

# The World Bank as Knowledge Bank: Analyzing the Limits of a Legitimate Global Knowledge Actor

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## Abstract

*The World Bank has always sold ideas, not just loans. Starting in 1996, then president James Wolfensohn rebranded the Bank by articulating a formal vision of a “Knowledge Bank”—a provider of state-of-the-art expertise on development. After a number of internal changes and assessments, the Bank is acknowledging that it needs to be more humble, pluralistic, and practical. Why do some regard the Bank as a legitimate knowledge actor, whereas others contest that authority? We offer an analytical framework that can explain stakeholders’ uneven recognition of the Bank’s knowledge role.*

*When stakeholders define knowledge as products, the Bank generally obtains recognition for the quality and quantity of the information it generates. This is the output dimension of legitimacy. On the other hand, when knowledge only counts as such to users who have been part of the process of creating it, the Bank finds itself with limited recognition.*

**KEY WORDS:** World Bank, Knowledge Bank, knowledge management, knowledge, legitimacy, international organization, development assistance

## Introduction and Context

**T**he World Bank has always sold ideas, not just loans. Yet, in 1996, then World Bank president James Wolfensohn rebranded the World Bank by articulating a formal vision of a “Knowledge Bank”—a provider of state-of-the-art expertise on development. Although the concept of a “Knowledge Bank” has evolved over the years, as described in this paper, the essence of the notion that the Bank will play a key role in knowledge collection, dissemination, and sharing is still very much a part of its philosophy and *raison d’être*. In its current mission statement, the World Bank claims that: “Our mission is to fight poverty with passion and professionalism for lasting results and to help people help themselves and their environment by providing resources, *sharing knowledge, building capacity* and forging partnerships in the public and private sectors” (World Bank, 2010a).

The Bank’s mission statement makes clear that knowledge involves information that is shared and, we would add, “agreed upon within a community” (Meadow, Boyce, & Kraft, 2000, p. 38). If the Bank has assumed the role of producer or disseminator of knowledge, then how has the relevant community of stakeholders responded, and to what degree have they validated the Bank’s output as agreed-upon knowledge?

On the one hand, the Bank has been lauded as a knowledge actor, receiving knowledge management awards, and enjoying extensive citation impact measures *vis-à-vis* other international organizations that have taken up similar knowledge

agendas. On the other hand, many academics, practitioners, and clients have been very critical of the Bank's knowledge role. They have found that a universalistic approach, neoliberal bias, and lack of reliance on local sources of knowledge, among other issues, challenge the organization's legitimacy as a knowledge actor.

In global governance, legitimacy has been described as the consent and justified acceptance of authority over a given domain by a community of stakeholders (Bernstein, 2005). This paper addresses the puzzle of why some stakeholders recognize the Bank as a legitimate knowledge actor, whereas others contest that authority. We suggest an analytical framework that can shed light on this puzzle and suggest why the Bank continues to face challenges in securing legitimacy for its self-proclaimed knowledge role.

Many authors in the knowledge management and organizational legitimacy literatures have advanced a set of what we find to be complementary analytical distinctions. In knowledge management, there is a visible epistemological differentiation between those who regard knowledge as specific products or as processes. In organizational legitimacy, a similar distinction has been drawn between output legitimacy (the effective delivery of products) and input legitimacy (accepted deliberative processes). This paper bridges both literatures by combining these analytical distinctions.

We argue that the Bank has gained legitimacy among users for whom macroeconomic and statistical information *products* are an agreed-upon standard of knowledge, whereas the Bank has experienced an institutional legitimacy gap among users, who regard knowledge as a relational *process* of mutual understandings and criticize the Bank for failing to adequately engage with its clients. We illustrate this argument by describing the nature of the contradictory assessments from different stakeholders who have evaluated the Knowledge Bank policy.

This paper is structured in four parts. First, it briefly discusses how global knowledge production intersects with the legitimacy of international institutions like the World Bank that have taken up the mission of knowledge sharing. The second part reviews the history of the Knowledge Bank policy. Third, the paper proposes an analytical framework to interpret the divergent assessments the Bank's knowledge initiative has received. Fourth, it examines feedback from the Bank's three main stakeholders: staff, clients, and researchers. By applying the analytical framework described earlier, we demonstrate that the divergence of views among key stakeholders, and contested legitimacy of the Bank as a knowledge actor, can be understood by combining the two key epistemological approaches to knowledge and legitimacy described above: the requirements of effective products as outputs and appropriate processes as inputs. The paper concludes with remarks on the challenges the Bank faces as it seeks to reaffirm its position as a knowledge institution.

### **The Intersection of Knowledge Management and Legitimacy at the World Bank**

The concept of the Knowledge Bank was at its pinnacle in the late 1990s. This is evident in the then president's speeches and Chief Economist's position papers,

which highlighted the innovative and progressive approach to development policy. The number of Bank publications and initiatives related to its role as a knowledge actor nevertheless declined over the years. The original concept has not only seen its name evolve from Knowledge Management to Knowledge Sharing today, but the idea of the Knowledge Bank was also quietly tempered down after its main champion, President James Wolfensohn, left office. During the short tenure of President Paul Wolfowitz, fighting corruption and focusing on aid to Africa took center stage as the new leader's strategic priorities. The knowledge role only appeared in the Bank's mission statements or in self-referential claims, but fresh financial resources and the once frequent World Bank commissioning of external assessments of the Knowledge Bank policy seemed to have diminished until 2009. When President Robert Zoellick came into office, he identified renewing the knowledge initiative as a priority for institutional reform. In 2009, senior management proposed a new vision for knowledge sharing to the Board of Directors and, in 2010, it presented a strategy that recommended knowledge services as one of the three main business lines of the Bank (World Bank, 2010b).

The Bank now forcefully declares: "Knowledge is the key to development effectiveness, and the driver of a successful development institution. Without knowledge, the WBG cannot lend, it cannot advise, and it cannot convene. Knowledge is the core of our DNA" (World Bank, 2009a). However, this time, the Bank is showing some caution in how it pursues its knowledge agenda. In his 2010 speech entitled "Democratizing Development Economics," President Zoellick called for more humility from the Bank, pluralism of ideas, and development policies that are grounded in practice not in an ivory tower of academic thought (Zoellick, 2010). Why does the Bank make these admissions now?

Analyzing legitimacy of international institutions has become an important research program in global governance (Bodansky, 1999). In knowledge management, consent of the users is paramount to ensure that knowledge is actually internalized and becomes a meaningful tool for development. There is also a normative argument for analyzing the legitimacy of the Bank's knowledge role. As Cord Jakobeit notes, "Due to its financial clout alone, the Bank as a globally leading (if controversial) think tank and a globally committed donor has a special position in international development policy. Because it has in many cases the power of definition and interpretation, its publications must be taken seriously" (Jakobeit, 1999, p. 5). International organizations have highly respected bureaucrats with noted expertise that accords them great influence with states (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004). Consequently, the Bank prides itself on strong economic research that member states acknowledge to be grounded in the best economic analysis available. Scholars have argued that this gives the Bank deference and respect for its policy advice. Yet, the promotion of certain ideas packaged as knowledge remains heavily contested. In particular, announcements by President Zoellick on the need to "democratize" Bank research call our attention to what can be understood as a legitimacy crisis surrounding the knowledge agenda. In a widely reviewed speech among practitioners and academics, Zoellick asserted:

We have also been criticized for the way research has sometimes been used to proselytize on behalf of Bank policy, without always taking a balanced view of the evidence or without

expressing appropriate scepticism. And in keeping with much academic research, the Bank's analytic work has often lacked broad-based transparency—not least amongst those who would be affected most by the policies derived from those analyses. (Zoellick, 2010)

### History of the Knowledge Bank Policy

The policy turn to knowledge was driven by the confluence of external and internal forces. Beginning in the early 1980s, civil society actors mounted numerous boycotts and campaigns against the World Bank, targeting the organization's poor social and environmental record, which created conditions that drove people into further poverty. Some of the more often cited cases of that period are the campaigns against the Bank's Polonoroeste project in Brazil that involved massive resettlements and infrastructure in the Amazon and the Narmada Valley Dams in India, which critics argued not only displaced thousands of poor people but would have caused irreversible environmental damages (Clapp & Dauvergne, 2005). In response to these protests, the United States pledged that it would withhold replenishing funds if the Bank did not establish an inspection panel as an accountability mechanism (Park, 2010). This undermined the legitimacy of Bank projects and credibility of its adherence to existing safeguards.

At the same time, Wolfensohn noted that the Bank's lending business to developing countries was declining, and the organization was no longer competitive on that front alone. Finally, a 1992 internal evaluation, dubbed the Wapenhans report after its principal author, assessed that project performance had been steadily declining over the previous decade and, by 1991, almost 40 percent of Bank projects were ranked unsatisfactory when they were evaluated at completion. Borrowing countries did not comply with conditions for loan disbursements. Only 20 percent of legal agreements were being honored. It is against this backdrop that Wolfensohn assumed the presidency in 1995 and adopted a vision of reform (Weaver, 2008).

It is curious that with staff morale at an all-time low, and serious credibility gaps among external stakeholders, the Bank would launch a policy that promoted its authority on development ideas. Catherine Weaver offers a possible explanation for this puzzle. In her book, *Hypocrisy Trap* (2008), Weaver argues that the Bank often finds itself in the quandary of promising more than it can actually deliver, hence the disparity between words and deeds. The Bank designs policies that respond to external legitimacy claims, but these must be internally executed by staff organized to perform tasks in bureaucratic fashion, which reshapes the original policy promise.

Despite the outcome of the knowledge policy that we will analyze in this article, Wolfensohn was originally focused on responding to an external audience that was calling into question the relevance of the institution after 40 years of investing in development and continued project failures. This coincided with the growth of private capital investment and an erosion of the Bank's original position as the leading source of capital to developing countries (Weaver, 2008). Wolfensohn needed to reinvigorate an institution marred by NGO protests, internal evaluation reports of its projects' performance, and a deteriorating mission.

For example, in an interview on his presidency's push to build partnerships with civil society, Wolfensohn noted: "The center of my attention was trying to build some sort of relationship at almost any level on almost any subject with civil society,

because we were totally distrusted by just about everybody” (Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, 2010).

Yet the people who would need to get the internal machinery of the organization in motion to deploy the knowledge policy respond to the bureaucratic imperatives of routinized rules and procedures, a functional specialization of labor and hierarchies that are better at delivering concrete products than at enabling open-ended, relational processes of knowledge creation (Kramarz, 2012; Weaver, 2008). In this sense, Bank staff could more easily understand the need to create specific knowledge products as these represent the kind of concrete “deliverables” that Bank projects already regularly quantify.

In addition to the bureaucratic culture that favored a particular interpretation of the knowledge policy, there were important disciplinary boundaries within the Bank that affected the interpretation of that policy. The Bank’s Development Economics Unit, which produces one of the preeminent knowledge products, the flagship World Development Report, is dominated by PhDs in economics (Weaver, 2008). The preference for quantifiable, econometric analysis of large-N cases, over ethnographic studies, for example, is a product of these disciplinary spaces within the Bank.

The focus on producing quantifiable knowledge products was further enabled by the advancing technological frontier of the mid-1990s. When President Wolfensohn set out to transform the identity of the World Bank as a state-of-the-art knowledge institution, he proposed that the Bank become a central node in capturing and disseminating development knowledge. Technological advances supported this vision and made it feasible to begin thinking of knowledge as a product that could be created, manipulated into tradable units, and sold.

Can you imagine putting online all the experience we have had in preschool education, to allow an education minister or a researcher in a distant country to have direct access to the Bank, without waiting for various documents? Or just think: through our satellite system, interactive, thirty-person classrooms around the world can participate in direct teaching. Bank offices can provide classes and discussions with developing countries throughout the world, in whatever language necessary. This is not science fiction; this is today. So we will take advantage of technology, and we will take advantage of the new opportunities we are finding. (Wolfensohn, 1996)

The timing of Wolfensohn’s initiative can be framed and contextualized as part of a key moment in historical and academic thinking concerning marrying technological advancements with knowledge management. Specifically, in the mid-1990s, enterprise application integration (EAI) offered organizations a new approach to system integration of knowledge parts (Themistocleous & Irani, 2000). EAI became known as a term businesses and organizations referred to when looking for a low-cost approach to consolidating knowledge but executable with less programming and rewriting of codes that could be integrated with advancements in information communication technologies (McKeen & Smith, 2002). EAI was easily married to another body of research, information systems (IS)-enabled knowledge management. As Alavi and Leidner explained:

What is new and exciting in the knowledge management area is the potential of using modern information technologies (e.g., the Internet, intranets, browsers, data warehouses, filters and software agents) to systematize, facilitate, and expedite firm-wide knowledge management. (1999, p. 1)

It was believed that without capturing and sharing knowledge, an organization would lose its comparative advantage (Grant, 1996; Spender, 1996). The globalization of information and the speed with which knowledge can be transferred with information communication technology suggested that organizations need to embrace IS-enabled knowledge management to ensure continued knowledge creation and sharing (see Alavi & Leidner, 2001; von Krogh, 2002). This was not always easy, and a number of studies traced how and why organizations failed to achieve knowledge management success in the contemporary period (see Merali, 2000; Schultze & Boland, 2000).

In 1997, the World Bank hosted the first Global Knowledge Conference in Toronto, Canada, and gathered world leaders, policy makers, and development stakeholders to discuss ways of combining the gains in information communication technologies and the struggle for development in the South. From the Toronto meeting, Wolfensohn took the Knowledge Bank concept one step further. As part one of four pillars in a larger reform package called the "Strategic Compact," the Knowledge Bank would serve as one component of the overall internal reform plan.

Joseph Stiglitz, serving as chief economist, lent his considerable influence in promoting this new role for the Bank. In the 1998 World Development Report, Stiglitz and others argued that poverty in developing countries was as much a result of insufficient capital as it was of knowledge gaps in development (Stiglitz, 1998).

How did the Bank implement its knowledge agenda? The Bank's vision was to package and share the knowledge already created, so as to not "reinvent the knowledge wheel," to be used by governments, donors, and private actors in designing development policies (World Bank, 1998/1999). To begin the Knowledge Bank transfer of ideas, the World Bank's offices around the world were connected into a global communication sharing system in 1998. Subsequently, three initiatives were launched in 2000 to pursue the "Knowledge Bank" objectives: The Development Gateway, which was an online portal that housed information on development and poverty reduction; The Global Development Learning Network (GDLN), a facility providing videoconferencing and distance education; and the Global Development Network (GDN), a virtual research portal and repository of research and policy papers. These institutional initiatives assisted in improving a number of information delivery goals, but alone did not create an effective knowledge bank.

First, the Development Gateway could be accessed by member countries, the private sector, the nongovernmental sector, and international donors. The Gateway once posted on its website that its role was to "solve development problems by sharing high-quality information from local and national sources, tailored to users' needs by topic and community" (Wilks, 2002, p. 329). With this grand goal, the Gateway offered an online bookstore, links to a quasi-encyclopedia of development issues, access to participating Country Gateway sites, and a database of donor and aid agency projects (Wilks, 2002). The Gateway was effectively privatized into its own independent entity in 2001 and continues to operate from Washington, DC.

Second, the GDLN was a partnership with regional centers that provided videoconferencing and distance education classes to promote cross-country discussion on development and poverty reduction issues. The GDLN comprises over 120 affiliated global institutions in more than 80 countries that seek to coordinate and collaborate learning projects on development. These affiliates include academic

units, think tanks, research centers, government agencies, or private sector organizations. Most of the GDLN's work is involved in promoting learning sessions with virtual conferences consisting of multiple countries (Global Development Learning Network, 2010).

Third, the GDN was a virtual research institute that promoted research capacity and policy ideas, bridging the gap between theory and practice. In cooperation with the United Nations, the GDN fostered seven regional research networks that acted like local think tanks for development issues in each of the respective regions. The regional research units are generally biased toward hiring economists, but the East Asian and the Eastern European units are more diverse in their hiring (Stone, 2003). In 2001, the GDN became an independent not-for-profit body operating in Washington, DC, but with continued links to the World Bank (2003, p. 2). It later launched GDNet, portal and repository of research papers and policy papers emanating from regional economists, many of which have ties to the regional research centers. After becoming an international organization, GDN moved its operations to India in 2008.

The Bank also reorganized under an internal matrix management system that would assist in information sharing within the institution. Yet the Bank's own Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) reported that this reorganization did not realize its knowledge objectives (World Bank, 2012). It highlighted that:

The matrix system, which was predicated on collaboration and teamwork among Regions and sectors, left intact or strengthened the existing incentives and underlying organizational culture. Coupled with the drive for decentralization, the matrix has strengthened regional operations while weakening linkages to the network anchors, and has served to maintain organizational silos and competition among the Regions and networks. (World Bank, 2012, p. 104)

Despite attempts to create networks across the institution, the World Bank's overall drive toward decentralization had the unintended consequence of creating new silos. Knowledge was being hoarded within the Bank. Internal knowledge, particularly between operations and research offices, was not being shared effectively. The lack of staff incentives to utilize shared knowledge was also a problematic symptom of the organizational culture that remained focused on country and project lending.

Before reviewing the internal and external assessments of the Knowledge Bank role from the point of view of the main stakeholders, we propose an analytical framework that helps us to disentangle the reasons for criticisms and support. This framework looks into the analytical priors that underlie the divergent reviews of the policy.

### **Knowledge Management and Institutional Legitimacy: An Analytical Framework**

Hayes and Walsham note that the knowledge management field is visibly divided between those who adopt a *process* perspective and those who identify knowledge in resulting *products*. The first involves a relational epistemology where knowledge is acquired in contextual and dynamic ways. The second assumes knowledge can be codified and stored. Proponents of this view see knowledge as a good or service and

a market for it to be shared, traded, bought, or sold. Those who advance relational approaches are critical of the product perspective because it is highly prescriptive, oversimplified, black box solutions packaged as cutting edge best practices, and is supplier focused (Hayes & Walsham, 2003).

The literature on knowledge and organizations grew dramatically after the mid-1990s (Swan & Scarborough, 2001).<sup>1</sup> A growing number of contributions started to favor the product perspective to knowledge. This moved the center of the literature toward managerial questions and away from sociopolitical analysis. Writing the editorial of the 2001 special issue on knowledge for the *Journal of Management Studies*, Swan and Scarborough compared current contributions with those that appeared in the journal's first special issue on the subject, published in 1993. This comparative exercise led the editors to conclude that earlier writing was more critical of the definition of knowledge as a commodity that was "objective, portable and manageable" (Swan & Scarborough, 2001, p. 915). The incipient lines of research in the field had prodded a richer array of foundational questions that have been since largely abandoned.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary literature on knowledge management came to accept knowledge as an economic commodity that can be captured, stored, and marketed. By adopting a managerial tone, the literature has focused on the functionalist requirements of knowledge operations to deliver high-quality products to a market of knowledge consumers.<sup>3</sup>

However, for the Bank to legitimate its claim as a global knowledge leader, it must respond to dual requirements: follow appropriate processes in knowledge building and produce effective products that help fill in knowledge gaps. The literature on legitimacy in global governance has explicitly distinguished the sources of legitimacy along these process and product dimensions, sometimes referred to as procedural versus substantive sources of legitimacy.<sup>4</sup> Writing on the European Union, Fritz Scharpf (1999) first advanced the now often cited distinction between input legitimacy to refer to deliberative processes that enable wide participation, transparency, and accountability in decision making and output legitimacy that involves the pursuit of common interest and effective delivery of products that address a given problem (Scharpf, 1999). The core notion of democratic legitimacy thus rests on the dual pillars of government by the people (input legitimacy) and for the people (output legitimacy) (Scharpf, 2003). We contend that legitimacy of the World Bank's role as a global knowledge actor depends on the extent to which the institution can deliver on both input and output dimensions.<sup>5</sup> As Scharpf has argued, "even if trade-offs are acknowledged, one could not argue that performance in one dimension would fully substitute for deficits in another" (Scharpf, 2003, p. 5).

It is clear that there are tensions between delivering on both input and output dimensions of legitimacy. For example, acquiring the necessary knowledge to address a given development issue, through extensive participation and long periods of deliberation, may create delays that postpone problem solving. However, without the active participation by knowledge users, knowledge may only amount to information. There is a very large amount of information at the World Bank that receives very little use because the potential users do not perceive it as relevant for their particular purposes. As Alavi and Leidner have argued, we take knowledge to be "information possessed in the mind of individuals: it is personalized information" (Alavi & Leidner, 2001, p. 109). Knowledge "does not exist outside of an agent

(a knower): it is indelibly shaped by one's needs" (Alavi & Leidner, 2001, p. 109). Hence, information only becomes knowledge through process and practice.

World Bank practice has echoed the narrower view of the knowledge management literature and concerned itself principally with functional strategies to deliver a commercial product. This has resulted in a focus on organizational procedures that will best capture and systematize information, installing information technology that will enable the storing and access to data, and devising operational processes to make best practices flow more effectively from research experts in Washington, DC, to operations experts in the field. There has been limited experimentation at the margins of the relational knowledge approach, for example, in creating thematic groups and communities of practice among its staff. However, the institution has largely applied a product-centered approach to knowledge when dealing with external stakeholders including clients in developing countries.

In combining the two approaches to knowledge management and institutional legitimacy, we find that the Bank has been more successful at legitimating its products than its processes. As we will see in more detail in the following section, stakeholders give their best reviews to the Bank's output of macroeconomic and statistical data,<sup>6</sup> whereas clients in developing countries criticize the one-directional flow of knowledge transfer, the lack of engagement with local knowledge experts, and universalistic approach of prescriptions. This narrow focus on the procedural dimensions of knowledge production limits the organization's legitimacy as a knowledge actor. Despite the rhetoric on participation and country ownership, the organization remains weak in the deliberative and participatory aspects of relational knowledge that are crucial concerns for building input legitimacy. As Leonard Seabrooke highlights in his assessment of international financial institution's legitimacy gap, clients confer legitimacy to an international organization following a process of engagement and contestation between the organization and its clients (Seabrooke, 2007). Legitimacy, like relational knowledge, is constructed through practice as social actors engage each other in deliberation (Schmidt, 2008).

Because the Bank has privileged one type of knowledge based on products (see Table 2, quadrant 1B), we argue it has been successful at securing output legitimacy, which is based on problem solving (see Table 2, quadrant 2B). It thus create econometric measures of poverty and development that stakeholders believe to be reliable and treat as legitimate information. However, when stakeholders emphasize that information products are a necessary but insufficient condition for knowledge production and that knowledge depends on an interpretative process by users (see Table 2, quadrant 1A), then the Bank is subject to sharp criticism. The main elements of this criticism are the absence of participatory, deliberative, and transparent means that are output dimensions of institutional legitimacy (see Table 2, quadrant 2A). An important caveat to this conceptualization of process based on participation, deliberation, accountability, and transparency is that it does not consider the norms of acceptable scientific research as due process that Bank staff do in fact adhere to in order to generate publications that academic peers might consider legitimate contributions to the development field. Adherence to acceptable research design and methods constitutes a form of process that we are not discussing in this paper. In this analytical framework, procedural considerations are circumscribed to participatory dimensions as it is in this realm that we find the

greatest criticism against the Knowledge Bank policy and the institution's legitimacy as a global knowledge actor.

In this article, we assess the Knowledge Bank's legitimacy by referring to the prior questions of what is knowledge to each stakeholder and how is it generated? Three key constituencies of the Knowledge Bank are its staff, clients in developing countries, and global researchers. We will illustrate below how stakeholders from these three constituencies often commend the Bank for the information gaps it fills in but reserve their sharpest criticisms for how the Bank produces what it calls "knowledge."

## **Recognition from Stakeholders: The Delivery of Effective Products**

### ***Internal Reviews***

President Wolfensohn's first official statement on the strategy in 1996 focused on the importance of adequate technical infrastructure to link the Bank's development experience with people in developing countries who could benefit from it. The statement also showed a concern with positioning the Bank as a knowledge leader in development (Wolfensohn, 1996). Effectiveness would thus be measured by the technological capacity the Bank developed and recognition by staff, clients, and peers. This shows the initial heavy emphasis on devising appropriate systems as a way of gaining institutional recognition and legitimating the claim of the Knowledge Bank. The conception of the Knowledge Bank was thus heavily centered on product deliveries.

Billed as a "plan for renewal," the 1997–2001 Strategic Compact was an agreement between the Bank and its shareholders at a time when the institution's legitimacy among shareholders, clients, and NGOs was critically at risk. The Bank was being heavily criticized for its centralized, top-down management structure, abstract approach to knowledge, and universalist prescriptions for development that were producing a record number of unsatisfactory-rated projects (Weaver & Leiteritz, 2005). Retooling the Bank's knowledge base was one of the four goals of the compact (World Bank, 1997). Once again, information management systems were identified as the key component to enable linking external and internal resources. A technology solution, to push knowledge out of the Bank's repositories, implemented the knowledge initiative. This included developing tools such as videoconferencing, online directories of information, and web portals. Speed and ease of access to information were explicitly stated as standards of effectiveness (World Bank, 2003).

In 2001, an assessment of the strategic compact noted the problems in conceptualizing the Knowledge Bank within the organization and the lack of organizational cohesiveness in the Bank's approach: "The knowledge management system is fragmented and insufficiently integrated with operational processes. It is also supply rather than demand driven, and insufficiently orientated towards the needs of clients . . . [Moreover,] There is no shared understanding of what the Knowledge Bank is, nor how its various elements fit together" (World Bank, 2001, p. 51). Even more damning was a Bank assessment of Wolfensohn's matrix management system (one of the main tools for implementing the Strategic Compact)

that introduced a system where internal experts competed with each other for work. The assessment concluded that a market with incentives for knowledge hoarding, rather than sharing among thematic units, had been inadvertently created (Nielson, Tierney, & Weaver, 2006).

In 1999, IBM's Institute for Knowledge Management conducted a staff evaluation. The team consulted roughly 500 staff members, including 19 vice presidents, using focus groups, interviews, and surveys. The report gave the Bank's knowledge initiative its full endorsement, calling it a strategy that is "far-sighted in conception and sound in its fundamentals, and positions the Bank to play a key role in the world economy of the 21st Century" (Prusak, 1999, p. 1). It also commended the Bank for accomplishing much in a short amount of time and with limited resources, including: forming thematic groups and appointing thematic leaders, creating web pages for dissemination of information, an expert directory listing staff specializations, and revising staff evaluations to incorporate performance in Knowledge Bank dimensions. However, the report's findings and recommendations revealed significant gaps in implementation. Staff responses on the clarity of the policy and its effectiveness showed that about half of the staff understood and agreed with the Knowledge Bank policy. Moreover, only 37 percent of staff said that the Bank's knowledge resources were accessible. Thematic groups, which were identified as a keystone strategy for Knowledge Bank implementation, received mixed reviews. Most participants said thematic groups might eventually add value to Bank work. However, the evaluation team warned that the groups were in danger of unraveling because staff saw the extra tasks as an additional burden. Hence, we see some managerial experimentation with the approach of knowledge as practice but a disconnect with committing the resources necessary for establishing knowledge processes.

Hence, by 1999, the Bank had fallen short of meeting many of its own product-centered standards of effective knowledge management. It did not enjoy its own staff's recognition, legitimizing its desired position as a knowledge enterprise, as the policy and desired outputs were not clear to them nor was their own ability to contribute to it. Technological capacity was promoted but mismanaged and disjointed. Information resources spread across several networks including regional and thematic group sites, the intranet and the external World Wide Web. The Knowledge Bank intranet alone contained 900 dead ends (Prusak, 1999). According to the evaluation report, this was not a product of missing investments in technology but of lacking organizational structures that would guide the processes of capturing and storing information in coherent ways. In the words of Fuller and reflecting the Bank and knowledge management literature's narrow view of knowledge: "if knowledge is the problem, management is the answer" (Ruggles, 1998, as quoted in Swan & Scarborough, 2001, p. 915).

In 2002, after 6 years and \$280 million invested in implementing the knowledge policy, the Operations Evaluation Department conducted an extensive internal and external assessment. The evaluation relied on a Knowledge Bank literature review, surveys, and interviews with networks within the Bank, individual staff and management, academics, NGOs, and private sector representatives. This 2002 evaluation showed a sharp increase in ease of access to information, at least internally, and as compared with the 1997 findings from the IBM team. Thematic groups still

received mixed reviews from staff, but internal and external Web resources became more integrated and a more widely used tool for knowledge sharing. Since 2000, and for five consecutive years, the organization won a most admired knowledge enterprise award from Teleos, a Knowledge Bank research company. In 2002, Yahoo! Spanish economic and business section also gave the Bank an award for its external website and, in 2002, the Nielson Norman Group for design of its intranet. Help desks became a well-established strategy for responding to general internal and external requests. They did not provide in-depth analysis but supplied quick responses to queries on publications or statistical data. However, much of the information being collected was still not integrated into operations. Hence, although networks within the Bank were doing a better job at capturing and storing information, these remained separate activities that were not parlayed into program and project work at the country level (Gwinn, 2003).

### **Reviews from Academics**

Gilbert and colleagues have argued that the Bank is in the perfect position to be a knowledge actor because knowledge is a global public good that is best produced by an objective party like the Bank. They argue that the Bank can produce and “bundle” knowledge and ideas more effectively than either academia or the private sector because it can use lending to help “the money carry the ideas” (Gilbert, Powell, & Vines, 1999, p. F610).

To comment on the quality of World Bank knowledge production, the Bank commissioned an independent academic evaluation of its research in 2006 that is often referred to as the Deaton Report. It assessed the process of selection, topical emphasis, analytic quality, and relevance of research produced by the Bank (Banerjee, Deaton, Lustig, & Rogoff, 2006). They found outstanding work being carried out primarily by economists measuring global poverty and health. The panel took note of the Bank’s flagship publication, the World Development Report, and how it had changed the way we think about development, health, poverty, and population. However, it warned that in recent years, attempting to reconcile too many points of views and framing trade-offs as win-win situations had diluted the report. Because these reports are so influential, it remains a challenge for the Bank to navigate the tension between policy advocacy and serious intellectual research.

The evaluators echoed other external stakeholders’ criticisms regarding the selection and use of information “to proselytize on behalf of Bank policy” (Banerjee et al., 2006, p. 6). Despite this critique, the evaluators’ overall comments gave high marks to the efficacy of knowledge products. Their specific reference to flagship reports and the Bank’s contribution to filling gaps of collection and systematization of information are viewed as the main contributions of the knowledge policy.

If products have been the focus of the knowledge policy, it stands to reason that citation trail and impact measures should significantly increase following the launching of the Knowledge Bank. We evaluate the relative impact of the Bank’s knowledge products by comparing it with peer international organizations involved in knowledge work. We review two quantitative measures of relative impact: the institutional research tail of the Bank *vis-à-vis* other international organizations and the citation impact of its papers. Citation impact is far from a perfect measure, but

it has some important qualities: it is not subjective; it captures a measure of knowledge value by experts insofar as it shows the extent to which Bank papers are worth engaging in scholarly discussion; Bank staff are partly judged on their contributions to academic journals; and other knowledge institutions, such as academic departments, use these measures to judge their own performance and that of their researchers (Kim, Morse, & Zingales, 2006).

We refer back to recognition as a core component of legitimacy. If researchers engage the Bank's publications in debate, we posit this is a tacit recognition of the Bank's output legitimacy as a knowledge actor. Robin Broad quotes a World Bank senior official who found that from 1998–2003, Development Economics Vice Presidency (DEC) papers had a 4.22 average citation impact (using ISI Thomson Scientific Database set), whereas the World Bank overall had 3.63 and overall papers had a 1.71 impact (Broad, 2006). The point being that the World Bank overall is listened to in the development circles and its research department even more so. We have conducted our own assessment of the relative levels of publication activity (dissemination activities) and impact on academic discourse in development. Our data do not determine the quality of the publications, support for Bank data or ideas, nor if there has been any learning as a result of using Bank publications. Our data do demonstrate the production capacity of the Bank, the level of engagement the academic community has with its literature, and how the Bank compares in these two measures with other international financial institutions. Because there is a significant institutional symmetry between the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), we draw comparisons between the two organizations as we unpack the data below.

As Table 1 indicates, World Bank staff publishes more frequently in academic journals than the IMF, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Institute of International Economics (IIE), and the Brookings Institute. However, this is owing to the fact that the World Bank staff is much larger than the other organizations. In 1994 and 2006, the World Bank had employed 9,400 and 10,000 people; the IMF had employed 2,500 and 2,633 people.<sup>7</sup> The World Bank staff was 3.8 times larger than the IMF staff in both 1994 and in 2006. Of course this does not give us a breakdown of economists and support staff, but

**Table 1.** Process and Product Dimensions of Knowledge and Legitimacy

	Process	Products
Knowledge management perspective	1A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational</li> <li>• Contextual</li> <li>• Dynamic</li> <li>• Socially embedded</li> <li>• Based on practice</li> <li>• Tacit</li> </ul>	1B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Codifiable</li> <li>• Storable</li> <li>• A commodity with a market</li> <li>• Objective</li> <li>• Portable</li> <li>• Manageable</li> </ul>
Institutional legitimacy perspective	2A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation</li> <li>• Deliberation</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Transparency</li> </ul>	2B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue the common interest</li> <li>• Fill in information gaps</li> <li>• Formulate effective policy responses</li> <li>• Problem solve</li> <li>• Achieve desired outcomes</li> </ul>

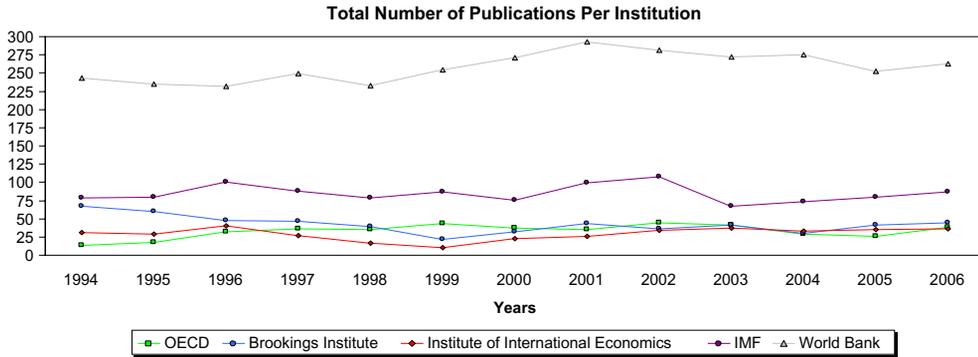


Figure 1. Total Number of Publications of International Economic Organizations: 1994–2006  
 Source: Data derived from Thomson ISI Web of Knowledge.

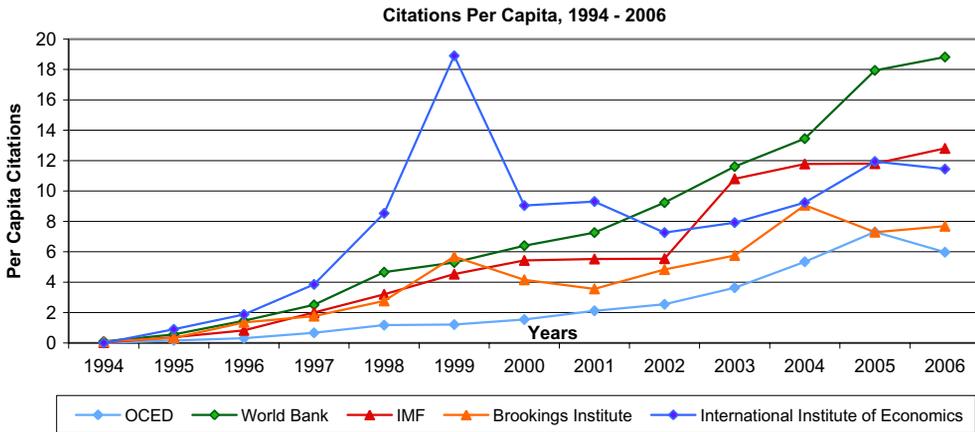


Figure 2. Citation Impact of International Economic Organizations: 1994–2006  
 Source: Data derived from Thomson ISI Web of Knowledge.

one can derive a clear difference in sheer staff size. If we were to assess how many journal publications the World Bank and IMF authored per staff member, the IMF actually outperforms the Bank.<sup>8</sup>

The academic community on average cites Bank academic publications 8.23 times per publication, compared with the IMF 6.43, OECD 2.5, and Brookings Institute 4.07. Over the 12 years examined, as Figure 1 notes, Bank publications have been progressively improving their citation impact. One real surprise, however, were the IIE publications, which were more frequently cited in 1998 through to 2001. This is perhaps explained by the Asian crisis (Figure 2).

Bank personnel often do double duty as scholars and staff. Hence, publication trail and citation impact are quite high. However, the data in these two figures show that the number of external academic publications the Bank produced between 1994 and 2006 has remained generally stable while citation impact has steadily increased. The Bank’s influence in academia, as measured by this method, has been gaining momentum since the launching of the Knowledge Bank policy. This indicates one level of policy effectiveness that is both objective and widely recognized

among academic institutions. We cannot tell from these numbers if academics are citing Bank publications to offer critiques, or accepting Bank data as evidence. At the beginning of this paper, we referred to the Bernstein (2005) definition of legitimacy as “the consent and justified acceptance of authority over a given domain by a community of stakeholders.” One may well argue that academics have consented to the authoritative role that Bank publications have in shaping development discourse and practice, yet do not necessarily agree with the second part of the legitimacy definition dealing with justified acceptance of authority. What we can say is that academia is significantly engaging with Bank literature in ways that it did not do before the Bank started to self-consciously recast its image as a knowledge institution. To the extent that there is scholarly engagement, the Bank can be said to have attained a measure of recognition that legitimates its claim as a knowledge actor.

### **Criticisms from Stakeholders: The Process Deficit in Knowledge Building**

Although many have supported the Knowledge Bank, the concept has often had its critics, many from academia, think tanks, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society actors. The absence of a relational process in knowledge building has generated concerns over transparency, accountability, and effective participation. Hence, the three main arguments from stakeholders refer to: questions of Bank impartiality and objectivity, its promotion of universalist knowledge as opposed to context specific, and partiality toward neoliberal prescriptions stunting critical debate.

### ***Reviews from Developing Countries***

In 2002, an internal Bank evaluation surveyed 121 respondents in a five-country study that included Bangladesh, Brazil, Poland, Senegal, and Tanzania. Most respondents were government officials and academics, and a minority came from the NGO, media, or private sector. The majority were economists by background, with experience in development and familiar with the World Bank.

The questionnaire gathered quantitative and qualitative responses on the use of World Bank advice and how it was obtained, the quality and applicability of the advice and information offered by the World Bank, the effectiveness of information dissemination strategies, factors that impact effective information sharing, and the impact of the Bank’s knowledge products and services (Gwinn, 2003). The summary findings of the report describe an institution that has progressed in establishing internal production processes but not been as successful in sharing knowledge externally. On the quality of the information produced, respondents across the five countries gave the Bank high marks on technical knowledge, rating reports as valuable because of their comprehensiveness, analytical strength, and detail. However, much of the criticism concerned the practical application of the best practices promoted by the Bank. The majority of respondents were critical of the organization’s “presumption of correctness,” disregard to alternative approaches and local knowledge, bias toward macroeconomic solutions and inflexibility in considering applicability to local conditions (Gwinn, 2003, p. 65).

Some voices from the developing world confirm this survey with anecdotal views on the knowledge initiative. As the largest recipient of World Bank loans at US\$29 billion up to 2009, India accounts for 22 percent of outstanding loans to the Bank (World Bank, 2009b). Within India, there have been many vocal critics of the Knowledge Bank initiative, particularly voiced through an organization called the “Independent People’s Tribunal on the World Bank in India” (IPTWBI), which monitors Bank activities in India. In 2007, it convened a large meeting in the form of a tribunal held in New Delhi, which attracted 150 testimonies to a “jury” panel with 700 people from civil society and the nongovernmental sector in attendance. The findings of this grass roots tribunal were highly critical of the knowledge initiative. Specifically, the tribunal declared that:

Specific evidence presented at this Tribunal has shown that in various reports important facts have been deliberately suppressed, and others handpicked to support plans for large dams and the privatisation of water. Testimony also demonstrated that information produced by the World Bank excludes local people and local knowledge but generates highly lucrative contracts for international consultants. (Independent People’s Tribunal on the World Bank in India, 2009)

The IPTWBI findings furthered other clients’ views that knowledge is imposed as a best practice with little room for contestation.

The Spanish magazine “*Pueblos*,” which showcases north-south debates, has also published critical views of the Knowledge Bank initiative, in the end arguing against a knowledge role for this agency because it cannot host independent and autonomous academic debate on development. It states that, by the nature of the organization, the Bank’s research efforts cannot be disassociated from its policy agenda and political interference of donors.

Debate, contestation, consultation, and recognition of the local are the language of process in both knowledge management and input dimensions of legitimacy. These are the critiques that client country stakeholders consistently level at the Bank.

### ***Reviews from Researchers***

There has been frequent criticism from academics and nongovernment organizations that contend the Bank is not in a position to be an objective knowledge actor on development when it holds the power of the purse in determining many developing countries’ financial welfare. As Robert Wade of London Economics points out, for example,

It raises the question of whether the world is served by having as the principle [sic] provider of development statistics an organisation exposed to arm-twisting by its member states and needing to defend itself against constant criticism. We would not want Philip Morris research labs to be the only source of data on the effects of smoking even if the research met professional standards. (Bretton Woods Project, 2001)

Others have echoed these same questions whether the Bank can in fact be impartial in presenting alternative ideological views on development (Standing, 2000). The first question is whether the Bank will take issue with the policies it has prescribed and will foster open dialogue with known critics. After all, who will challenge the potential “knowledge hegemony” emanating from the Bank? Who

and what are the checks and balances on the Bank (Standing, 2000)? Moreover, there is no internal Bank framework used to assess the value and opportunity costs of playing this central role (Kapur, 2006). Devesh Kapur argues that the Bank would be better off concentrating on lending and consider supporting the research of developing country institutions, which would presumably be better at incorporating local knowledge (Kapur, 2006).

Second, Diane Stone argues that the Bank has been uncritical concerning how the Knowledge Bank is utilized (Stone, 2003). She notes that in the case of the GDN, the World Bank has at times promoted a discourse that seems to be void of appreciation for developing countries' social context. The general criticism of Bank policies and advice as being void of social context is frequently cited in various forms (Woods, 2006). Lyla Mehta argues that the Knowledge Bank concept, as first envisioned in the 1998–1999 World Development Report, is patronizing the poor as lacking knowledge and implies the rich are enlightened; the solution to this problem is a top-down and universalistic knowledge transfer that fails to appreciate local circumstances of poverty (Mehta, 1999).<sup>9</sup> She adds:

The Bank's knowledge agenda often tends to be centralized and absolutist and draws on economic and technocratic models. These trends contribute to the emergence of a narrow knowledge agenda that both neglect sociocultural issues and those concerning a wider political economy. Thus, the plural nature of knowledge is denied and the Bank's own problematic role in knowledge generation is not reflected upon. (Mehta, 1999, p. 189)

Third, it is argued that the Bank does not allow discourse within the Bank itself and is therefore stunting the knowledge production cycle. As Nicholas Stern and Francisco Ferreira point out: “[World Bank] researchers are not free to follow intellectual inspiration . . . and the atmosphere is much more deferential than one would find in universities. There is an understandable concern with what superiors will think of their conclusions” (Stern & Ferreira, 1997, p. 594).

Stunting internal discourse is ever more problematic when the Bank places significant emphasis on knowledge creation in the Knowledge Bank cycle. The Bank germinates internal research to be fed into a knowledge production cycle, whereas, in theory, the Bank opens the cycle to other researchers and practitioners that are part of a feedback loop into the generation of new ideas. However, Robin Broad found that the World Bank's department in charge of the germination of knowledge, specifically in the Development Economics Vice-Presidency (DEC), controls internal World Bank debate through stunting discordant ideas and giving incentives in hiring and promotion for those who reinforce the Bank's agenda (Broad, 2006). This was further supported by a recent paper, commissioned by the World Bank, which noted that: “internal research that was favorable to Bank positions was given great prominence and unfavorable research ignored” (World Bank, 2007), and President Zoellick's own admissions that the Bank's work lacks transparency (Zoellick, 2010). David Shaman relates the case of how B-SPAN, a webcasting platform that offered uncensored policy dialogues to the public, was defunded by the Bank to keep internally discordant positions away from the public eye (Shaman, 2009). Broad found that the World Bank's research department has deemed its ideas to be superior to those in area or functional departments that had

closer relations with debtor countries. This system of “paradigm maintenance” has influence and impact outside of the Bank (Broad, 2006).

To take this one step further, critics claim that the World Bank has tried to legitimize its place in global governance through the ideas and knowledge it produces for an audience of “norm consumers” to internalize it. The Bank has used academic language, rigor, and claims to scientific analysis to legitimize its agenda. The Bank thereby attempts to create its own epistemic community, with an army of norm diffusers constantly shaping the agenda in development discourse and monopolizing the data and methodology to further policy debates (St. Clair, 2006). The ideas produced by the World Bank and other IOs serve to create legitimate frames that limit further discourse or that deem dissonant ideas radical; this is a form of Gramscian “ideological hegemony,” which critics suggest needs to be carefully unpacked (Boas & McNeill, 2004).<sup>10</sup>

Table 2 highlights selected excerpts from the above section to summarize some of the key points that arise among stakeholders’ contradictory assessments of the Knowledge Bank policy. This table is meant to reflect directly back on the analytical framework advanced earlier in this paper and clearly illustrate the direct connections between our conceptual lens and empirical findings.

## Conclusion

This article has addressed the puzzle of stakeholders’ uneven recognition of the Bank’s knowledge role. It started by tracing the historical development of the initiative. We highlighted the various push-and-pull factors that shaped how knowledge was conceived and practiced: the response to external legitimacy demands, the Bank’s own sense of institutional competitiveness, and the growth of technological opportunities to package, store, and share information, all coupled with the Bank’s internal bureaucratic culture and professional specialization that shaped the interpretation of the knowledge policy.

We then developed an analytical framework and applied it to the claims of supporters and critics regarding the role of the World Bank as a legitimate knowledge actor. We argued that the problem of recognition of the Bank’s role branches in two directions. When stakeholders define knowledge as products, the Bank generally obtains recognition for the quality and quantity of the information it generates. This is the output dimension of legitimacy. On the other hand, when knowledge only counts as such to users who have been part of the process of creating it, the Bank finds itself with limited recognition. This is because stakeholders grant input legitimacy to an institution when it provides transparency, accountability, and effective participation.

Given the historical and institutional context in which the knowledge policy developed, the Bank moved to establish information systems and organizational processes before grappling with central questions on the substantive elements of knowledge for its stakeholders.<sup>11</sup> Clients are left to learn from the Bank and its expert advisors, whereas the reverse relationship receives little institutional attention (Easterly, 2006). This has not changed despite repeated internal directives to share knowledge across and within the organization. In the words of the IEG at the Bank: “The objective of creating a global Knowledge Bank has not been achieved”

**Table 2.** The Product/Process Perspective of Knowledge Management and the Input/Output Perspective of Institutional Legitimacy in the Case of the Knowledge Bank Policy

	Process	Products
Knowledge management perspective	<p>1A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational: “the Knowledge Bank concept, as first envisioned in the 1998–1999 World Development Report, is patronizing the poor as lacking knowledge and implies the rich are enlightened; the solution to this problem is a top-down and universalistic knowledge transfer”</li> <li>• Contextual: “disregard to alternative approaches and local knowledge, bias toward macroeconomic solutions and inflexibility in considering applicability to local conditions”</li> <li>• Dynamic: “controls internal . . . debate through stunting discordant ideas and giving incentives in hiring and promotion for those who reinforce the Bank’s agenda . . . This system of “paradigm maintenance” has influence and impact outside of the Bank”</li> <li>• Socially embedded: “[the Bank should instead] consider supporting the research of developing country institutions, which would presumably be better at incorporating local knowledge”</li> <li>• Based on practice: “much of the criticism concerned the practical application of the best practices promoted by the Bank”</li> <li>• Tacit</li> </ul>	<p>1B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Codifiable: “quick responses to queries on publications or statistical data”; “the Bank can produce and ‘bundle’ knowledge and ideas”</li> <li>• Storable: “adequate technical infrastructure”</li> <li>• A commodity with a market: “a sharp increase in ease of access to information, at least internally”; “Help desks became a well-established strategy for responding to general internal and external requests”</li> <li>• Objective: “knowledge is a global public good that is best produced by an objective party like the Bank”</li> <li>• Portable: “push knowledge out of the Bank’s repositories . . . included developing tools such as videoconferencing, online directories of information and web portals”</li> <li>• Manageable: “information management systems were identified as the key component to enable linking external and internal resources”</li> </ul>
Institutional Legitimacy Perspective	<p>2A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation: “information produced by the World Bank excludes local people and local knowledge”</li> <li>• Deliberation: “who will challenge the potential ‘knowledge hegemony’ emanating from the Bank? Who and what are the checks and balances on the Bank?”</li> <li>• Accountability: “by the nature of the organization, the Bank’s research efforts cannot be disassociated from its policy agenda and political interference of donors”; “It raises the question of whether the world is served by having as the principle [sic] provider of development statistics an organization exposed to arm-twisting by its member states”</li> <li>• Transparency: “Specific evidence presented at this Tribunal has shown that in various reports important facts have been deliberately suppressed”; “[World Bank] researchers are not free to follow intellectual inspiration . . . and the atmosphere is much more deferential than one would find in universities”</li> </ul>	<p>2B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue the common interest</li> <li>• Fill in information gaps: “outstanding work being carried out primarily by economists measuring global poverty and health”; “flagship reports and the Bank’s contribution to filling gaps of collection and systematization of information are viewed as the main contributions of the knowledge policy”</li> <li>• Formulate effective policy responses: “the World Development Report . . . changed the way we think about development, health, poverty and population”</li> <li>• Problem solve: “. . . the Bank is a more effective knowledge actor than academia and private sector because it can lend money to carry ideas</li> <li>• Achieve desired outcomes (of the Knowledge Bank policy): Research tail and citation impact of Bank papers; “academia is significantly engaging with Bank literature in ways that it did not do before the Bank started to self-consciously recast its image as a knowledge institution. . . . This indicates one level of policy effectiveness that is both objective and widely recognized among academic institutions”</li> </ul>

(World Bank, 2012, p. 37). They note that silos still exist, and more alarmingly that silos have been strengthened in regional and network offices as a result of decentralization efforts. The IEG report notes that this is not only a failure of capacity to extract and share knowledge but also a failure of providing organizational incentives to change staff behavior and culture.

We have argued that the Bank needs to move beyond packaging information and toward meaningful partnerships with stakeholders. The Bank's historical preference to control the development message may merely serve to confirm what critics have argued for some time, which is that its organizational culture makes it ill equipped to pursue a legitimate knowledge role in development.

## Notes

- 1 Academics begun to refer to a new "knowledge economy" that seemed to be fuelling job growth particularly in the United States in the 1990s. Yet this broad correlation between technological advancements and productivity in the wider economy did not focus on the sociological questions of tacit versus codified knowledge and social arrangements that facilitated knowledge transfer (Powell & Snellman, 2004).
- 2 For a recent discussion, see N. Stehr and U. Ufer (2009), who question if new knowledge is actually in demand, whether global problems require global answers and what happens to knowledge when it is made to travel between one scenario where it was deemed a best practice to a completely different context.
- 3 For example, M. Easterby-Smith, M. Crossan, and D. Nicolini (2000) estimate that 70 percent of all publications on knowledge management have focused on designing optimal information technology systems. R. Ruggles (1998) has noted, "If technology solves your problem, yours was not a knowledge problem."
- 4 See Bodansky (1999) for a discussion of these various labels.
- 5 For the purposes of this paper, we may say that the problem the Bank identified was the dispersion of development knowledge. However, framing the problem that is to be addressed may become a further challenge to legitimacy.
- 6 Some authors would refer to this as "information" rather than knowledge. See Alavi and Leidner (2001).
- 7 Derived from IMF and World Bank website. IMF staff employed 2,633 in 2006; 2,297 in 2000; 2,212 in 1998; 2,203 in 1997, and 2,500 in 1994. The World Bank employed 10,000 in 2006 and 9,400 in 1994.
- 8 World Bank researchers in the DEC are expected to publish two academic journal papers per year (World Bank, 2007). However, no such quotas have existed at the IMF.
- 9 See World Bank (1998/1999).
- 10 See also Wade (2002).
- 11 For a review of knowledge subjectivities in development, see Powell (2006).

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