

TUPPENCE -TWO THOUGHTS

1. IDS is in a crisis situation in the original - turning point - sense of the term.
2. It is remarkably analogous to an SSA economy with half a dozen to a dozen years of structural adjustment behind it which has averted "free fall" and achieved a certain fragile short run sustainability - but faces continued exogenous shocks including creeping conditionality. The greatest dangers in that context are:
 - a. to perceive the situation as having greater dynamic stability/sustainability than it does (e.g. Ghana 1995);
 - b. coming to respond to outside initiatives and agendas not to put forth ones own and to camouflage this reality by high level strategic scenarios which create the illusion of degrees of freedom quite unsupported by serious tactical and strategic initiatives;

TEACHING (SHORT COURSES)

3. IDS can still attract would-be attenders - the bottom line is their or our funding them.
4. The possible responses are:
 - a. to give up on Short Courses;
 - b. to see what donors want and to bid for them;
 - c. to construct a set of courses - check demand by users and set out to sell for lump sum or multiple place funding for 2 to 4 runs by 1 or more donors.
5. "a" would doubtless cut our 'bloated teaching service' but à la the SSA country that cut agricultural research and extension from 22,000 to 6,000, i.e. dieting, that looks a trifle anorexic. It would also:
 - a. admit we had no teaching product (beyond formal degrees) which was user friendly and donor viable;
 - b. create cash flow problems (and require supporting staff cuts in Teaching Area).
6. "b" may be workable albeit it means would-be course directors must take time to canvass ODA (and EU) to find out what courses they want and have no pre-identified providers (e.g. on project analysis we'd face the established ODA-Bradford oligopolist/oligopsonist

relationship). It carries automatic downside that donor fashions (which are about as stable as those of haute couture), not user perceived needs or our views of user/IDS productive interactions would set the overall programme and to a creeping degree course content.

7. "c" will require work both before the course and during the run of courses. And it will require more director (in practise co-directors will usually be essential) time on targeted recruitment and targeted negotiations with funders. It can preserve user/IDS broad control over programme and course content. Basically 50 days plus pre-course directoral time will be needed for funding-recruitment-preparation.
8. Schematically this approach might turn on -

- a. building up 8 or so prospecti

- Primary Health Care and Its Extended Family
- Library - Data Base - Communication skills and institutional management
- Food Security
- Rural Development - Research, Participation and Extension
- Gender Issues In Macro and Sectoral Policy - Gadflies, Mainstream Links and/vs Underfunded Nurseries for the 'Girls'
- Public Policy Goals and Means and Civil Service Reform - Pay, Productivity and Procedures
- Structural Change In Export Composition: What Opportunities and Requirements? (SSA/Caribbean/Pacific)
- Macro and Sectoral Applied Political Economy for Structural Adjustment and Transformation In SSA.

(Doubtless others are possible. Key test is whether anyone feels strongly enough to set out to design a recruitable/fundable course in, e.g. Industry, Environment)

- b. with a decision on 3 or 6 or 13 weeks tied to **level of participant**, i.e. Directors/Senior Assistant Secretaries for 3, SAS/Assistant Secretaries/Deputy Directors for 6, Young Professionals for 13 with analogous on domestic social sector and research institution participants.

Evidently content (especially amount of techniques) is necessarily influenced both by time available and level of participants.

- c. checking whether we would have a user base (past experience may or may not be adequate guide);
 - d. preparing prospectors to go to - ideally - 5 or 6 donors asking:
 - i. 4 to 8 places funded;
 - ii. Special initial and overhead cost funding;
 - iii. For 3 to 5 courses if possible (or 1 test course with commitment to consider a 3 run extension if first works out).
 - e. donors will want something and on a number of issues no problem of principle arises:
 - i. including a few topics to which they give high priority (with **no** guarantee we handle them on basis downer views -)
 - ii. accepting a speaker from them
 - iii. for regional courses finding a co-sponsor in region and planning transfer to region and - presently - IDS fade out. (We are after all supposed to be in the capacitation business)
 - iv. standing ready to assist a national sponsor's holding a national variant of the course in its home country.
 - f. With good luck 3 to 5 will get funded. Once a core of 3 to 5 running on average 3 times each before 'close down' or 'handover' need 1 or 2 new per year.
 - g. Given time cost of setting up proposals probably need 2 weeks seedcorn for each person (or 1 week each for a pair) with serious course proposal.
9. The above is not simply a wish or dream. The Structural Adjustment To Transformation SS now in its 10th Year (and 3rd in Africa with Co-Sponsor now Co-Sponsors) is an example. (1996 is 3 to 2 on to see first national spin-off and over 1996-97, 3 to 2 on to see an African institution take-over of lead role with IDS phase out by - say - end of 1998). The example shows possibility but also the need of hard pre-course work **each year** by directors (not just Teaching Area support staff) and for ongoing up-dating and revision of course content sponsorship and arrangements. It also shows need for deep ongoing commitment to teaching the topic by at least two co-directors (with change of one per year possible consistent with continuity).

10. In this case (SSA-SA-SS) IDS Fellows and other Co-Directors/Core Faculty have always had **full academic freedom** on course content and presentation. The key elements in content evolution have been: a.) user requests, b.) director views on changing contexts (and therefore needs/opportunities). The course has fed back into research for its co-directors albeit with no core or envelope programme grant funding subsequent analysis and write-up time from this (or other) courses will be much harder to manage in the future.

RESEARCH FUNDING, RELEVANCE, INDEPENDENCE

11. No institution based primarily on donor designed projects put to competitive tender can have genuine intellectual independence nor - after a transitional run-in/down period - be anything more than a cut price applied consultancy firm. The theoretical exception of a plethora of programmes/projects on offer so one could pick and choose does not arise now and is quite unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future. And even it would not allow a - say - 25% component of unfashionable research we (and perhaps South users) believed important and agencies might indeed want five years down the road (IDS' historic strength).
12. Under such conditions an independent strategy - at least as envisaged and discussed (albeit never actually put in practice except by osmosis) in IDS - is not possible. The viable strategy has four components:
- a. identifying present donor fashions;
 - b. projecting $t + 3$ donor fashions (to be in on ground floor in new areas when the time comes);
 - c. via new appointments and redirecting existing fellows' programme emphases (to the extent possible - there are cases of its happening) creating a body of professional employees able to respond to "a" and when the time comes "b";
 - d. seeking outside funding (sponsored short courses? Grants for research project bids put in by us? Mine run consultancies at least overlapping topic?) to allow people in "b" to pay their way until biddable contracts arise.
13. There is **nothing disreputable** about the strategic agenda above. It is that of a prudent **commercial consultancy firm** not that of an independent academic institution. Over the

past 15 years and much more the last 5, IDS has accepted funding patterns which mean it can no longer be the latter. (Whether it should have done so or not may be debatable but as history - the water has long gone over the bridge and under the dam.) To pretend that the reality is otherwise will not alter the reality but can, quite possibly render IDS quite unviable and lead to desperate contract seeking of the kind in which results as well as programmes are specified (as appears to be the case for at least one once highly reputable institution in a series of USAID contracts nominally for independent basic research).

14. If IDS - as a body of professionals desiring to be professional applied academicians not contract consultants/researchers - wants to change the present reality and the dynamic from it to being a cut rate consultancy outfit a fund diversification strategy and a strategic effort (presumably by individuals not IDS *per se*) to influence general academic research funding in the UK from - say 1997 - onward are needed.

15. On the funding side:

- a. restore viable short course programme (see above);
- b. increase raising funds for research projects/programmes designed by us (even if negotiated with funders);
- c. selectively raising number of consultancies accepted (here we do have more requests than we can service so some degrees of freedom) because they will provide data and contacts for related research and teaching.

If a-b-c could get the proportion of total funds needed from bidding for donor (basically ODA) set projects down to 20% overall and 30% of non-teaching budget (excluding residual core information services grant and expenditure therefrom) then independence would be restored to a substantial degree as data from contracts could be reworked in operations we controlled. In the present UK context the chances of such a funding structure transformation are very poor unless we can tap a stream of programme research grants from EU - possible but problematic if sustained study and consultation time invested, hopeless otherwise.

16. That leaves the government academic basic research funding route. As Fellows (or less plausibly as IDS) we would be well advised to tackle the general issue, not the way it impinges on IDS:

- a. we are then free of the challenge of "special pleading";
 - b. there is more likelihood of a general academic research funding shift than of an exceptional one for IDS;
 - c. we can target the big battalions (e.g. Shadow Education Minister) not outriders (e.g. Shadow ODA).
17. The case that basic research and applied research related to what investigators expect to be key themes cannot be funded optimally by competitive tender for topics defined by present short term users is eminently respectable (unless one denies external economies and market imperfections). Ideally a combination of block grants plus awards to researcher instituted proposals is the most suitable to this area. (For user defined negotiated contracts with 'bids' pro-forma and short list negotiations do make sense but that is a different sub-area.) The case is not unique to universities. Bell Telephone financed a basic research team for a quarter of a century. It made some useful spin-offs on the way but the key breakthrough was not envisaged for first twenty years. It was the transistor - five Nobel prizes and a technological revolution. Bell didn't in fact capitalise very well on its initial proprietary knowledge position but that criticises its applied research and operating technology design strategies not its basic research one. However, our concern is academic research.
18. A sub-story is irrelevant - and unnecessary. A reasoned case now by 3 or 4 fellows aimed at influencing the research aspects of Mr. Blunkett's and Mr. Blair's education strategy is relevant and - if IDS wishes to sustain itself as an independent academic institution - arguably necessary.

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