

The World Bank: A Bank or a Think Tank, or Both?

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Alicia Anzivine

The Ohio State University

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Project Advisor: Professor Edward Malecki, Department of Geography

Abstract

James McGann, Director of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, defines think tanks as “public policy research, analysis, and engagement institutions.” Until recently, McGann did not consider the World Bank a think tank because of its relationship with rich governments. In 2009, McGann ranked the World Bank Institute, a division within the Bank, among the top think tanks worldwide. McGann does not consider other research branches of the World Bank think tanks. However, the Development Economics Vice Presidency, known as DEC, is the central research arm of the Bank and exemplifies all think tank characteristics. My research examines the degree to which the World Bank acts as a think tank on global issues. The research methodology is historical and archival, drawing on documentation on the World Bank’s website as well as published. It synthesizes reviews and critiques from inside and outside the Bank about the purpose, methods, and impact of World Bank research, including the World Development Reports and thousands of other World Bank publications. Finally, interviews of former and current World Bank employees provide additional evidence. Overall, after analyzing the different departments within the Bank and their research, it is evident that the World Bank goes beyond McGann’s definition. Last year the Bank spent \$750 million on “knowledge,” or research, and in 2009 it was top-ranked among research institutions on development. The World Bank’s budget for research has declined significantly since a 2006 evaluation report, which ironically recommended just the opposite. Nations and donors should recognize the need for the World Bank to sustain the research budget in order to support the work and knowledge produced by DEC and the other research-intensive departments. This will continue the Bank’s role as a super think tank on global development and public policy advocacy.

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Important Abbreviations

Development Economics Vice Presidency	DEC
World Bank Institute	WBI
World Development Report	WDR

Introduction

Since the 1945 conception of the Bretton Woods institutions, many scholars have focused primarily on the World Bank's lending operations, which have been heavily criticized from inside and outside the Bank. It is not surprising that the Bank's lending function tends to be at the center of the debates among academics due to the controversial conditions the Bank and the International Monetary Fund place on the loans issued to client countries. However, the World Bank's research activities arose naturally out of its evaluation of the impacts and effects of these structural adjustment stipulations and development projects in each country. Despite the Bank's growing reputation for world-class research on development, little attention has been paid to the Bank's creation of knowledge for development.

The research methodology is historical and archival, and draws on documentation found on the World Bank's website as well as published material. It synthesizes reviews and critiques, from inside and outside the Bank, focused on the purpose, methods, and impact of World Bank research, and includes the World Development Reports and thousands of other publications. Finally, personal interviews conducted with former and current World Bank employees provide additional information on the Bank's knowledge or research program.

Section 1, *The Evolution of World Bank Research*, delves deeper into the creation and development of the research division at the World Bank. The historical changes that have occurred over the past thirty years provide additional evidence for labeling the Bank the super think tank of the modern world. The Bank continuously reevaluates its policies and projects in order to maintain an updated definition of development. Originally, the research of the Bank was performed by its Economics Department. This group mainly worked with the operations lending division. It evaluated the projects and their impacts on the client countries. The process

of reorganizing the Bank was rather long and continued throughout the past thirty years. The Bank still makes changes to its structure in order to better handle the current crisis. Each year brought some directional change and moved the Bank yet another step closer to the research department that exists today. The external reviews and internal exchange of ideas eventually positioned the Bank to begin making its mark on the world with the first *World Development Report* in 1978, which truly marked the Bank as the leading institution on development studies.

The structure of the “knowledge” or research program at the World Bank (section 2) makes it clear that it, indeed, operates as a think tank. Each division of the research program works collaboratively with others to provide world-class knowledge on development policies for leading officials. The Bank’s research is methodological and evaluative and focuses on issues that range from economic and social to political. The focal point of research at the Bank is done through the Development Economics Vice Presidency, more commonly DEC. This group works under the Chief Economist, who is responsible, with the help of the Research Committee, for determining the focus for DEC’s research. DEC also has the responsibility of working on projects with other functional units of the Bank, including Operations. The World Bank Institute collaborates with DEC, the regions, and the networks to produce course offerings on its research. These programs have often stimulated debates among political officials concerning the effectiveness of policies. The Bank works to analyze and evaluate its projects and future issues, and provide education to the development community.

The research division produces for the public an array of materials based on its research. Section 3, Public Outreach, describes these documents and their impacts. The most critical and prominent is the yearly *World Development Report* (WDR), each of which covers a topic chosen by the Chief Economist. Since 1978, this report has involved the collaboration of leading

researchers under the direction of the Chief Economist. Although most of the WDRs have been very influential, some have triggered debates among experts outside the Bank. Some criticize the Bank for a lack of diversity in staff, and suggest that certain material is flawed in predicting reality (Rogoff et al. 2009). The WDR, they say, “tries to make everyone happy” by ignoring the potential negative impacts of certain development policies (Rogoff et al. 2009, p. 82). For example, a WDR might recommend that countries pursue more equal distribution of income without considering the effects that will accompany the raising of taxes to enable such an effort. Despite these limitations, the WDRs are among the world’s top institutional publications for avant garde information on development issues.

Section 4 shifts attention to the topic of think tanks. In recent years, think tank institutions have become increasingly influential on developing research and recommendations for policies around the world. These institutions are designed to assist governments and the development community with establishing effective policy initiatives. Until now, the World Bank in its entirety has not been considered to be among these elite institutions. In order to categorize the Bank as a think tank, it is essential for it to satisfy the term’s definition. James McGann, Director of the Think Tanks and Foreign Policy Program at the Foreign Policy Program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, defines think tanks as “public policy research, analysis, and engagement institutions.” Think tanks have six major roles:

- (1) Carry out basic research on policy problems and policy solutions in a fashion similar to that done by university-based researchers,
- (2) Provide advice on immediate policy concerns,
- (3) Evaluate of government programs,
- (4) Interpret policies and current events for the electronic and print media,
- (5) Facilitate “issue networks” and the exchange of ideas, and
- (6) Supply personnel to government and serve as a place for politicians and policymakers who are out of power to recharge their batteries – or as a simple sinecure.

(Source: McGann 2010, p. 18-19)

McGann began to review institutions to identify those that perform these roles. After an extensive amount of research and meeting with experts in the field from around the world, in 2010 McGann compiled a list of 6,480 think tanks (McGann 2011b, p. 6). Of these, 30% are located in North America. In 2011, McGann decided to hold the first ever comprehensive nomination selection of think tanks. In doing so, he contacted each of the 6,480 think tanks as well as 1,500 experts, scholars, and academic elites and asked for their recommendations and evaluations on institutions. After several rounds of evaluations, and surveying each of these contacts, a panel of 250 experts reviewed the rankings and compiled the final list. The Brookings Institution ranked number one. In the category of government-affiliated institutions, the World Bank Institute was ranked number one, which was the only division of the Bank considered qualified for a position in the ranking.

For the past forty years, the World Bank has worked to achieve a position as the leading international institution on development (Rogoff et al. 2009). Each year it publishes, in each member country, its research and knowledge on a wide spectrum of topics. The Bank conducts research-intensive, policy-oriented analyses that provide guideline information for the public on how to create effective development policies.

Thus, the Bank should be considered a think tank because it performs all of McGann's six roles and more. It has developed a competitive advantage in research, which no other institution has yet been able to match. As a result of the international relationships it has established, it is among the few institutions in the world that can perform cross-country analyses. In short, the Bank is no longer just a financial lender; it is the Bank of knowledge. Although the World Bank Institute was ranked as a think tank, the WBI does not conduct much of its own

research and in many instances requires assistance from other parts of the Bank to produce its conferences and courses on development.

Section 5 focuses on how the Bank has evolved into a Super Think Tank. After reviewing McGann's study and the opinions of outside experts on the study, the Bank clearly has the characteristics of a *super think tank* on development issues – it both creates policy advice and contributes effectively to its implementation in the developing community. The Bank performs all six roles McGann defined for think tanks, which many if not most of the think tanks included in his rankings do not currently do. In other words, the World Bank operates above and beyond the current definition of think tanks.

The question remains: Why is this important for experts on think tanks to agree on the definition required to create a unified ranking system? Quite simply, it is vitally important that the world's developing communities, including the donors and nations that contribute to the Bank, recognize the impact and value of the research conducted by the World Bank. The World Bank research is unique and important for many countries (Rogoff et al. 2009).

In the final section, section 6, The Future for the World Bank, underscores the importance of continuing these programs and ensuring that the Bank maintains an adequate Research Support Budget. If it fails to do so, it will lose its competitive advantage and position as the world's leading development institution. The Bank, additionally, requires managerial improvements such as “aligning incentives for researchers, and providing better incentives to staff to carry out research” (DEC 2009, p. 13). Each of these is critical to the Bank's ability to accommodate future change and growth.

1. The Evolution of the World Bank Research

The World Bank's research has evolved throughout its history to handle both long-standing and new issues facing the world. Its research has taken on many forms to accommodate varying pressures and demands from both intellectual and institutional entities. In order to hold its position as one of the most prominent research centers in development studies, the Bank has had to make alterations in its ever-evolving definition of development. These shifts have altered the project structures and foci among academics and research leaders. Many scholars have noted the changing definitions and meanings of development since the inception of the World Bank. These changes have allowed the Bank to explore various opportunities for research around the world and have placed it at the forefront in discovery on development.

The main projects the Bank has focused on for the past thirty years include "growth and poverty reduction, states vs. markets, the role of institutions and governance, from the 'Washington Consensus' to country specificity, globalization and the transition of financial instability, and aid effectiveness" (DEC 2009, p. 82-88). Within these categories the Bank has had great impact as well as heated criticism. With the passage of time, it has had to revise its diagnoses for development policy conditions on each subject. However, in order to devise a mechanism for developing countries to follow, it was forced to establish an internal research or knowledge program. Each project and category encountered generated more knowledge on new and changing subjects. The history of the research division at the Bank reveals its position as the leading think tank on development and underscores its expertise on policy advocacy. Table 1 is a brief chronology of the research program at the Bank.

Table 1. Development Research at the World Bank: Brief Chronology

1946	Eugene Meyer becomes President of the World Bank and the Bank begins its Operations. Leonard Rist is appointed Research Director, and Paul Rosenstein-Rodan Assistant Director.
1952	First major reorganization of the Bank.
1960	The International Development Association (IDA) is established.
1963	George Woods becomes President and Irving Friedman Economic Advisor to the President with the rank of Vice President.
1968	Robert McNamara becomes President.
1971	Central research program formally established and Research Committee created. Since then (except during 1982-87), the RC sets research priorities – through sectoral reviews – and channels resources to research activities.
1972	Major reorganization of the World Bank. Vice Presidency for Development Policy created, headed by Hollis Chenery. Research comes under the aegis of the Development Policy Staff.
1977	External evaluation of research by Sir Arthur Lewis.
1982	A.W. Clausen becomes President. Development Policy Staff becomes Economics Research Staff, with Anne Krueger as VP for Research. Resources for research are shifted toward operations. Funding decisions made by REPAC, chaired by the Research Administrator.
1983	External evaluation of research by Assar Lindbeck.
1987	Barbar Conable becomes President. Reorganization: David Hopper is Senior VP, Policy Planning and Research (later Policy, Research and External Affairs) followed by Wilfried Thalwitz in 1989; V. Rajagopalan is VP for Policy Research & External Affairs (now Operations Policy Staff). Stanley Fischer is Chief Economist and VP for Research (until 1990).
1988	REPAC is replaced by a reconstituted Research Committee.
1991	Lewis Preston becomes President. Lawrence Summers becomes VP for Research.
1992	Nancy Birdsall creates a Research Department combining all sectors (and mirroring the Networks created later).
1993	Michael Bruno becomes Chief Economist. He dies in 1996.
1995	James Wolfensohn becomes President.
1997	The Bank is reorganized and adopts a matrix structure. The Networks are created. Joe Stiglitz becomes Chief Economist.
2000	Nicholas Stern becomes Chief Economist and Senior VP.
2003	Francois Bourguignon succeeds Nick Stem in October 2003.
2005	Paul Wolfowitz becomes President.
2006	External evaluation of research by a panel chaired by Angus Deaton.
2007	Robert Zoellick becomes President in July 2007, Wolfowitz having resigned. Francois Bourguignon retires in October 2007.
2008	Justin Lin becomes the Bank's first Chief Economist and Senior VP from a developing country.

(Source: DEC 2009, p. 90)

The Bank's shifts in viewpoints have been accompanied by multiple reorganizations in the structure of the research program and the rest of the Bank. When the priorities of the Bank changed, the branches within the Bank were correspondingly transformed. For example, in 1987, the Bank became more invested in the study of environmental protection and decided it was appropriate to establish the Environmental Department (DEC 2009). This did not necessarily mean the Bank had no previous interest in the field; instead, it signaled that the Bank was committed to learning more on the issue.

The main factors that determine the topics and issues covered by the research department are the budget and the availability of time. The less funding the research department has the less likely new topics will be explored and the more likely the funding of current programs will be reduced. Unfortunately, with a limited budget, priority is given to the areas where the returns are highest, which means the areas of lower interest or those with a lower potential to produce quality solutions might be sacrificed. The Vice Presidents and the Chief Economists work together to determine the research areas.

In the beginning, the Economics Department was the body in the Bank assigned to "conducting financial feasibility studies of proposed projects" (DEC 2009, p. 91). Its authority was equal to the Loan Department's in negotiating with borrowing governments. Eventually, the Loan Department began conducting its own studies on the projects. This created tension between the operations department and research at the Bank. Administrators worried about the financial influence the Bank would have on Wall Street and, thus, began to push for more conservative policies. Proposals for social loans to developing countries began to be rejected by the Bank. Eventually, in the late 1960s, the Bank began to receive backlash from experts in the development field. Faced with criticism from both inside and outside, the Bank restructured into

“three area departments and a new technical Operations or Project Department” (DEC 2009, p. 91). The Operations Department assumed the Economics Department’s role with project studies. Research was minimal during this time period outside of evaluating current projects. The Economics Department, created under George Wood’s leadership, was essential for the research component of the Bank.

Recruited from the International Monetary Fund, Irving Friedman and Andrew Kamarck came to the Bank as Vice President and Director of the Economics Department, respectively. Both had Ph.D.’s in economics and were involved in the creation of the Bretton Woods Institutions. In the four years that followed their arrival at the Bank, more than two hundred Ph.D. economists were hired by the Economics Department (DEC 2009, p. 92). The two men truly established the foundation for the research department that is in existence today. “The work of the Bank today is measured more in terms of successful development of member countries than of the number of projects approved, the lack of defaults on past loans, or the rate of return on equity. And development itself is measured not only in terms of rising real gross national product but in improved public health, more equitable income distribution, declining rates of population growth, and greater political stability” (DEC 2009, p. 92).

Hollis Chenery, an economist with a Harvard Ph.D. who worked previously for the U.S. Agency for International Development as an assistant administrator, replaced Friedman in 1970. His focus at the Bank was to be on quantitative analysis. He was influential in establishing a program to redistribute income in developing countries in order to reduce abject poverty (DEC 2009, p. 92).

The central research arm of the World Bank was instituted in the early 1970s, at the time Robert McNamara was sharpening the Bank’s core message of making the world free of poverty.

In a speech given to the Board of Governors in Copenhagen, McNamara declared it was crucial for the Bank to analyze issues thoroughly, to take a stand on development issues and to propose solutions. He wanted the Bank to be at the forefront of identifying the policy options required to solve these problems. In April 1971, a research committee was appointed to help establish the foundation of the Bank's research program. Importantly, the Bank recognized that a portion of its budget had to be allocated specifically for research. The first dedicated allocation was termed the External Research Budget (now referred to as the Research Support Budget). The Bank then created 15 new divisions within the operations department, each of which specialized in a particular area. In 1973, the Research Committee released its first annual report. It listed the four core objectives for the research program, which are those it follows today:

(1) To support all aspects of the Bank's operations, including the assessment of development progress in member countries, (2) To broaden understanding of the development process, (3) To improve the Bank's capacity to provide advice to member countries, and (4) To assist in developing indigenous research capacity in member countries (DEC 2009, p. 94).

Each of these goals has helped provide an operating framework for the research department.

Each of the 15 divisions within the operations department was instructed to create annual plans detailing their work for the coming year. These established priorities for the Research Committee. Many of the divisions were very systematic in their planning (DEC 2009, p. 94).

This, however, eventually led to increased competition between the divisions for funding. In order to address the problem of allocating money from a limited budget that was exacerbated by increasing demand for funds – and to eliminate internal bias – the first external evaluation of the research program was instituted.

Under the leadership of Sir Arthur Lewis, six panels reviewed the research program at the Bank and covered all topics. The outcome of the reviews formed the focal point for the General

Research Advisory Panel (GRAP), whose role was to identify research priorities between the departments and the Research Committee. To aid GRAP, the Bank created steering committees to guide and advise each department. The goal was to create collaboration between the client countries and the research department. For the GRAP, this was the “comparative advantage” the Bank could have over other development-focused institutions (DEC 2009, p. 95). The Bank had the power and the clientele to establish cross-country analysis. The steering committees became quite effective in determining which projects were to be pursued. Each project was thoroughly investigated and voted on by the group.

In 1978, after the revisions and improvements within the research system, the Bank released its most important public outreach book, the *World Development Report*. Chenery had discussed the potential of the publication in his annual reports to McNamara, who then sought to formalize the concept. The best and brightest economists at the Bank created the WDR. This elite group worked on the project with Chenery to produce the first report, which was 68 pages and was subtitled *Prospects for Growth and Alleviation of Poverty*. According to McNamara, the WDRs were designed to be “a comprehensive assessment of the global development issues” while addressing “a number of fundamental problems confronting developing countries and exploring their relationship to the underlying trends in the international community” (DEC 2009, p. 95).

After McNamara’s presidency, the Bank went through several more restructurings and, in 1992, the last few changes led to the development of the current research program. In October that year, the beginning of the network system, which remains in place today, was outlined with a focus on “thematic Vice Presidencies for policy guidance, operational support and dissemination of best practice to operations” (DEC 2009, p. 100). Then, in 1997, the “matrix

structure” was founded. Six major networks were assembled to “bring sectoral expertise, multi-country experience and research to bear on operations and policies” (which was reduced to four networks in 2006)¹. The major research effort was placed under the direction of the Chief Economist and Vice President for Development Economics, or DEC. DEC assumed the responsibilities of “micro and macro-economic research”. This was the conception of the research program that is in place today.

The Bank’s overall structure and operating system has undergone many changes in the past forty years. Table 2 illustrates the major shifts that led to the focus of the Bank today.

Table 2. The World Bank’s Development Shifts

Decade	Development
1950s	Economics Department was mainly responsible for conducting financial feasibility studies of proposed projects.
1960s	Under the presidency of George Woods, the Economics Department recruited 200 PhDs in economics and also sought to have economic analysis carried out in area departments.
1970s	In 1971, the first research program was formalized and it was given four basic objectives.
1980s	Research focus shifted toward market incentives, getting prices right, and macroeconomic adjustment.
1990s	Poverty, inequality and corruption reemerged as research topics.
2000s	Emerging economies, and in particular China and India and their impact on the world, as well as infrastructure – after years of neglect in lending – have been mentioned as research priorities.

(Source: DEC 2010, p. 5)

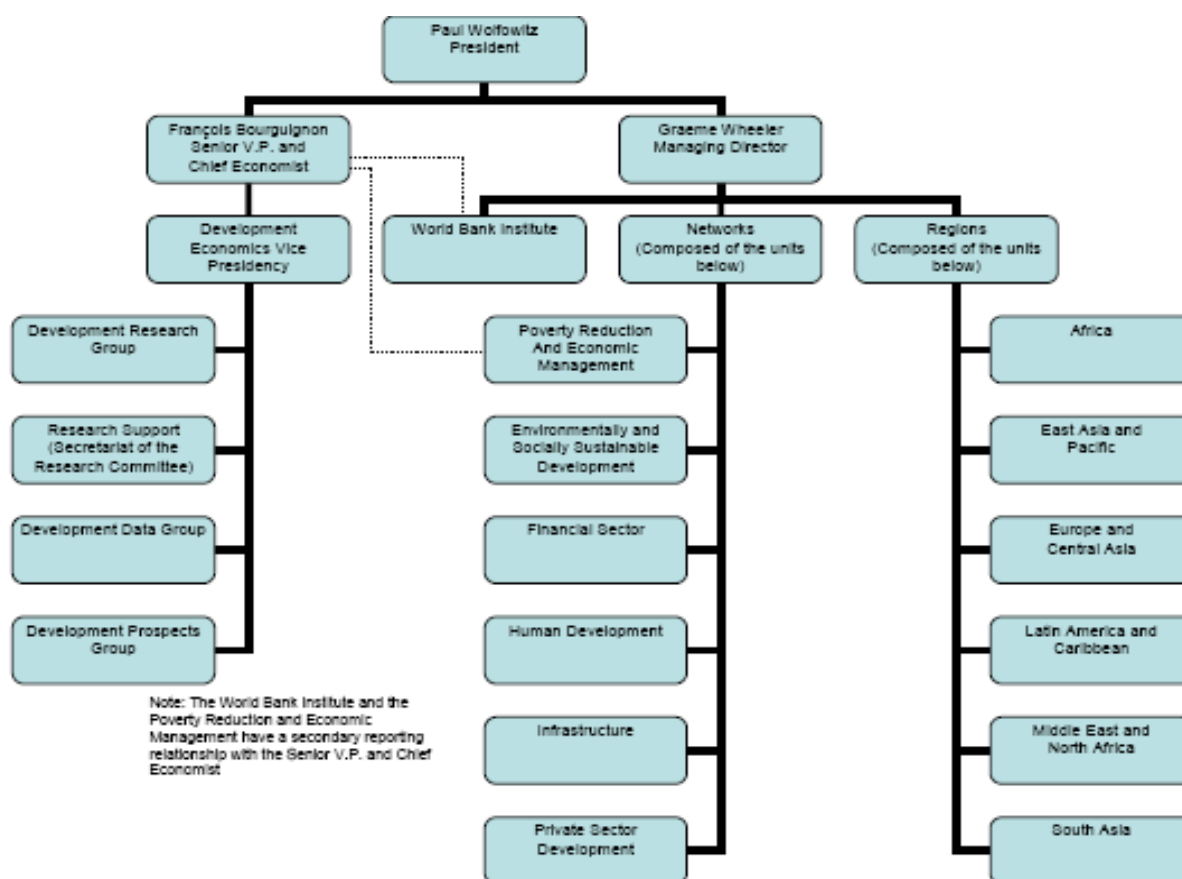
¹ The networks originally included: Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, Environmentally and Social Sustainable Development, Financial Sector, Human Development, Infrastructure, and Private Sector Development. The networks restructured in 2006 to four networks: Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, the Sustainable Development Network, the Human Development Network, and the Financial and Private Sector Development Network.

2. The Bank's Research Program

Knowledge is an essential part of the World Bank and it is produced and published by several divisions of the Bank. The Bank's research is under the management of the Senior Vice President, Chief Economist and Managing Director. When performing research, the Bank frequently collaborates with "external consultants" who are experts on the areas of interest.

Figure 1 is an organization chart that shows the divisional breakdown of the Bank's research program.

Figure 1. Organization Chart of Research Groups within the World Bank as of May 2006



(Source: Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 25)

Most of the Bank's research is conducted by the research group, which is part of the DEC. Research is also performed by six regional vice presidencies. Geographically, these cover

Africa, East Asia and Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia. In addition, four networks and the World Bank Institute perform research. The networks include: Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, the Sustainable Development Network, the Human Development Network, and the Financial and Private Sector Development Network (following the merger of Finance and Private Sector Development and Infrastructure and Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development) (DEC 2010, p. 33).

Research is created through DEC, the regions, the networks, and the World Bank Institute (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 24). Bank research is funded through the administrative budget, of which the major portion is allocated by the Research Committee. The Research Support Budget is a fund of about \$5 million each year and is allocated based on a competitive formal review process (Dethier 2007). The research division can also receive funding from trust funds. As mentioned in section 1, the Research Committee, which includes 20 managers from various units of the Bank, was established in 1971 and is headed by the Chief Economist. DEC works with the Development Research Group to determine the topics and issues the researchers are to pursue. The other major research groups, such as the regions, networks, and the World Bank Institute, can, to some degree, determine where funds should go in order to meet “regional priorities” and to satisfy “gaps in knowledge not covered by DEC or the Research Committee” (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 26).

The research budget has been a major issue for the Bank the past several years because of its continuous decline. The Chief Economist is in charge of the Research Committee, which gives him or her considerable influence over both DEC and the Research Committee. However, the Chief Economist does not have complete control over the process in the regions or networks,

which are managed by their vice presidencies. Currently, the Bank spends about 2.5 percent of its total budget on research or its acquisition of “knowledge”, which in 2010 amounted to approximately \$750 million (Dethier 2011). Although this seems substantial, the Bank has begun to decrease, in real terms, the amount of funding provided to the research program (Dethier 2011). “In the last few years under the global financial crisis, since 2008, the lending of the World Bank has tripled; the Bank used to lend 20 billion dollars and now lends more than 60 billion dollars. At the same time, the budget of the World Bank has declined in real terms and in particular for research the budget has been declining in real terms by 2 percent for five years, year after year” (Dethier 2011).

Obviously, a healthy budget is critical to the Bank’s ability to perform research. In an interview, Dr. Jacques Dethier, DEC’s current Research Manager, said “Since the Deaton evaluation, which called for an increase in the budget year after year, for five years the budget has in fact declined in real terms. And it has declined for a good part of the Bank. The reality is the quality of recruitment has declined very significantly. The reason why the quality of staff is declining is because the benefit packages and salaries have changed significantly” (Dethier 2011). There is no doubt that the Bank must address this issue in the near future if it is to remain among the elites on development knowledge.

The Bank’s research is unique in that it is “essentially empirical – and often involves collecting and analyzing new survey data – and much of this research is evaluative, meaning that data are used to rigorously assess under what circumstances development policies are effective” (DEC 2009, p. 5). The Bank’s research encompasses a wide range of worldwide topics. As described previously, topics are selected based on how likely the results will create solutions for crucial development issues. In determining which topics are chosen, the managers of DEC

Research Group (the DECRG) focus on the immediate needs of the Bank’s Operations and, more importantly, on the “developing community”. In order to identify the needs, DEC’s researchers spend about 30 percent of their time working directly with the Operations department and other units of the Bank. During this time they are encouraged to think analytically about the topics and the work being conducted elsewhere in the Bank. Solutions for the problems that arise in the various departments are not always easily found and require the researchers to take innovative approaches.

From 2006 to 2008, the research program conducted more than 350 projects each year on a spectrum of topics (DEC 2009). Table 3 shows the breakdown of the major topics. Two categories, Human Development and Public Services and Sustainable Development, receive slightly more (18-20% each) attention than the others.

Table 3. World Bank Research Topics by percentage of total, 2006-2008

Topic	Percentage of Projects
Human Development and Public Services	18 to 22 percent
Sustainable Development	18 to 20 percent
Finance and Private Sector Development	15 percent
Macroeconomics and Growth	13 to 14 percent
Poverty and Inequality	12 percent
Trade and International Integration	9 to 14 percent

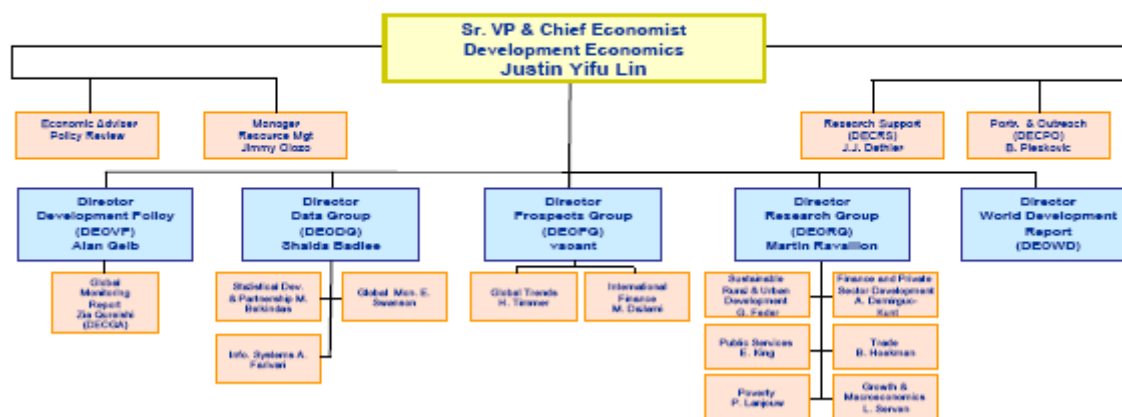
(Data from DEC 2009, p. 5)

Research output during 2006-2008 period included more than 1,000 Policy Research Working Papers, 430 books, 2,000 scholarly articles, and a large numbers of conferences,

workshops, and seminars. The Bank also worked to establish research projects in developing countries.

DEC is the main research and data “arm” of the World Bank. Its role is to “seek to increase understanding of development policies and programs by providing intellectual leadership and analytical services to the Bank and the development community” (The World Bank Group 2011b). Overall, DEC’s research enables countries to create effective policies that assist in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). DEC comprises five teams or working components: the Data Group (DECDG), the Prospects Group (DECPCG), the Research Group (DECRG), Development Policy (DECDP), and World Development Report (DECWD). Figure 2 shows DEC’s organizational chart.

DEC Organizational Chart



(Source: DEC 2009, p. 102)

The Research Group provides the “empirical and methodological research on development policy” (Dethier 2007, p. 470). The Research Group collaborates with other groups inside and outside the Bank to create the knowledge or research team of DEC. The Data Group gathers data that are used by the other four teams to measure how effective each development policy was in the past and to determine its potential for the future. The Prospects Group focuses on trends and

global projects and produces two annual reports: *Global Development Finance* and *Global Economic Prospects*. Overall, DEC is comprised of about 80 full-time staff researchers and “15 other long-term researchers, as well as around 30 support staff” (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 27). The main categories of research (and the corresponding subcategories) that have been covered by DEC to date are listed in the Table 4.

Table 4. DECRG Thematic Areas of Research

Category	Subcategories
Global Financial and Macroeconomic Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy trade-offs posed by the financial crisis in all policy areas in specific country contexts - Policy responses in finance, macro and social protection, incl. strategically relevant M&E efforts
Macroeconomics and Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Microeconomic Foundations of Growth - Innovation and Technological Upgrading - Macroeconomic Instability - Capital Flows and International Financial Integration - Governance and Political Economy - Conflict Countries
Finance and Private Sector Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to Financial Services - Risk Management - Entrepreneurship and Innovation - Informality - Corporate Governance - Business Environment and its Reforms
Human Development and Public Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measuring Inequalities and Understanding the Determinants of Human Development - Improving Service Delivery and Reforming Institutions in Support of Human Development - Workers and Labor Markets
Poverty and Inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aid Effectiveness - Tools and Data for Poverty and Equity Research - Inequalities in education and health; in opportunities stemming from location and impediments to mobility; and in

Energy, Environment, and Sustainable Development	voice and power - Climate Change - Land Policies - Community-Driven Development - Water Management - Infrastructure and Economic Development - Urban Development
Trade and International Integration	- Distortions of Agricultural Incentives - Services Trade Policies and Non-tariff Measures - Regulation, Trade Costs and Trade Performance - Trade and Poverty - Trade Agreements - Migration

(Source: DEC 2009, p. 11)

DEC produces a wide array of outreach materials and conferences based on its past, current, and future research. From 2006 to 2008, DEC conducted over 56 conferences, including the Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics (ABCDE), which is among the most well-known conferences on leading knowledge on development. DEC's research has both an external and internal element, that is, it deals with the public as well as other units of the Bank. The interaction between these elements produces what the Bank calls the "Lending, Learning, and Knowledge cycle", which is illustrated in Figure 3 (The World Bank Group 2011b).

Figure 3. The Lending, Learning, and Knowledge Cycle

Lending, Learning, and Knowledge



(Source: The World Bank Group 2011b)

This cycle illustrates the on-going flow of information between DEC, other units of the Bank, and the “developing community” that is used to create knowledge. The regions, networks, and the World Bank Institute also perform research and in some instances provide information for DEC.

As discussed previously, the regions cover each of the globe’s continents. The regions focus their attention primarily on the research required to respond “to immediate problems arising in operational work” and in some cases “long-term research” (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 28). The amount of research conducted by the regions varies and is largely a function of their staffing. Unlike DEC they do not have full-time staff devoted to research. Of all of the regions, the Latin America and Caribbean region is the most research-intensive group and operates with “an annual budget of several million dollars” (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 28). Other regions generally devote less time to research and report a limited number and spectrum of findings. Latin America does much of its own research due to the fact that DEC’s main priorities are focused on

the entire world and do not always address problems specific to a given region. This has helped Latin America and Caribbean to become a leader among the regions (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 132).

Each of the six networks, which were established officially in 1998, has its own area of expertise. A network's primary function is to "collaborate with and provide services to each of the regions in their area of expertise" (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 28). Basically, the networks have the task of taking the research information and knowledge produced by DEC, translating it and then using it to teach. The research is different between networks, and usually depends upon what is needed by a given region.

The final group is the World Bank Institute (WBI). This group differs significantly when compared to the other entities. In short, it is devoted to "learning programs and policy advice" (Rogoff et al. 2006). According to the WBI's website, its primary goal is to act as a "global connector of knowledge, learning, and innovation for poverty reduction" (The World Bank Group 2010). The WBI seeks to help the officials of developing countries achieve efficient development policies by working through "global, regional and country-based institutions" (The World Bank Group 2010).

The WBI was originally named the Economic Development Institute (EDI) on March 11, 1955. It was intended to be a division devoted to serving as a "college" for senior ranking officials from developing countries to discuss development policies and programs and to be a forum for officials to learn from one another's experiences. The first six-month course began in January 1956 with fourteen participants from around the world. It included representatives from countries such as Colombia, Egypt, India, Japan, Mexico, Thailand, Uganda, and Yugoslavia. The course was a combination of seminars, discussions, and meetings that lasted through the

entire day. Inspired by the success of the first course, the EDI continued to create more courses, with some offered in different languages including French and Spanish.

In 2000, EDI was renamed the World Bank Institute. Today, the WBI has developed over 1,000 learning experiences and courses for about 80,000 clients in 120 countries (The World Bank Group 2011a). Each year, the WBI also gives more than 350 scholarships to enable officials to attend its programs. The WBI frequently works with other parts of the Bank and experts in development economics to create the courses.

Criticisms of World Bank Research

Although the Bank's research has been influential in spurring thought and debate on key development issues, the Bank's research clearly has room for improvement. In some cases, the research performed is not meaningful for the policymakers, development community, and academics. According to a 2006 evaluation report on the research program, "the quality of execution does not always match the importance and the relevance of the topic, and is often unacceptably far behind best-practice methods" (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 38). In addition, the different departments that conduct research are not held to the same standards of quality. DEC research is evaluated every three years. In the Rogoff evaluation that was conducted from 1998 to 2006, interviews revealed discontent between the different research divisions.

One leading research in DEC says that the networks are 'out of control' and another is even more blunt: 'Research outside DEC – with a few notable exceptions – is even more practical. It is essentially a form of rhetoric. It is often not about doing research to discover new knowledge but to justify some previously determined policy. It is not unusual to be told that 'we should do an evaluation to prove that X program works', for instance. Or 'we have to run some regressions to show that Y agenda matters for growth otherwise we will not have Bank buy-in.' Peer reviewing is often fixed by appointing cronies as reviewers who are not in a position to make critical comments' (Rogoff et al. 2009, p. 125).

In order to promote quality work, the Bank must establish a system wherein each research unit of the Bank is evaluated based on the same standards (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 151).

Some of these cases might require the help of outside sources and experts on given topics. According to Tara Das, “For official Bank documents, there is a required series of intensive reviews by peer external to the producing unit, which necessitates final approval by senior management like the lead health specialist and sector management” (2009, p. 219). He also underscores the importance of peer review: “The aim of peer review is to achieve accuracy and consistency in World Bank information, which explains Bank borrowing from sister UN agencies in addition to information stability within the Bank” (2009, p. 220). For example, when confronting the struggle against HIV and AIDS different regions in the Bank discuss their findings with one another or even with outside agencies such as WHO to gain more insight and understanding of certain problems and issues (Das 2009, p. 220). Some of the publications that are produced do not always take into consideration the views of experts on the topics covered. In contrast to Das’s depiction of knowledge production at the Bank, others have criticized the Bank’s lack of diversity among the staff. “Over the years, generations of economists who have been recruited by the Bank have created an argot within the Bank that is closely aligned with the argot of economics, which in turn creates high entry costs for other disciplines” (Rao and Woolcock 2007, p. 480). Scholars say the Bank must employ a staff having a wider spectrum of expertise in order to produce research that is meaningful, comprehensive and substantial.

As in the world of goods and services, the world of development ideas and evidence should be characterized by diversity, free trade, and equitable competition, not monopolies, high barriers to entry, and disdain for others who do things ‘differently’. Development problems rarely map neatly or obviously onto a single discipline; accordingly, the diversity of the World Bank’s research staff and the content of its research agenda should be such that it can respond most effectively and imaginatively to those problems (Rao and Woolcock 2007, p. 483).

The Bank's lack of staff diversity is not the only issue affecting the quality of its research. Researchers at the Bank have limited time to conduct research for programs such as, among others, the "social capital initiative" (Bebbington 2007, p. 345).

There is only a handful of social scientists in the Bank's research complex who have reasonable amounts of time to think and write. The vast majority of the social development group do not have such time and when they do get a few weeks here and there to write and think, such time is generally paid for by resources external to the Bank. The very patchy quality of the research emerging from this group is clearly indicative of this. In such a context, the Bank is very unlikely to be a source of intellectually significant research into the social dimensions of development (Bebbington 2007, p. 345).

It is also important to examine each of the flagship publications produced by the World Bank and its role in disseminating the Bank's research findings.

3. Public Outreach

The Bank's research is distributed to target audiences in many ways, including via the operational staff, developing country policymakers, the development community and academics (DEC 2009). In order to reach a broad and diverse group of people, the Bank employs several mechanisms, including Policy Research Working Papers, Policy Research Reports and books, *World Development Reports*, *The World Bank Economic Review*, and the *World Bank Research Observer*, *Doing Business*², articles in peer-reviewed journals, conferences and workshops, and more recently the research website (DEC 2009). In addition to these materials, researchers from DEC are required to publish two articles each year. "Between FY 1998 and 2005, Bank staff produced more than 2,000 articles in peer-reviewed journals" (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 30). Each of these research vehicles provides information and knowledge from the Bank for a variety of consumers. For example, *The World Bank Research Observer* is geared for those with a "professional interest in development" while the *World Development Reports* are meant to serve in-depth review for experts and policymakers on key global issues.

As mentioned above, a major criticism of the Bank is the lack of diversity in expertise among its researchers. In 2009, the World Bank produced a WDR on "reshaping economic geography" which was severely criticized by geographers who claimed: "It does a disservice to economic geography and it elides many or most of the interesting debates in development geography" (Rigg et al. 2009, p. 134). Although this WDR contained informative material on the "spatial unevenness of development" it lacked input from professional geographers. A group

² *Doing Business* was established in 2002 and looks at "domestic small and medium-size companies and measures the regulations applying to them through their life cycle. By gathering and analyzing comprehensive quantitative data to compare business regulation environments across economies and over time, *Doing Business* encourages countries to compete towards more efficient regulation; offers measurable benchmarks for reform; and serves as a resource for academics, journalists, private sector researchers and others interested in the business climate of each country" (The World Bank Group 2011c). *Doing Business* analyzes 183 economies around the world.

of scholars complained: “how would economists feel if a group of geographers sought to re-shape economics and blithely ignored their scholarship” (Rigg et al. 2009, p. 135). The limited amount of pressure from within the Bank to obtain the input of outside sources on research topics affects the quality of research and, especially, its acceptance by outside experts. The geographers noted the Bank’s inability to convey its information effectively due to its lack of innovation and its “narrow perspective” on the effects of problems and outcomes of the major issues (Rigg et al. 2009, p. 135). The Bank requests input from some external experts and consultants in certain fields, but this is not a mandatory procedure. The 2006 evaluation report “found that non-Bank advice and consultation is done on a largely haphazard basis and largely left to individual researchers” (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 39). Because the Bank does not monitor external involvement there is a very limited amount of work that is co-authored by outside researchers. The Bank allows outside researchers to publish their findings in WB journals on topics the Bank is covering, but only through a highly competitive submission procedure. This usually results in low numbers of publications (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 30).

The Bank’s research has proven to be quite accurate and is accepted by many scholars, despite the limited involvement of researchers outside of the economics discipline. Its public outreach pieces are changing the world of development by presenting new information and ideas. “Since the mid-1990s, the Bank as a whole has been publishing an average of around 100 books per year on economic development.” Overall, the Bank published nearly 2,000 books and 9,000 articles (DEC 2010). The Bank has undergone an extensive transformation over the last forty years. Appendix Table 1.1 presents a detailed list compiled from a web archive study that shows the evolution of the scope of research at the World Bank since 1997. Each year the Bank has restructured and in some years it added to its case load.

The *World Development Reports* (WDRs), produced annually by DEC, have provided benchmark data and analysis since 1978. These have presented new material and perspectives on rising issues. “The WDRs are a prominent mechanism by which the World Bank seeks to extend its world view, to pre-fame development debates, and to ‘naturalize’ particular economic and political discourses” (Mawdsley and Rigg 2002, p. 108). The Chief Economist, who aims to improve viewpoints on a particular issue and its relationship to development, selects the topics in advance. The topic does not have to be entirely new; it can be a revisit of older subject matters.

Table 5 shows the topics covered in each of the WDRs.

Table 5. Topics in *World Development Reports*, ranked by frequency of inclusion

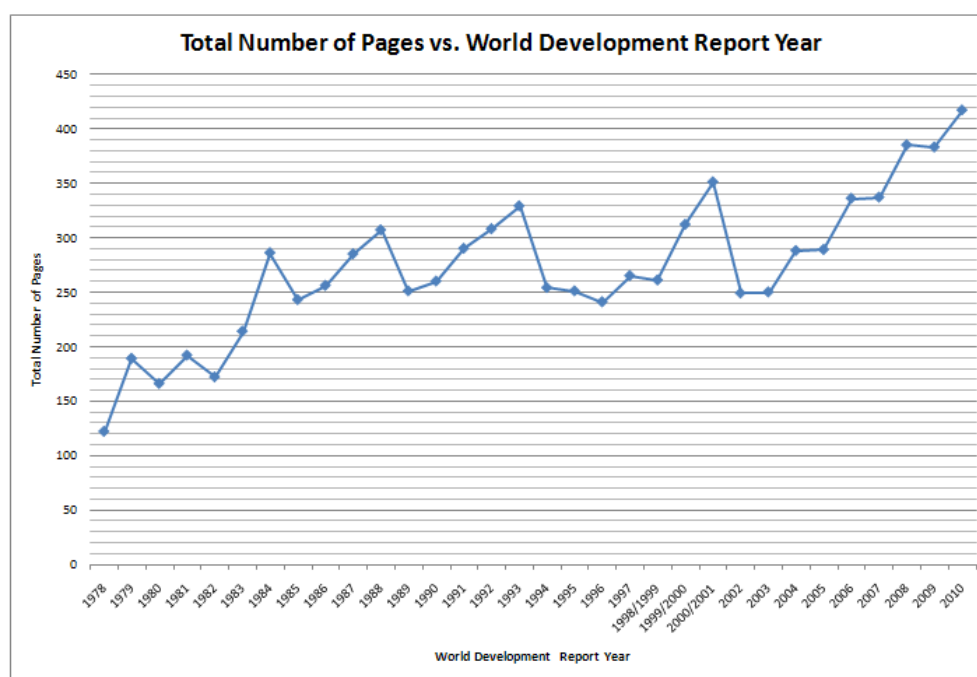
Theme	World Development Report
Macroeconomics and Economic Growth	2005, 2002, 1999/2000, 1997, 1996, 1991, 1985, 1983, 1981, 1979, 1978
Public Sector	2004, 2002, 1997, 1996, 1991, 1988, 1983, 1979
Poverty Reduction: Development through the Decades	2006, 2000/2001, 1990, 1980, 1978
Private Sector	2005, 2002, 1995, 1991, 1983
Trade	2009, 1987, 1986, 1981
Health, Nutrition, and Populations	2007, 2004, 1993, 1984
Environment	2010, 2003, 1992
Agriculture	2008, 1986, 1982
Education	2007, 2004, 1998/1999
Labor	2007, 2005, 1995
Finance	1989, 1988, 1985
Urban Development	2009, 1999/2000
Rural Development	2008, 1982
Law and Development	2006, 1996
Gender	1993, 1984
Social Development	2007
Governance	2007
Science & Technology Development	1998/1999
Infrastructure	1994
Industry	1987

(Source: The World Bank 2011)

Once a topic is selected, the Chief Economist invites a group of elite researchers who work collaboratively to gather data and prepare the book. Eight fulltime researchers are assigned to the book and dedicate about a year to the project. Although each of the researchers is specifically selected, the WDRs are not limited to his/her opinions. The books compile data and knowledge from both inside and outside the Bank. Many experts from around the world are consulted on the assigned topic. These reports are made available to the public worldwide. They are published in PDF format online – and are available free of charge – and in hard copy by World Bank Publications and Oxford University Press. “Policy makers with all 30 WDRs in their libraries can access an enormous amount of information on past and current economic theory and practice. They have at their disposal a wealth of research done within and outside the Bank” (Yusuf 2009, p. 47).

The size of the WDRs has grown since the first WDR was published in 1987 from 68 pages to over 300. Figure 4 shows the report’s growth in page numbers.

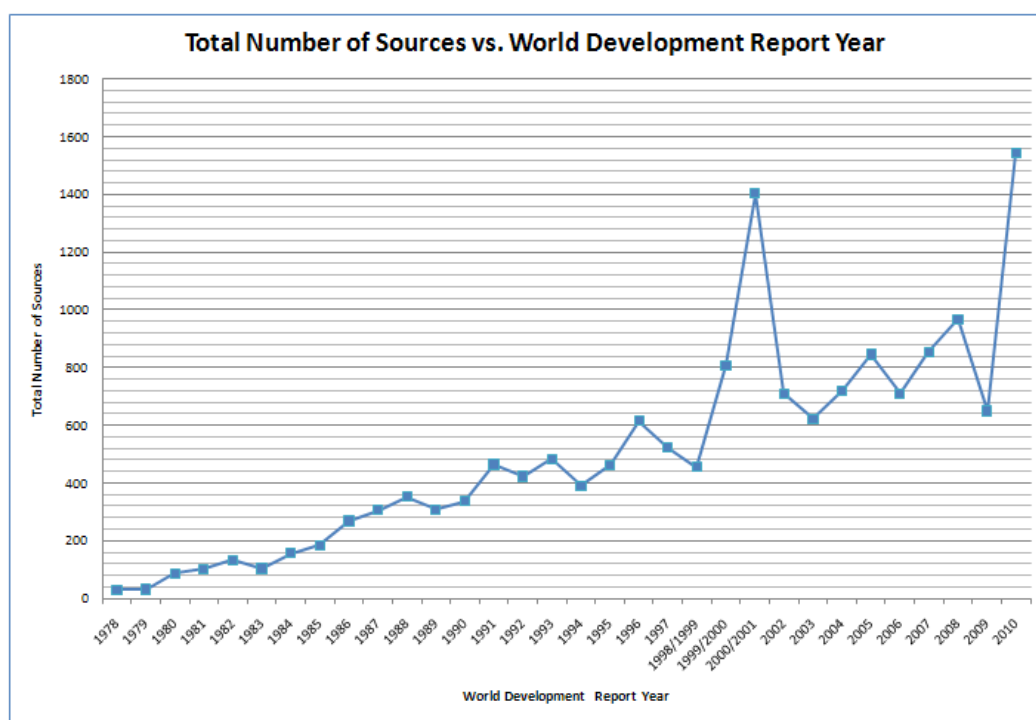
Figure 4. Total Number of Pages in each *World Development Report*



(Source: The World Bank 2011)

The WDR's increase in page numbers has also been accompanied by a significant increase in the number of sources utilized. Figure 5 illustrates a growth from about 39 to more than 1500 sources cited in the WDR. Those with the most were the 2000/2001 WDR (on poverty) which cited 1400 sources, and the 2010 WDR (on global climate change) which cited nearly 1500.

Figure 5. Total Number of Sources per *World Development Report*



(Source: The World Bank 2011)

The WDRs have had sufficient influence to change perspective on development policy. This does not necessarily lead to agreement among experts or academics in the particular fields. Instead, the WDRs accomplish this by simply offering alternative viewpoints. For example, after the publication of the 1984 WDR, which was subtitled *Population Change and Development* and presented the Bank's perspective on the issue, the National Academy of Sciences published an

opposing opinion (National Research Council 1986). However, despite the conflict, both publications were viewed as academically legitimate.

The WDRs are not intended to encompass all material ever produced or discussed on a given topic. They instead usually rely heavily on research and data produced within the Bank. The WDRs currently account for about 10% of the Bank's research budget. In an evaluation of World Bank research, critics claimed the Reports "lack sharpness and focus, and are sometimes incoherent, especially when it proves impossible to reconcile the views of the various commentators and authors" (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 8). The WDRs have also been severely criticized for their subscription to "win-win" scenarios. The Bank might suggest that a policy needs to be changed or improved but then fails to address the negative consequences of those changes. For example, "growth and environmental improvement are never seen in conflict, because poverty and pollution are social problems that each mark institutional failure, so that institutional repair can somehow lead to both being dealt with simultaneously" (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 81). There is seldom discussion on the possible tradeoffs of pursuing certain policies versus others. The WDRs avoid discussing the realities of decision making. This is possibly the result of growing political pressures. In an article written by Emma Madwsley and Jonathan Rigg, they explain how politics have shaped the WDRs.

WDRs have sought to draw attention away from the unequal structures of global power – whether they be mediated through US hegemony, the IMF, WTO, western financial markets or historical experience. At the national and international level, domestic policy 'choices' (over some of which poorer countries may in fact have little autonomy), are being increasingly examined in isolation from wider global inequalities – whether of consumption, institutional dominance, military power or financial leverage (2003, p. 282-283).

The WDRs are very time consuming and require extensive resources at the World Bank. "The need to produce one every year is an enormous tax on Bank research, and the team leaders are

often the Bank's most senior and productive researchers. And in part because of the pressure to include everything, there is a huge overlap from one WDR to another; in particular, there are chapters in the reports on poverty, on sustainable development, on service delivery, and on equity, that are virtually interchangeable. It is hard to believe that it is a good use of such skilled researchers to have them rewrite the same thing in different words year after year" (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 84).

Conversely, insiders describe the World Bank less critically. For these scholars the World Bank has an "intellectual agenda" and seeks to be a leader in economics to produce information and programs for development. This agenda is its means to attain legitimacy among scholars and policymakers (Marshall 2008; Dethier 2007 a, b). The World Bank helps define the practice of development economics by performing experiments with policies, evaluating the effects of these policies, and then publishing the findings to benefit the development community.

4. What makes a Think Tank a Think Tank?

Think tanks have been a growing phenomenon in the past decade due to their growing expertise on world issues. Although these institutions are relatively new to the international stage, each generates knowledge and is increasingly becoming more useful for governmental actors, other international institutions and, more importantly, the public. After World War II, think tanks became an information source for governments and the public. These institutions had the ability to produce knowledge in innovative ways. “They were relatively small, and as independent organizations, they had no vested bureaucratic interests and could thus, take synergetic, trans-departmental perspectives on problems” (McGann & Sabatini 2011, p. 35). From 1945 onward, think tanks have provided answers to policy questions for the public and governments worldwide.

James McGann (2010), Director of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, defines think tanks or “public policy research, analysis, and engagement institutions” as “organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues in an effort to enable policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues” (p. 14). Many experts view think tanks as being synonymous with policy institutes³ (Center for Media and Democracy 2011). Think tanks can be independent or connected with another institution. These groups “act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities, serving in the public interest as an independent voice that translates applied and basic research into a language and form that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for policymakers and the public” (McGann 2010, p. 14).

³ For more information on think tanks, SourceWatch (Center for Media and Democracy) and Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.) both have sites. The SourceWatch page provides a detailed description as well as a comprehensive list of think tanks from around the world. Wikipedia has a think tank page also, which describes the different functions, types, and some criticism of think tanks. The site also provides an expansive list of think tanks.

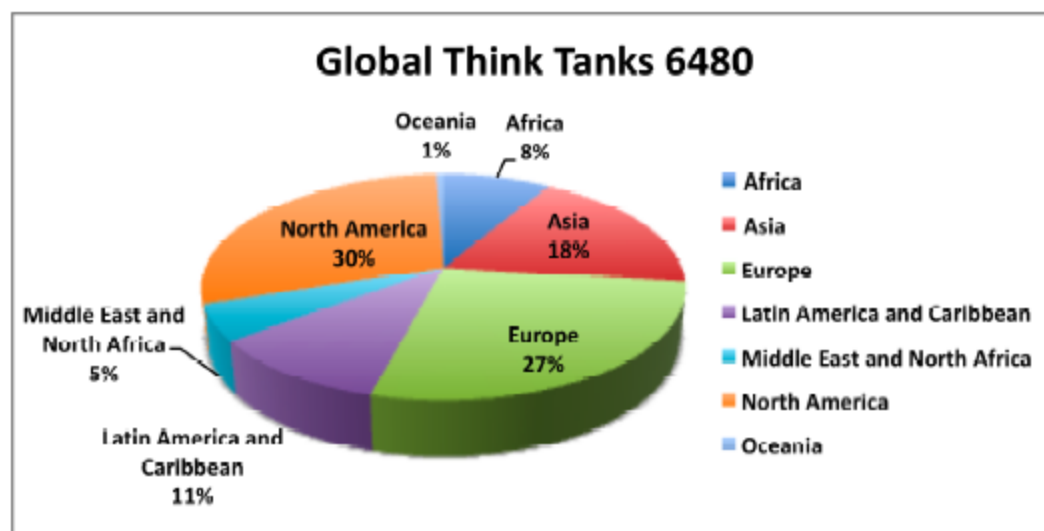
Each institution can offer a range of services to its clientele, from unique policy research analyses to “educating and engaging policymakers”. Overall, think tanks have one characteristic in common: “the individuals in them attempt to make academic theories and scientific paradigms policy relevant” (McGann 2010, p. 15). Although each think tank can perform its own functions, it has six important roles. The first is to conduct research analysis on policy issues and solutions using the approach of a university. Second, think tanks are able to conduct emergency research in order to provide advice on pressing policy concerns. These issues can cover a wide range of topics. At times, think tanks will sometimes even offer seminars and discussions for the media and policy officials. The third common role for think tanks is the assessment of government issues. These are usually performed at the request of the government and can cover topics that range from military to social concerns. The fourth role involves the think tank staff’s “interpretation of policies and current events” to the public (McGann 2010, p. 18). As technology has progressed the latter has become focused on electronic outreach, such as website updates, blog posts, videos, and sound bites. These are influential pieces that enable the public to gather opinions and viewpoints on current issues.

The fifth role of think tanks is to serve as the “facilitator” for various groups to “exchange ideas” (McGann 2010, p. 19). Here, the development of extensive relationship and verbal communication skills are essential. Many times government officials are not knowledgeable in key areas and are generally more inclined to learn from a discussion with an expert than from reading an article on the topic. This provides for an efficient transfer of experience and knowledge. Examples include briefings, conferences, and seminars.

The sixth and final role of think tanks is to provide education for policymakers and personnel for government positions. This is a vitally important feature because it gives governments access to a highly educated and knowledgeable group on policy.

Since no ranking system existed, McGann assembled the first source list of all think tanks. After reviewing numerous databases and interviewing many experts on think tanks, he “identified a universe of 6,480 institutions”, each of which had its own background and served roles that defined it as a think tank (McGann 2011b, p.7). Some of these performed one or more of the six roles. In order to determine a more accurate definition of think tanks, McGann hired 30 interns and assigned them to obtaining detailed background information on each institution. Figure 6 displays the worldwide distribution of think tanks. North America currently has the most think with a total of 1913 (McGann 2011b).

Figure 6. 2010 Global Distribution of Think Tanks by Region



(Source: McGann 2011b, p. 15)

Each of these institutions works to promote and develop policies and programs for both policymakers and the public. After the contact list and information on each institution was gathered, a complete “Think Tanks and Civil Societies database” was compiled and sent to each

member. In order to continue his work, McGann is now conducting the first “comprehensive ranking of the world’s top think tanks based on a worldwide survey of 1500 scholars, policymakers, journalists and regional and subject area experts” (McGann 2011b, p. 5). Each of the 6,480 established think tanks was invited to participate in the process. McGann also created a panel of 250 experts from a variety of fields to help with the nomination and selection process. A formal review procedure was created for the ranking. First, an announcement letter was sent to each of the 6,480 institutions asking for recommendations and suggestions for improving the current system for identifying a think tank. In addition, a letter was sent to each of the experts McGann had identified requesting a critique of his methods and the research that was to be used in the ranking system (McGann 2011b, p. 6-7). The process is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. The 2010 Global Go To Think Tank Rankings Process

Date	Process
March 7, 2010	An ‘input letter’ was distributed to expert panelists from 2009 asking for suggestions and/or critiques. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A team of interns analyzed income responses from March – May 2010. - A new team of interns developed a modified selection process to be used for the 2010 rankings.
June 21, 2010	An ‘announcement letter’ was distributed to all known think tanks in the recently updated database, informing them of the modified selection process and inviting further suggestions.
June 31, 2010	An expert panel email was sent out asking for an evaluation of 2009’s subjective criteria.
July 10, 2010	A reminder letter is sent out to expert panelists and think tanks for final criteria and methodology suggestions.
July 15, 2010	All known think tanks will be asked for the first round of nominations via email and survey link.
September / November 29, 2010	Think Tanks that receive five or more nominations will be placed on a rankings ballot and included in an online survey distributed to the entire think tank universe to determine the finalists.
December 2010 / January 2011	An Expert Panel will evaluate each nominee based on specific criteria that accounts for the regional biases often encountered in the public policy research field.

(Source: McGann 2011b, p. 11-12)

Experts on think tanks have criticized McGann's work for being subjective and inaccurate. Goran Buldioski⁴, a director of the Open Society Institute Think Tank Fund, pointed out a large number of flaws within the ranking system and McGann's current definition. Overall, he says, "Apart from making more people sensitive of the world think tank, this study has little added value. As someone who works with think tanks, studies think tanks, writes about think tanks, I see very little value in it. Therefore, it is high time to move to alternatives to this study" (Buldioski 2011).

Buldioski's comments and evaluations of the study raise serious questions. For example, what are the precise requirements for a think tank to be ranked, besides simply being included in the survey? Will this information ever become public? He points out that some of the think tanks included in the list are in fact not think tanks but, in reality, are donor institutions such as National Endowment for Democracy. He recommends that McGann and the Think Tanks and Foreign Policy Program focus on studies for "Best Policy Study" or "Best Advocacy Campaign by a Think Tank" where value judgment can be made.

⁴ Goran Buldioski is a program director for the Open Society Institute Think Tank Fund. He focuses on "strategic planning and capacity building of NGOs and independent policy centers, organizational and project management in the nonprofit sector, and development of democratic and participatory policy change in Eastern and Central Europe" (Open Society Foundations 2011). He recently published entitled "Think Instead of Thanks," which is centered on think tanks.

5. The World Bank: a Super Think Tank

Until recent, McGann and Johnson (2005) did not classify the World Bank as a think tank because its primary relationship was with rich governments. Further, in a personal interview with McGann this year, when questioned about his exclusion of the World Bank, he attributed the decision to “choices” and said it was not considered for the list because not all of the 1500 scholars included it in their individual lists (McGann 2011a). Instead, the scholars voted and included merely one unit within the Bank, the WBI, which they ranked as number 1 among the “Best Government Affiliated Think Tanks”. Table 7 displays the outcome of the votes for the top 20 ranked in this category.

Table 7. Best Government Affiliated Think Tanks

Rank	Think Tank (Country)
1.	World Bank Institute (WBI), World Bank, (United States)
2.	Congressional Research Service, (United States)
3.	Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, (United Kingdom)
4.	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), (China)
5.	European Union Institute for Security Studies, (France)
6.	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), (Norway)
7.	United Nations University (UNU), (Japan)
8.	Korea Development Institute (KDI), (South Korea)
9.	German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, (Germany)
10.	China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), (China)
11.	Shanghai Institute for International Studies, (China)
12.	Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), (Russia)
13.	Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (RIETI), (Japan)
14.	Council of Policy Advisors EU, (Belgium)
15.	China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), (China)
16.	Polish Institute of International Affairs, (Poland)
17.	Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, (India)
18.	Institute for Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS), (South Korea)
19.	Center for Eastern Studies, (Poland)
20.	Information and Decision Support Center, (Egypt)

(Source: McGann 2011, p. 46-47)

In contrast, after reviewing the historical evolution of the World Bank it became quite evident that it, in fact, exhibits all the think tank characteristics. The World Bank produces

world-class knowledge on development issues. For years the Bank has worked to establish an institution where economic development is at the core of its goals and policy recommendations. The Bank, however, cannot be limited to a think tank. Instead, with all the effort and years dedicated time to improving its research, development, and public outreach, it has earned its place as a *super think tank*. The Bank accomplishes all of the prescribed necessities laid out in McGann's definition and more. Each year its knowledge is distributed around the world to an extraordinary number of organizations, individuals and political officials.

The Bank's wide range of interests along with its international outreach has earned it a place among the world's leading think tanks. Its research efforts have employed many people from developing countries. DEC collaborates with developing countries on different projects. From 2005-2007, the Bank spent \$31.5 million on consultants from all over (DEC 2009, p. 37). Of this, "a total of 139 projects involved consultants from developing countries, with 446 contracts going to individuals or institutions based in developing countries for a total of \$5.5 million (17 percent of the total)" (DEC 2009, p. 37). The Bank has a competitive advantage as a result of its relationships with countries around the world and its highly influential research. John Toye, a Senior Research Associate in the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford, said, "Some international public institutions have, nevertheless, wanted to be intellectual actors, rather than just investors in the production of knowledge. In the field of economic and social development, perhaps the foremost contemporary repository of this ambition is the World Bank" (2009, p. 298).

When considering the definition McGann used in each of his pieces on think tanks the Bank meets each criterion. It conducts research similar to a university through DEC, the regions, networks, and the WBI. As mentioned in section 2, each of the units of the research program

work together to compile research (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 32). This is then published in the different public outreach pieces, which were discussed in section 3. Next, the World Bank addresses immediate or urgent issues. The World Bank's website has several links to sources that address these. They include: Press Releases, Development News, Speeches, and Broadcast & Multimedia (The World Bank Group 2011d). Under the "Development News" link there is a list of press reviews, which are as current as the day before. This link has a variety of news articles on current issues and the potential effects on economies. On May 2, 2011, the main section was entitled "Gold And Oil Dip On News Of Bin Laden's Death" and had three feature articles from different news sources (The World Bank Group 2011e).

The Bank works continuously with developing countries on problems and government policies. It creates projects in clientele countries and then evaluates the effectiveness of the project, with the goal of making appropriate alterations for improvements. DEC has been enhancing its public outreach by improving the website and information released to the public. In 2008, DEC "had 16.85 million page views, which represents a 12.8 percent increase over FY07 (14.7 million page views). The growth rate in traffic between FY06 (12 million page views) and FY07 was 22 percent" (DEC 2009, p. 34). This allows the Bank to reach audiences wherever Internet access is possible. The WBI, with the help of other departments within the Bank, including DEC, provides conferences and courses that enable political officials to facilitate discussion on development policies. Finally, the Bank helps governments by training their officials. Each of these examples illustrates that the Bank accomplishes each of the six roles McGann laid out in his book on think tanks.

The Bank, as evidenced by its history and breakdown in research structure, clearly provides policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues, and

establishes a forum for governmental officials from around the world to discuss these recommendations, and generates new ideas for progress in development. The Bank seeks to serve the interest of the developing community and the public by creating influential research that can be used to change the world for the better. Each of the publications released by the Bank, from journal articles to *World Development Reports*, communicates directly to academic and other experts on crucial topics (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 76). The World Bank does more than the normal think tank, which may perform a few of the essential roles as defined by McGann. The Bank has even been top ranked "...in the IDEAS ranking of research institutions on development which is based on the RePEc database, 'World Bank' was ranked No. 1 and the subset of the World Bank, 'Economics Research, World Bank' (which is essentially the DEC Research Group) was ranked No. 2 in January 2009" (DEC 2009, p. 17). Among others, the top ranked institutions included Harvard, Chicago, and Oxford. There is no question that improvements can be made, but few institutions have the capacity to produce the knowledge the Bank currently does as a result of its relationships and the impacts it has had over time.

6. The Future of the World Bank

In order for the World Bank to remain a super think tank, it must make some immediate changes. Its research program has been reviewed by a panel of outside experts three times during its existence, as discussed in section 2. Unfortunately, some of the recommendations of these panels are yet to be implemented and it is becoming increasingly urgent for the Bank to recognize and address the associated problems. The changes must include maintaining an adequate Research Support Budget, improving the governing and communication structure of the research department, “aligning incentives for researchers, providing better incentives to staff to carry out research,” and finally, ensuring that political pressures do not alter policy recommendations (DEC 2009, p. 13).

In each of the evaluations there was a recommendation that the Bank increase the amount of funding for research. When the Bank was first created it was designed to be a resource of both financing and advice for developing countries. However, as the years passed, a growing number of banks and lending institutions entered the market. Thus, for developing nations, the World Bank is no longer the sole provider of financial assistance or the “only game in town” (Dethier 2011). In a book by Fareed Zakaria, this concern is evident when he states:

Moises Naim, editor of *Foreign Policy* magazine, tells a story about the Nigerian government negotiating a \$5 million loan for train systems with the World Bank in 2007. The bank had insisted that the government clean up the notoriously corrupt railway bureaucracy before it approved the loan. The deal was almost done when the Chinese government stepped in and offered the government a \$9 billion loan to rebuild the entire train system – with no strings, no requirements, no need for any reform. The World Bank was sent home within days (Zakaria 2008, p. 117).

The opportunity to deal with banks that are geographically closer, are less likely to impose difficult conditions on borrowers, and are not run by international governments has weakened the Bank’s competitive advantage as a financial lender.

Three things have altered the availability and costs of World Bank resources. First, wealthy non-borrowing members have reduced their contributions to the institution. Second, an increasingly onerous bureaucratic process has grown up within the World Bank – principally as a way for the large bureaucracy to mitigate risks within its own walls. Finally, the conditions attached to loans have grown in breadth and depth. The result of the three forces described is that developing countries are displaying a diminishing appetite for borrowing from the World Bank (Woods 2006, p. 189).

However, some smaller countries still need the Bank’s continuous financial assistance due to either their size or limited resources and relationships, factors that hinder them from getting access to loans elsewhere. It is essential for the Bank to realize its competitive advantage in the 21st century is no longer derived solely from financial assistance but, more importantly, its accumulated knowledge and research capabilities. Although other banks might be physically closer or more willing to loan without stipulations, they do not have the level of expertise, the ability to see and predict trends and, more importantly, the developmental policy programs these countries need in order to stabilize and grow to their full potential.

The World Bank’s research budget began to decline significantly in the past several years. It is important for nations and donors to recognize the need for the World Bank to sustain the research budget in order to support the work and knowledge produced by DEC and the other research-oriented departments. This is essential to maintaining the Bank’s position as a *super think tank* on global development and public policy advocacy. Currently, DECRG is the only unit of the Bank dedicated to conducting research, and its research is highly regarded (Rogoff et al. 2006, p. 46). “It is focused on the practical usefulness of its work, rather than pursuing economic theory or method for its own sake, and is able to exploit the World Bank’s unique potential to carry out empirical and evaluative studies, as well, as methodological research” (DEC 2009, p. 13). However, the size of the staff in DECRG has declined over time due to its limited budget. The result is that it has fewer resources to respond to the demands of projects

and their evaluations. This has a downward spiral effect that pushes the timing back on all projects. In addition to staff shortages, cutbacks have been made in research areas, including “agriculture and rural development, trade research, and research on growth in fragile and post-conflict states” (DEC 2009, p. 76). This threat to the Bank’s competitiveness is growing and is seen as inability to confront new and growing issues, such as “macro stabilization in open economies, fiscal policy, financial sector regulation, social protection, rapid monitoring of poverty impacts and impact evaluation for responses to crisis” (DEC 2009, p. 77). In order to counter the consequences of a declining budget it is crucial for every unit of the Bank to be on the same page and recommending the same policies.

Each member of DEC is required to publish two articles in peer-reviewed journal each year. This is intended to maintain the Bank’s reputation and provide public outreach. However, the main goal of the Bank’s research is not to “maximize published output but to maximize the Bank’s development impact” (DEC 2009, p. 78). The researchers have the responsibility to study projects and policies and make effective recommendations on changes and modifications. Their work is to be innovative in providing critical solutions. In order to ensure that the quality of work on development is state-of-the-art and informative, all researchers must have the same incentives to achieving better solutions. It is also imperative that the Bank’s Chief Economist and Research Committee are keeping the staff abreast of issues current and past. Some questions and research projects requested by developing countries may have already been answered or completed and perhaps are known to not have a potential solution. “A sound understanding of the relevant theory and methods is crucial for the credibility of the answers researchers give to their questions posed by colleagues in operations and client countries. Researchers need to continually update their knowledge. Too often researchers maintain essentially the same tool kit

they picked up in graduate school. This stifles creativity and the ability to respond to new and interesting questions” (DEC 2009, p. 77-78). Each researcher must have some form of training and education, which is continuous throughout their time at the Bank. This will help in keeping them up to date on key issues and aware of each others’ incentives and work. It is also important for researchers in the different divisions of the research program to communicate with each other.

DEC relies on the regions, networks, and the WBI to ensure that they are researching important and well-defined issues. The relationships among these groups can be strengthened in several ways:

(i) reviewing more frequently the priorities of research; (ii) organizing more research or other knowledge work on country-specific topics jointly produced by DEC and the Networks; (iii) providing more frequent feedback on ongoing research; (iv) organizing more seminars to disseminate important research findings; and (v) improving the research website and using interactive blogs (DEC 2009, p. 13).

The Bank’s reduced budget has also affected the incentives provided to its staff. The staff in the Operations department used to receive extra benefits if they worked on research, but as the budget continues to decrease these incentives are being eliminated. This limits the amount of extra research being done by other divisions within the Bank. If the Bank is going to continue to produce quality work, it must keep the budget and provide incentives for other departments to participate in the research process.

The other major issue currently facing the Bank is the pressure from political actors that attempt to dictate policies for developing countries.

The IMF and the World Bank are powerful and coercive instruments of the international community and bastions of a dominant way of thinking about economic policy and the global economy – or so they are perceived across developing, emerging, and transition economies. Wealthy countries dominate the board of each agency and have arrogated to themselves the right to choose the head of each organization. Furthermore, when the institutions lend, their wealthiest members can bolster conditionality by bringing to bear

considerable political pressure of their own. Yet the IMF and World Bank do not always succeed in their mission. As staff within each agency put it, “politics” too often gets in the way (Woods 2006, p. 65).

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, many scholars have commented on the Bank’s lending operations over the past forty years. When the Bank and the IMF lends to a developing country there is usually a requirement or “conditionality” placed on the loan. These conditionalities, also known as Structural Adjustment Programs, require some countries to liberalize and follow the “Washington Consensus Model,” which can make developing countries vulnerable in the international markets. If a country does not agree to this requirement the Bank can refuse the loan. For many countries, these programs do not always work and the process has created demand for new incentives and new measures. Each developing country has its own unique structure and a “one size fits all” approach to solutions no longer works. The Bank has recognized this and has made adjustments to create more country-specific policies. However, the Bank has faced increasing pressure from political donors and sponsoring trust funds to focus on particular needs or issues both when lending and doing research. The Bank, however, must be free of control by politics if it is going to produce unbiased research that is informative and influential.

As time goes on, more and more issues have arisen that require attention. With the crisis in Japan and the potential for a single earthquake to produce major problems for numerous countries, there is a need for new research to generate the policies and effectively measure their impacts on interdependent countries. “New research has been launched to assess what factors helped countries achieve resiliency to the ongoing economic and financial crisis. Preliminary results from DEC research suggest that many developing countries were much better prepared to respond to this crisis than more developed countries, in part because of higher fiscal surpluses, a

better build-up of reserves, lower inflation, and avoidance of currency mismatches which could have led to exchange rate speculation and insolvency” (DEC 2010, p. 24).

The Bank needs to learn from history and change with the times. The Bank’s research effort must continue to seek new ways to create better policies. As advised by Bank insiders, “Given the combination of global operational engagement cutting across many sectors, it is essential to sustain the role of the Bank as an intellectual leader in the development field. This means being in a position where it can help identify more emerging issues, both of a global and country-level nature, and play a catalyzing role in the intellectual debate” (DEC 2010, p. 30). This is the role of a Super Think Tank, the World Bank.

Appendix

Table 1.1 The Scope of Research at the World Bank from Web Archive Study

(Source: Internet Archive 2011)

Year	Research Topics
1997	At this time the Bank had two separate sections, one for Development Issues and one for Research. The Development topics covered: Agriculture, Economics and Trade, Environment, Finance and Private Sector Development, Human Resources and Poverty, Infrastructure and Urban. The Research portion had nothing available until later in 1997, when three issues emerged in development economics, including microeconomic, macroeconomic, and sectoral. Major Topics included: Environment, Infrastructure & Agriculture, Public Economics, Finance and Private Sector Development, Poverty and Human Resources, Macroeconomic Growth, and Regionally focused Research Programs.
1998	Development Topics: Anti-Corruption, Education & Training, Energy, Environment, Financial Sector, Gender, Health, Nutrition & Population, Informatics & Telecommunications, International Economics & Trade, Labor & Social Protection, Law & Development, Mining, Participation, Poverty Reduction, Public Sector, Private Sector Development, Rural Development & Agriculture, Social Development, Transport, Urban Development, and Water Supply & Sanitation. (Nothing present for Research links)
1999	Same Development Topics as 1998 except Research has been added to this list. Major topics under Research: (1) Human Development Research- AIDS Economics, Public Economics of Health Reform, Early Child Development, Impact Evaluation of Education Reforms, Poverty and Social Protection in Transition Economies, Decentralization of Safety Nets in Transition Economies, Public Sector Downsizing, Public Pension Reform, Gender Disparity in South Asia, Educational Attainment and Enrollment Around the World, Attracting Doctors to Rural Areas/ Indonesia Research. (2) Environment and Social Development- Rural Development, Social Development, Rural Finance, New Ideas in Pollution Regulation (NIPR), Land Use and Ecosystem Preservation, Global Carbon Trading Initiative, Land Access, Tenure Security, and Rural Poverty Reduction, Land Use Policy. (3) Finance, Private Sector, and Infrastructure Research- Competition Policy, Regulation, Transition Economies Newsletter, Financial Sector Research, Anti-Dumping, Private Provision of Public Infrastructure, Impact Evaluation of Rural Roads Projects, and Motorization and the Pricing of Externalities. (4) Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Research- Corruption, Governance and Institutional/Economic Reforms, Spatial and Dynamic Aspects of Poverty, Budgetary Institutions and Public Expenditure Outcomes, Fiscal

Decentralization, Political Economy of Reform, Policies and Institutions that Promote Savings, Managing International Capital Flows, Trade Negotiations: Towards the Millennium Round?, Regionalism and Development, Trade and Trade Policy Data. (5) Cross-Sector Research-Growth and Development in Africa, Aid Effectiveness, Poverty, Environment, and Growth, Living Standard Measurement Study (LSMS) household surveys, The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative, Economic Growth Research, The Economics of Civil Wars, Crime, and Violence, and Gender and Development. (6) Additional Topics- Poverty and social welfare, including equity, demographics, and health and nutrition, Labor markets and education, Environmentally sustainable development, including environmental economics, energy, agriculture, and natural resources, Macroeconomics, including monetary and fiscal policy and adjustment, International economics, including trade, finance, and debt, Domestic finance and capital markets, Transition economies, Private sector development and public sector management, including industrial organization, regulation, institutions, political economy, and privatization.

- 2000 Research link only. Topics: Agriculture-land, commodity prices, markets, Domestic Finance- saving, financial systems, stock markets, Education- child labor, returns to schooling, Environment- pollution, biodiversity, air quality, Governance- corruption, legal reform, Health & Population- nutrition, fertility, HIV / AIDS, Infrastructure- telecoms, power, water, Industry- competition, science parks, International Economics- trade, capital flows, Labor & Employment- labor market policies and institutions, Macroecon. & Growth- stabilization, monetary/fiscal policy, Poverty- income distribution, safety nets, micro-credit, Private Sector Development- investment behavior of firms, Public Sector Management- decentralization, participatory planning, Rural Development-land markets, non-farm economy, Social Development- equity, culture, demographics, Transition Economies- current and former socialist economies, Urban Development- motorization, infrastructure, pollution.
- 2001-2005 Topics: Agriculture, Domestic Finance, Education, Environment, Globalization, Governance, Health & Population, Industry, Infrastructure, International Economics, Labor & Employment, Macroecon & Growth, Poverty, Private Sector Development, Public Sector Management, Rural Development, Social Development, Transition Economies, Urban Development.
- 2006 Data and Research under one heading- Topics: Agriculture & Rural Development, AIDS, Anti-Corruption, Avian Flu, Children & Youth, Debt Issues, Education, Energy, Environment, Evaluation Monitoring, Faiths and Development, Financial Sector, Gender, Globalization, Global Monitoring, Health, Nutrition & Population, Information &

Communication Technologies, Infrastructure, Knowledge Sharing, Law & Justice, Macroeconomics & Growth, Millennium Development Goals, Mining, Participation, Policies, Poverty, Private Sector Development, Public Sector Governance, Social Development, Social Protection & Labor, Sustainable Development, Trade, Transport, Urban Development, Water Resources Management, Water Supply & Sanitation.

- 2007 Programs: Conflicts, Finance and Private Sector Research, Human Development & Public Services, Infrastructure & Environment, International Migration & Development, Investment Climate Research, Living Standards Measurements Study (LSMS), Macroeconomics & Growth, Poverty Research, Rural Development, and Trade Research. Also cover the same underlying topics in 2006.
- 2008 Programs: Agriculture and Rural Development, Climate Change, Economics of Conflict, Environment and Energy, Finance and Private Sector Development, Human Development & Public Services, International Migration & Development, Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS), Macroeconomics & Growth, Poverty & Inequality, and Trade & International Integration. Same underlying topics as in 2006 except added the topic of World Bank Reform.
- 2009 Nothing Posted Yet
- 2010 Programs: Agriculture and Rural Development, Climate Change, Economics of Conflict, Environment and Energy, Finance and Private Sector Development, Human Development & Public Services, International Migration & Development, Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS), Macroeconomics & Growth, Poverty & Inequality, and Trade & International Integration. Same underlying topics as in 2008.

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