

International Development Project

Participatory Development

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Three methodological approaches

1. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)
 2. Beneficiary Assessment
 3. Social Analysis
- ✿ Emphasis on “human” or “social” dimension
 - ✿ Incorporating actor’s view
 - Perceptions, values and priorities of local or “beneficiary” population

Beneficiary Assessment (BA)

- ✿ An approach to information gathering
- ✿ Assesses the value of an activity perceived by its principal users
- ✿ Seeks to close the “gap” between project management and beneficiaries
- ✿ Access to the “voice” of the beneficiaries
- ✿ Informal discussions
- ✿ Participant observation with some quantitative data

Social Analysis

- ✿ Identify, conceptualize, and deal with the social and cultural variables for developing projects
- ✿ Without socio-cultural factors, the projects will be unsustainable and fail
- ✿ ‘Beneficiaries’ of development should have a say in implementation
- ✿ Social scientists play the central role
- ✿ “...democratizing planning process by facilitating broader participation...” (Cernea, 1991)

Participatory Rural Appraisal

- ✿ Approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance, and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act (Chambers, 1994)
- ✿ Dissatisfaction with both the biases of field visits and inflexible nature of formal surveys
- ✿ A means of validating local knowledge and empowering local populations

PRA: methodology

❁ Core Values

1. Self-critical awareness: facilitators critically examine their own behaviors
2. Personal responsibilities: Use your own best judgment rather than the authority of manuals or rules

❁ Development of Interpersonal and communication skills

❁ Stresses the sharing of data in the context

PRA: Characteristics

- ✿ Local constructs and indigenous knowledge are values over scientific notion
- ✿ Trustworthiness of the data: credible information is built upon trust and rapport with informants, knowledge of the local context
- ✿ Emphasis on differences rather than averages
- ✿ Privileges visual over verbal data

PRA: Paradigm shift

- ✿ From individual to group
- ✿ From verbal to visual
- ✿ From Measuring to comparing
- ✿ From reserve to rapport
- ✿ From extracting to empowering
- ✿ From top-down to bottom up
- ✿ From centralized-standardized to local diversity
- ✿ From blueprint to learning

PRA: for development professionals

- ⚙ Most exercises are collective
- ⚙ Creation of conditions for good communication between investigators and community
- ⚙ Difference within communities may be as critical
 - Conflicts between genders, factions, castes and occupational groups
- ⚙ Concept of 'community'
 - Individual, household, work-group, occupational association are frequently the critical units for decision-making and action

PRA & the World Bank

- ❁ Promotion of Social Assessment (SA) for project preparation, formulation and implementation (1994)
- ❁ 110 projects used Beneficiary Assessment (BA) between 1983 to 1998
- ❁ By 1998, 125 Social Assessments completed or underway
- ❁ Difficulty of PRA in the World Bank:
 - PRA culture vs. WB culture
 - Individual judgment vs. rule-bound culture
 - Informal nature of methodology vs. financially “justified” program

Bank's challenges in participatory approach?

NGO and international development

- ✿ Success depends on understanding of, and responsiveness to , the needs of the local communities
- ✿ Grassroots oriented, part of the local communities
- ✿ Informal, less-structured, personal interaction oriented
- ✿ Participation came easily and naturally
- ✿ Personal interaction shapes the development agenda at a community level
- ✿ Strong commitment to social justice and helping rural poor

NGO's criticism towards PRA

1. PRA approach has operational limitations
2. PRA approach cannot reflect cultural context and local circumstances
3. PRA approach is seen as alien techniques imposed by outsiders

PRA: operational limitations

- ❁ Participative techniques are merely another development fashion
 - Unsupported by suitable training or any real in-depth understanding of 'facilitator'
 - Superficial understanding of the techniques would create bad practices of participatory exercises
- ❁ (instant) Participatory facilitators are seen as 'outsiders'
 - Power-relations exists between 'outsider' facilitator and community participants
 - (Could) jeopardize other long-term development strategies

Local culture and internal power relations

- ❁ Process of participation is NOT universal and is contingent on different cultural norms or assumptions
- ❁ Strong personal relationship between the leadership and the staff or communities with whom they work is essential to the success and survival of the project
- ❁ Decision-making process is culturally sensitive and belongs to local context

External power and control

- ⚙ Participatory approach vs. Participatory technique
- ⚙ PRA vs. other informal participatory process and method
- ⚙ PRA as essential component of formulating an aid proposal?
- ⚙ Suspicion towards 'experts' who advocate participatory approach to development
- ⚙ Technology-driven, externally planned, expert-led development
.....again???

