I prefer those who see themselves as teachers to those who consider themselves academicians and are often negative about our work. The main problem in the Institute seems to be that the faculty concentrate on academic research and paper writing, rather than on relationships with students -- they don't seem to have fully that feeling of being teachers. I wondered if this was because this is a Western society, but I can't say anything different about non-Western members of faculty... You have to get to know students and their strong and weak points, but here the attitude seems to be, 'Oh, I treat everyone the same.'" It's not a question of equality or competition, but the learning process for different people' (interview notes, November 1997).

Secondly, the coach's attitude is that 'there is no one right way... but many possible right ways, each of which must be worked out both in its global structure and in the most concrete details... indeed, much... coaching... seems aimed at opening up possibilities for interpretation that students have not as yet imagined' (Schön 1987: 209). There is neither 'unlimited freedom' nor 'a degree of constraint that demands "one right way"' (*op. cit.*: 210). Here again we confront 'the twin issues of freedom and discipline' (*op. cit.*: 123), to be bridged through 'a kind of "disciplined freedom"' (*op. cit.*: 125). The self-educator accepts 'an initial imposition of an order which one can always break open later... she feels confident of her ability to evaluate it *once she has understood it*, to look back on it, and to break it apart. She can relinquish control for a time and leave the direction of her development open-ended because she feels confident in her ability to control the larger process that includes this temporary loss of control' (*op. cit.*: 122-23, emphasis given).

The self-educator thus 'adopts a particular kind of stance -- taking responsibility for educating herself in what she needs to learn and at the same time remaining open to the coach's help' (*op. cit.*: 164). Such students have both a 'capacity for cognitive risk-taking' and a 'strong sense of self' (*op. cit.*: 139): 'more challenged than dismayed by the prospect of learning something radically new, more ready to see their errors as puzzles to be solved than as sources of discouragement' (*op. cit.*: 294).

The coach must give the self-educator moral support: "You keep going on," he says, "you are going to make it" (*op. cit.*: 107).

We now look at the comparative range exemplified by the eight master's students. Two of them had developed intense intellectual relationships with their supervi-



sors. One supervisor was labelled X above. The other I shall now call Y and was described in these terms:

‘For my Ph.D., I’ll look for a supervisor like Y. He’s part of a diaspora, he’s nuanced and reflects, he doesn’t accept dichotomies... I’m happy I met him. He’s an optimist, he’s helped me regain my optimism -- that’s been very exciting, otherwise just reiterating problems is boring’ (interview notes, November 1997).

A third student described a supervisor, here labelled Z, who had ‘coached’ sensitively on the lines approved by Schön, and whose suggestions had been profitably followed by the student. The relationship was useful and positive, but without the ‘powerful interpersonal component’ (Schön 1987: 220) in the relationship of the two students mentioned earlier with X and Y. Was this because Z was a second supervisor and not the main ‘coach’? Or because Z’s research was in a region very far removed from the student’s home country? Or because the subjective configurations were different? Both X and Y had important life experiences in common with the students whose descriptions of them we have cited: although from different parts of the world, each pair of coach and player shared what Schön called ‘overlapping experiences of vulnerability’ (*op. cit.*: 247).

Most other students had been competently coached and were pleased with the outcomes: they were satisfied with their research papers and positive about supervisors, even if they had not scaled any peaks of intellectual interaction with these supervisors. One student (already discussed) had experienced irreconcilable differences with a supervisor who seemed to epitomize what a coach should not be. This sample is not statistically generalizable across the Institute, and may reflect a positive bias in a purposive sample composed largely of self-driven achievers.

The remaining student felt that she had not found the optimum blend of ‘freedom and discipline’ but had been left too ‘free’ by her supervisors. She blamed herself:

‘The situation with my supervisors is complicated... I wasn’t ready to meet my supervisor, when she inquired. She was always encouraging and helpful. I should have been more active, taken responsibility, especially since I was a beginner in the field and needed a lot of advice. My background in development studies is weak, I needed more supervision. My supervisors left me free, but I needed instruction’ (interview notes, November 1997).

This case is significant because it illustrates how crucial the relationship is between self-educator and subject of study. This student was a mainstream product of a rich country, who had taken up development studies for personal reasons:

'Ever since high school I'd been interested in foreign countries, and my interest continued... I made Asian friends at university... and they gave me an interest in Asian countries. For a long time I had an Asian boyfriend and visited Asia several times. I found out more about the problems in Asian countries and this started me thinking about development studies. My country is supposed to be developed. During the five years that I had contact with Asia and visited regularly, I found that there the life was less sophisticated, the tools were old, so were the systems that the people followed -- but people looked happier there than at home, they were kind, they enjoyed life. At home, there seemed to be more isolation and loneliness, less happiness. I became interested in the relationship between happiness and development' (interview notes, February 1997).

'Happiness and development' is however not a subject that development studies is at present easily able to handle -- and even less so at the master's level, with a newcomer to the field. This student instead looked for a 'practical' subject that would help her find work as a development practitioner, in the course of which work she could consider further the relationship between happiness and development. She reported:

'I had trouble going through the various stages of my research paper, from the proposal to the design to the draft paper. I couldn't continue with the first topic that I chose because I couldn't develop it properly. My proposal was too broad' (interview notes, November 1997).

This student's final comment was:

'Though what I studied here was good and I made some progress, I still couldn't find a topic for my research paper that I could devote myself to. I really needed a subject that came from my heart' (*ibid.*).

In such a situation, the solution was not 'more supervision', because it was not on the supervisor's side that something crucial was lacking. It was not for the supervisor to find a topic that came from the student's heart. The self-educator must have an intellectual mission (as this student did), and must be able to operationalize that mission (as this student was not able to). If (s)he does not have an appropriate problem to work on, (s)he has to find one among the alternatives available.

A coach can only advise and act as a sounding board, a very sophisticated one. To switch to Schön's chosen metaphor: a coach is a midwife -- not a progenitor.

Schön urges, 'Coaches must be first-class faculty members, and criteria for recruiting, hiring, promoting, and tenure must reflect this priority. Moreover, the process of coaching... must become central to the intellectual discourse of the school' (1987: 171). Terms such as 'coach' and 'midwife' have para-professional resonances in conventional usage -- perhaps because the established image of a professional connotes control and achievement, rather than facilitating and enabling achievement by others. It is conceivable that caste systems may be advocated at schools of development studies:

'B's research is outstanding, let B concentrate on research. C is in great demand for consultancy work, C should be free to travel. D doesn't publish much or do much consultancy, D can coach students...'

In this context, we note that the supervisors identified here as X and Y are researchers acclaimed in their fields. The supervisor termed Z has a respectable record of published papers, and does considerable advisory and consultancy work. Being an excellent or a good coach may then be part of -- and even contribute to -- being an excellent or good academician. Students may not be the only beneficiaries of the learning processes involved in 'coaching', if the coach is a co-learner (*op. cit.*: 92).

In Schön's discussion, the student is quite often 'she', but the coach is invariably 'he': we mark here that both X and Z are women.

## **6. SOME PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

Our discussions of coaching have so far centred on research papers, but are applicable to coursework as well. Whereas research papers or their equivalents require 'intensive' coaching of individual students, coursework is related to 'extensive' coaching of a number and range of students.

This paper's emphasis on 'tacit knowledge', 'vicarious experience', 'self-education' and 'coaching' in development studies has implications for classroom interaction. Our approach does not support heavy reliance on lectures that attempt a 'masterly' synthesis of all relevant texts in order to impart their 'mysteries' to a classroom of students, leaving time for questions and clarifications at the end. Instead, there is a clear role for guided exercises, group work, role playing and simulation games. Discussions by faculty of texts, cases and debates in development studies should be designed as springboards into these activities.

The overview of issues and cases through such coursework may not be as comprehensive and elegant as when some 'masterly' lecture is delivered -- but then development studies is not elegant and comprehensive. 'If theory is complex, multiple and messy then our methods of teaching theory should be equally full of complexity, multiplicity, and even messiness' (Robbins 1996: 34).

When emphasis shifts from text-based lectures to discussions and applications of texts, the onus is on the students as well as the teacher to read and interrogate texts beforehand. Students thereby gain the opportunity to switch from passive stances --

both physically and mentally -- to active participation. This can generate a sense of teamwork, rather than the lecturer playing the lead role (sometimes in front of a bored or restive audience). Students' 'tacit knowledge' is more likely to emerge through such exercises: and in these ways, we can go beyond classroom situations where students know more than they can say and lecturers say more than they can know.

The question is then not one of 'rigorous' text-based inquiry through lectures versus 'relevant' exercises. Greater familiarity with subject and texts is likely to generate better exercises and games, and (conversely) creative exercises can deepen understanding of literature. Nor is the issue one of 'either' lectures 'or' exercises: both have to be combined and balanced -- somewhere in between the extremes of a series of lectures with a token exercise at the end or a set of exercises kicked off with a minimal lecture. Lectures and exercises are combined in order to move up and down what Schön called the 'ladder of reflection' (*op. cit.*: 221) that links theory and practice, rigour and relevance.

We have to 'own...up to the experimental character of our pedagogy' (*op. cit.*: 268-69). Some faculty at the Institute circulate beforehand lecture notes that present development debates and their own ideas, and use much classroom time for small group discussions and presentations, or casework. Faculty 'may teach in the conventional sense, communicating information, advocating theories, describing examples of practice. Mainly, however, they function as coaches whose main activities are demonstrating, advising, questioning and criticizing' (Schön 1987: 38). The ultimate goal is "reflective teaching" aimed at helping students become aware of their existing knowledge and take greater responsibility for their own learning' (*op. cit.*: 317). '[I]f we create opportunities for students to connect classroom knowledge to their prior experience, then we may be able to combine faculty-generated ideas about what students need to learn with students' active management of their own learning' (*op. cit.*: 342).

What about faculty 'workload'? Is it more demanding to teach or to coach? In my experience, sometimes a lecture that covers difficult concepts takes longer to prepare, and sometimes an elaborate exercise needs more preparation than a straightforward lecture. The difference is not so much in terms of time as in energy and responsibility. It is a relief no longer to have to 'carry the ball' by oneself, especially when passive spectators turn into keen fellow players. However, it may be difficult for faculty to stop 'hogging centre stage' or -- switching analogies -- to relinquish the steering wheel.

Sometimes roles can be reversed, and faculty may find themselves on the sidelines. I once heard a student end a description of a vibrant classroom discussion with -- 'We even forgot that the lecturer was there!' Yet the intense and rich discussion would not have taken place without facilitation and preparation by faculty.

In many cases, faculty may agree in principle with the arguments presented here but find the actual designing of games and exercises difficult, having themselves been conventionally educated. It is not as difficult as it might appear: I know, because I made the switch in mid-life and mid-career, after the research on which this paper is based. A changed approach may even be welcome to those jaded by years of conventional teaching.

Spaces within a curriculum that allow students to design their own exercises provide important learning experiences, with the process as important as the product. Here is a case from the Institute, within a programme -- on the 'politics of alternative development strategies' -- that allowed students considerable freedom in the 'synthesizing exercise' that at one time brought the academic year to a close:

I worked with a group on the LETS system -- you know, the network where people exchange services rather than pay in the conventional way. It was a fun topic, we enjoyed working on it. There are 250 people in this system in The Hague, and we went out and met some of them -- some came to the seminar that we gave. There was minimal lecturer involvement in the synthesizing exercise, which was great, and more informal chats and seminars. We went through the process of selecting our own topic, through discussions. It was very creative, the five of us in our group produced a fifty page paper. In another programme, they had to write three papers for their synthesizing exercise -- it was more directed, I think less creative' (interview notes, November 1997).

Schön's ideas, supported by the research on which this paper is based, also have implications for course evaluation.

I recently facilitated an end-of-course evaluation of a new specialization at the Institute (George 2000). Course evaluations there are generally conducted through questionnaires, with boxes to tick that rank the abilities of faculty under various headings. These evaluations can be described as faculty-focussed, with for example two questionnaires circulated where two people teach a course, one questionnaire to cover the 'performance' of each lecturer. There are additional questions, for example about readings. The import of these questionnaires seems to be 'Was this an outstandingly good course/ lecturer for the subject?' and 'Were the stated course objectives fully met?' It is not surprising that the answer is often 'No'.

The evaluation that I facilitated was more in line with Schön's thinking and centred on the question: 'What were participants' personal learning objectives and how far were these achieved through the course?' The faculty who had taught the course were absent but the teaching assistant was present. We sat around a table, and each of the eleven participants present took it in turn to reflect aloud on her or his personal objectives in enrolling for the course. All participants were able -- quite easily and at immediate notice -- to formulate their personal learning objectives: these arose out of their life stories and life plans, and for all of them had been achieved to a large extent through the course. (Levels of satisfaction may have been higher in this course than in others, since it was newly introduced after students had lobbied for one that covered the subject.)

We then shifted from a participant-oriented perspective to a course-oriented one, and I asked about the learning objectives presented in the course outline. It required more effort to remember what these formal learning objectives were, compared to the ease of recall for personal learning objectives. This suggests that personal objectives had mainly influenced choice of the course, although the learning objectives highlighted in the course outline had helped participants to check congruence with their own interests. I read out the objectives from the course outline and participants agreed that these had been achieved as well. The two main areas covered by the course reflected the research interests of the faculty who taught it, but also appeared to have strong relevance to participants' everyday work environments. The course had combined theoretical discussions in class with field visits.

The evaluation ended with recommendations for the course. Along with suggestions to enhance the substantive content, participants expressed preference for interactive and lively classroom sessions rather than mainly conventional lectures, and they underlined the use of case studies to illuminate real life situations. Group discussions and class presentations were also endorsed, although some asked for guidelines for more critical discussion. Participants wished for more opportunities within the course to share experiences from different contexts and backgrounds.

It would be interesting to check how congruent results were with the conventional questionnaires that were filled out, i.e. how much agreement there was between evaluation centred on participants' personal learning objectives and evaluation focussed on faculty performance.

Certain courses could begin with exercises in which students identify and articulate their personal learning objectives. This will allow, among other things, monitoring during coursework of how far these objectives are being met. It would be a serious mistake, however, to tie a course too tightly to individuals' learning objectives. In the course evaluation just discussed, participants mentioned 'bonuses', unanticipated gains that went beyond the personal objectives that had led them to enroll: insights from theoretical discussions, or from case studies or policy analysis in countries faraway from the home of someone who might count these insights as a bonus (George 2000:2). One of the eight master's students whose case was studied in depth said: "At first I thought of tailoring all my coursework to my subject of interest, but the faculty encouraged me instead to broaden my horizons and explore wider debates. Now I'm very glad I did this" (George 1997b: 9).

## 7. CONCLUSION

In the course of their study at the Institute, our protagonists had looked forwards as well as backwards, not just 'retrospectively, in relation to events that have already happened', but 'prospectively, in relation to those that might happen' (Schön 1987: 254). In none of our cases was it wholly clear at the time of the 'exit' interview whether the future path would lead to the high ground of academia or to the swamp of real world activity -- both destinations had their attractions, and there was often a desire to go on moving between the two, or if in one location to continue to move mentally between action and reflection.

In whatever event, it was clear that learning processes would go on. In a school of development studies, 'some of the most important kinds of learning are of the background variety, revealing themselves only when a student moves into another setting' (*op. cit.*: 298-99). Often graduation marked not so much harvest as the end of a particular sowing season: 'the [learning] experience can take root in the subsoil of the mind, in Dewey's phrase, assuming ever-new meanings in the course of a person's further development' (*op. cit.*: 168).<sup>9</sup> After all, those attending this school of development studies had been 'trying to learn not only... new technique[s] but a new appreciative

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<sup>9</sup> See George 1997a: 240-77, 319, for a discussion of the 'afterlife' of development education that followed periods of study at the Institute.

system and way of living that each individual had to evolve in his own way' (*op. cit.*: 293).

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