

Village Community, Mobilization and Participatory Development in MGNREGA

Approaching the SDGs through Wage Employment

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Overview of the Session

- Evolving paradigms of *Development*
- Understanding the concept of Community; Community-based development.
- Mobilizing the community for rural development
- Participation
- Participation as a tool in delivering developmental targets democratically
- Conclusion

The Idea of Development

- Begins at the end of WW-II with the breakdown of European colonial powers and the rise of USA
- Imperial relations between North-South was restructured in the mould of development.
- 20 Jan. 1949- Harry Truman, for the 1st time declared the Southern Hemisphere to be underdeveloped, a label that has stuck and remains firmly in place.
- Development = Industrialization = Westernization = Economic progress.
- Modernization Theory: Large-scale infrastructure development with Western collaboration.
- Rostow's idea of linear development.

Rostow's Growth Theory

ROSTOW's five stages of economic growth:

- 1) the traditional society;
- 2) pre-conditions for take-off;
- 3) take-off;
- 4) the drive to maturity;
- 5) age of high mass consumption

Organicist/ Evolutionary approach/ Darwinist Aeronautical metaphor.

Traditional society as 'ground zero' of history, as a natural state of underdevelopment.

Trajectory of development is defined for all societies as the same;

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Other Models of Development

- Dependency Theory: Core and the Periphery
- Welfare State
- Participatory Development
- Liberalization and Capitalist model of development
- Globalization and development
- Debates in India after 1947: Which model of development was appropriate?
- How to develop a country that was predominantly rural / agriculture based village communities?

The Community's Power

- The only way for communities to build long-term power is by organizing people and money around a common vision....[Community] organizing teaches as nothing else does the beauty and strength of everyday people. (Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father*)
- The only way that people can express themselves is through their leaders. (Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*)
- To hell with charity. The only thing you get is what you're strong enough to get—so you had better organize. (Saul Alinsky, *The Alinsky Legacy*)

Community as a Sociological Concept

- What is a community?
- Often used in a geographical sense, i.e. a set of people living together in a defined space with common characteristics.
- For e.g. people with a common language, religion, culture, occupation etc.
- Some examples of community-
- Ferdinand Tönnies (1887) in his book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and Society) differentiates between the pre-industrial rural society and the urban industrial society.
- Pre-industrial Rural Society: A small group of people interacting with each other over many years in different spheres of life- work, leisure, religion, family.
- Relationships were intimate and enduring, creating networks of reciprocal obligation, which survived from one generation to the next.
- Greater stability and close contacts allowed considerable social cohesion.

Community Vs. society

- Urban industrial society: Large number of people interact with each other over very specific tasks for a very brief period of time.
- For e.g. employing a plumber or dry-cleaner as a contractual relationship based on exchange of money. Voluntary association.
- The social world of the urban society is much larger with no compulsion to associate with anyone; Anonymity is inbuilt.
- In the village community, the social world is already given. Anonymity is impossible, so is the withdrawal from the community.
- Displacement of the community in the contemporary society- faster travel and communication technologies;

Decline of Community

- Robert Putnam (2000) *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American Community* shows the decline in popularity of civic associations;
- Changes in the *bowling habits*: from leagues to individualized systems;
- Capitalism and conveyer-belt production system/assembly-line work of the industrial society (Fordism) leading to subjective alienation (Marx)
- Transformation of work leading to loss of social community- e.g. automation, individualization of entertainment; ICT; etc.

Techniques of Community Mobilization

- Building leaderships and identifying potential leaders;
- Education as an important component of C.M.
- Putnam's two methods 1) *bridging*: inclusive linking people for the purpose of diffusing information;
- and 2) *bonding*: creates ties of solidarity and reciprocity among smaller groups of people.
- Dialogical Interaction can help people to organize themselves to meet their desired goals.

Advantages of Community Mobilization

- A mobilized community is a form of social capital which can be utilized for other benefits and advantages.
- Brings empowerment and counters deprivation/exclusion.
- Overcomes Alienation of the people from other people in their locality.
- Fosters Democracy and democratic means of development within a capitalist system.

Participation and its Types

- Appears as an important concept in development in the late 1950s.
- Transitive: oriented towards a specific goal or target;
- Intransitive: Participation without any predefined goal or purpose, e.g. listening to music, creating etc.
- Moral: If the nature of goals pursued are ethically defined or based on subjective beliefs.
- Free Participation: when the subject partakes in an activity out of their own free will;
- Forced Participation: Due to some compulsion, greed, or force.
- Manipulated participation: The participants do not realize that their actions are directed by outside forces outside their control.

Functions of Participation

- 4 important functions
- Cognitive: To regenerate the development discourse and its practices on the basis of a different mode of understanding reality. Challenges conventional developmental approaches as irrelevant (for 3rd World) and ethnocentric.
- Social: In this realm, participation made development everyone's business and brought in a sense of belonging in the programs run by the government.
- Instrumental function of the participatory approach was to provide the actors with new approaches to address the failures of conventional strategies. It served as the new alternative.
- Political: To provide development with a new source of legitimation; build bridges between the state and its target populations.

Participation of the People in Local Development

- Participation: refers to taking part in the processes that lead to the selection of leadership and determination of public policy; e.g. elections, GPDP preparation etc.
- Absolute Participation: When all people who are affected by a particular policy are consulted/ before the policy is made (Complete Politicization)
- Absence of Participation may lead to *democratic deficit* as electoral process gets replaced by nominations.
- To counter this trend, many European countries such as Denmark and Netherlands consult the people directly about new public policies, e.g. agricultural biotechnology, energy policy etc.
- Complete Politicization of development and public policy.

Who Participates, who doesn't?

- Traditional society is non-participant, while modern society is (Daniel Lerner)
- A nation's (community's) level of participation co-varies with its level of economic development (Rahnema)
- Most of the times, the concerned populations are deliberately kept out of all the processes related to the design, formulation and implementation of the developmental program.

Advantages of Promoting Participation in Rural Development

- Participation is an instrument for greater effectiveness as well as a new source of investment;
- It is economically an appealing proposition- for e.g. Grameen Bank, B'desh which proved that poor people are more reliable clients than rich;
- If the program provides evidence of being participatory, it has better chances of getting more funds, both nationally and internationally.
- Participating communities have increased control over their resources and gain power, hitherto excluded from such control.
- It saves development programs from becoming a top-down, bureaucratic and dependency-creating institution.
- Involving the *patients in their own care* begets faster results.

Obstacles in Participation and Community Mobilization

- In dependent societies, the oppressed people do not yet have a *critical consciousness* but rather a semi-transitive or naive consciousness (Paulo Freire)
- The burden of the colonized mind of the oppressed in historically feudal social setups.
- The dominant social actors condition them to internalize their values and create a distorted perception of their own condition.
- Lack of progressive intellectuals who could transcend their class interests and engage with the community in helping them out of this mental blockade.
- Misunderstandings that reduce participation to an amoeba word lacking any precise meaning can deprive us from many of its benefits.

Discussion and Conclusions

- Not just the ends, but the means of achieving development are equally important.
- Democratic means of policy making, planning and implementation can be ensured with people's participation.
- Participation of the people ensures enhanced inclusion and equitable distribution of benefits.
- Community mobilization seeks to *alter the relations of power* between the groups who have traditionally controlled our society and the residents of marginalized communities.

Thank You.