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1. Introduction

Chinese Philosopher Lau Tse embodies the essence of the participatory approach to community development in the following poem.

> **"Go and meet your people, live and stay with them, love them, work with them. Begin with what they have, plan and develop from what they know, and in the end, when the work is over, they will say: "we did it ourselves"(Dennis, 1977).**

This ironic description of Chinese Philosopher Lau Tse has a direct linkage with the theories, concept, principles and approaches of participatory community development.

Within this fundamental base the purpose of this essay is to establish and test a general theoretical framework for a participatory development approach aimed at facilitating a more relevant and socially responsible form community development. To accomplish this task, the following question will be examined. "Is it feasible to use a participatory development approach to facilitate community development?"

The study begins by the conceptualization of basic terminology and concepts will expand to examine the different types of development theories. It will also examine the rationale, principles and participatory approaches towards community development.

I argue and the result of my study clearly indicates that it is feasible to use a participatory development approach in facilitating the community development process.

2. Conceptualization of terms and terminology

With the objective to give insight to the readers regarding specific concepts related to this essay, basic key terms and concepts are briefly explained here below:

The concept **development** is very broad and encompasses values such as capacity building, equity, sustainability, self-reliance and empowerment. In general, as different scholars have defined (Coetzee, 2001; Cypher & Diethz, 1997; Weyman & Fussell, 1996; Gharajedaghi & Ackoff, 1986) it includes the improvement of people lives in terms of economic, social, political, environmental, spiritual/personal and cultural aspects.

Weyman and Fussell (1996) elaborate and define development as a process whereby people make life easier for each other by collaborating in the formulation of a vision their future and a collective action for resolution of perceived needs. According to Coetzee (2001:120) development refers to "…the connotation of favorable change moving from worse to better; evolving from simple to complex; advancing away from the inferior…a form of social change that will lead to progress...the process of enlarging people's choices of acquiring knowledge, and having access to resources for a decent standard of living". For Gharajedaghi & Ackoff (1986) development is a mechanism in which people increase their abilities and desires with the objective to satisfy their own needs.

Participation evokes involvement of the community in the decision making process of implementation of development projects (Maser, 1997). According to Oakely (1991) the term participation refers to harnessing the existing physical, economic and social resources of rural people in order to attain the objectives of community development programs and projects. Paul (1987) also refers participation as the shift and a self-transformational process and learning by practice.

Participatory development is broadly understood as an active involvement of people in making decisions about implementation of processes, programs and projects that affect them (Slocum, Wichhart, Rocheleau, & Thomas-Slayter, 1995). The basic element of participatory development is to view the term participation as the exercise of people's power in thinking and acting, and controlling their action in a

collaborative framework. Accordingly, the key concept of participatory development includes the collaborative effort of people, taking initiatives by themselves in terms of their own thinking and deliberations (Rahman, 1993; Oakley, 1991).

The term **capacity building,** according to Eade (1997), refers to enabling institutions to be more effective and efficient in the process of identifying, implementing, monitoring and the evaluation of development projects. Eade & Williams (1995) also note that capacity building is a mechanism of enabling local people to determine their own values, priorities and act on their decisions. According to Schuftan (1996), the term capacity building refers to an approach to community development that raises people's knowledge, awareness and skills to use their own capacity and, using available support systems, to resolve the more underlying causes of underdevelopment.

A **community** refers to a group of people living together with a common attachment to their place of residence. It is a place where people encounter one another 'face to face' (Maser, 1997). It also refers to a partially delimited 'territorial entity of indeterminate scale' and also an 'evocative idea, used to refer to a place or sense of calm, refuge and harmony' (Johnston, 1985:61).

The concept **Community development** is the new paradigm of development that focuses on participatory methodologies and ensures the involvement of the community in the decision making process. It also encourages the use of practical and generalist skills, on locally derived revenues (Maser, 1997; Abott, 1995; Hawken, 1983). It is also a process of organisation, facilitation and action that allow people to create a community in which they want to live through a conscious process of self-determination (Maser, 1997). It also operates successfully within the specific environment where the government is open for community involvement in the decision-making process (Abott, 1995).

The term **empowerment** has many meanings and uses (Rappaport, 1961). However, it is common to view empowerment as a process in which a person or community gives or gets power from another. The notion is that power originates outside the person or community, who gives or gets it from another. There is always another person or community that can become empowered. However, the key is for people to recognize

and act upon the power or potential power that they already have (Checkoway, 1995). Empowerment is also termed as gaining of strength, confidence and vision to work for positive changes (Eade, 1997).

Sustainability refers to the conservation of natural resources and a sense of obligation to future generations (Becker & Jahn, 1999). It relates to the capacity of an organization or set of activities to become self-supporting (Eade & Williams, 1995). Shepherd (1998) also notes that it is a means of looking after resources while maintaining present or existing activities.

3. Development theories and participatory approaches

Since the 1950s, a diversity of theoretical and empirical traditions has converged in the field of development approaches. Such convergence produced a rich analytical vocabulary, but also resulted in conceptual confusion (Waisbord, 2001). The field has not experienced a linear evolution in which new approaches superseded and replaced previous ones. Instead, different theories and practices that had originated in different disciplines have existed and have been used simultaneously.

This part of the essay identifies the different types development theories, traces their origins, their practical applications, draws comparisons, and indicates strengths and weaknesses. It also analyzes the main understandings of participatory development approach and major tools of application.

3.1.The philosophical basis of traditional development theories

Different schools of traditional development theories have emerged in the past few decades and a range of views are reflected by different theorists. Some of the basic argument of traditional development theories including: Modernization, Marxist and dependency theories that will briefly elaborated on. First let us review the basic argument of modernization theory.

Modernization theory emerged in the late fifties and early sixties (Evans & Stephens, 1988). The theory stem from the ideas from Durkheim, Weber and Parsons who explained the transformation from traditional to modern societies in terms of population growth with its divisions of labour; personal motivation and the change of

moral values and norms. According to modernization theorists, the first world industrial countries are modern and the third world countries are traditional. Development is only possible when "primitive" values and norms are replaced with modern ones (Evans & Stephes, 1988; Simpson, 1987). Contact with the modern world, whether by trade or language, will therefore incorporate and transform the primitive culture, leading the way to development (Webster, 1984: 44-51).

The basic premise of modernization theory is that development is possible, and that in order to achieve it, developing nations should copy the Western European experience, which was characterized by a set of stages in which development took place (Coetzee, 2001; Evans & Stephens, 1988:742; Alvin, 1953). There is also another theory of development viewed by Karl Marx, the well-known Marxist theorist.

Marx claims that "the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future" (Marx, 1867: 8-9 in Evens & Stephens, 1988:743). Marxist theory, like modernization theory, sees the role of the market as the solvent that would break down traditional cultures and would allow for development to take place (Evans & Stephens, 1988: 749). As the shortcomings of both modernization and Marxist theory became more apparent, another school of thought known as dependency theory emerged to explain the weaknesses of the above theories.

The basic argument of dependency theory is that the reliance on the international market that led to the domination of transitional capital because of the unequal exchange between core and periphery, benefiting only the core (Evans & Stephens, 1988:749). Frank (1969) argued that the major causes for inequality are historical colonialism and western capitalism. Evans & Stephens (1988) noted that, in contrast with modernization theory, dependency theorists regard the state and its agents as active actors in the process of underdevelopment.

I argue that even though all of the above traditional development theories give us insight in to the notion of development; all of them fail to provide an all-encompassing explanation of the concept of development especially for developing countries. Having the above traditional development theories as a background, let us explore the fundamental theory of participatory development.

3.2. Theories of participatory approach/humanistic approach

According to Waishbord (2001) participatory theories criticized the modernization paradigm on the ground that it promoted a top-down ethnocentric and paternalistic view of development. They argued that the strategic model proposed a conception of development associated with a western vision of progress. The top-down approach of persuasion models implicitly assumed that the knowledge of governments and agencies was correct, and that indigenous populations went either ignorant or had incorrect beliefs (Cypher & Diethz, 1997; Weyman & Fussell, 1996).

Dissatisfaction with the above traditional development theories lead to a re-examination of the purpose of development towards a search for alternative conceptual explanations. A host of development scholars (Roodt, 2001; Pendirs, 1996; Rahman, 1993; Chambers, 1992; Conyers & Hills, 1990; Dodds, 1986) have began to answer this challenge, articulating a concept known as Participatory, or "People Centered Development". Current debates and development efforts focus on 'bottom up' planning, 'People-Centered Development' and the view that ordinary people have the capacity to manage their own development. This theory encourages the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of development (Burkey, 1993; Rahman, 1993; Oakley, 1991; Bryant & White, 1982) and will be used to the development initiatives that exist in the third world countries.

One of the most influential thinkers in recent years in the area of social and educational thought has been Paulo Freire, Freire's model proposes a change of strategy where students are on equal terms with their teachers and that is possible only in a transformational mode (Gadotti, 1994). The impact of his ideas has been felt far beyond the area of educational thought. Freire's model and participatory models in general proposed a human-centered approach that valued the importance of interpersonal channels of communication in decision-making processes at the community level (Siddiqui, 2003).

For participatory theorists and practitioners, development required sensitivity to cultural diversity as well as other specific points that were ignored by modernization theorists. The lack of such sensitivity accounted for the problems and failures of many projects (Coetzee, 2001). The main essence of participatory development theory is an

active involvement of people in making decisions about implementation of processes, programs and projects, which affect them (Slocum, Wichhart, Rocheleau, & Thomas-Slayter, 1995). Participatory development approaches view the term "participation" as the exercise of people's power in thinking, acting, and controlling their action in a collaborative framework.

Roodt (2001) and Dodds (1986) have noted that the participatory development approach stresses the participation of the majority of the population (especially the previously excluded components such as CBOs, Women, Youth and the illiterate) in the process of development program. This approach views development as a process which focuses on community's involvement in their own development using available resources and guiding the future development of their own community. The wishes of an individual never superimposes on those of a group. This approach emphasis concept such as: capacity building, empowerment, sustainability and self-reliance.

According to the belief of participatory development theory, the answer to the problem of successful third world development is not found in the bureaucracy and its centrally mandated development projects and programs, but rather in the community itself. This needs its capacities and ultimately its own control over both its resources and its destiny (Korten, CM, 1986).

3.3. Rationale and principles of participatory approach

The rationale behind the emergence of the participatory development approach is that the participation and involvement of beneficiary groups develop and strengthen the capabilities of beneficiary groups in development initiatives. This is empowering, and leads to self-transformation and self-reliance thereby ensuring sustainability (Pendirs, 1996; Rahman, 1993; Conyers & Hills, 1990).

In this context the Chinese philosopher, Lau Tse, argues that the principles of the participatory approach includes (Dennis, 1997):

- **Inclusion** - of all people, or representatives of all groups who will be affected by the results of a decision or a process - for example a development project.

- **Equal partnership** - recognizing that every person has skill, ability and initiative and has an equal right to participate in the process, regardless of their status.
- **Transparency** - all participants must help to create a climate conducive to open communication and building dialogue.
- **Sharing power** - authority and power must be balanced evenly between all stakeholders to avoid the domination of one party.
- **Sharing responsibility** - similarly, all stakeholders have equal responsibility for decisions that are made, and each should have clear responsibilities within each process.
- **Empowerment** - participants with special skills should be encouraged to take responsibility for tasks within their specialty, but should also encourage others to also be involved to promote mutual learning and empowerment.
- **Cooperation** - is very important; sharing everybody's strength reduces everybody's weaknesses.

3.4. Basic participatory tools

In discourses around sustainable development, the term participatory approach has become a widely advocated methodological principle for intervention practice, and a range of participatory methodologies, methods and techniques have been proposed in order to operationalize it. Despite the fact that important differences exist among the various methodologies, they have in common that they primarily perceive the process in which actors supposedly participate as a process of planning, decision-making and/or social learning (Cees, 2000).

A number of participatory methodological approaches have been adopted to bring about sustainable development at the community level. However, each participatory approach is deemed suitable for a specific type of problem situation, in relation to which it aims to generate certain contributions. In part, this explains why so many methodologies and approaches exist, each with its own acronym, abbreviation or (marketing) label. Let us briefly view PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) and PAR (Participatory Action Research).

PRA is a set of informal techniques used by development practitioners in rural areas to collect and analyze data. PRA was developed in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the perceived problems of missing outsiders or miscommunications with the local people in the context of development work (GTZ, 1995).

Several authors (Farm Africa, 1996; GTZ, 1995; Dunn, 1994) note that PRA uses group animation and exercises to facilitate information sharing, analysis, and action among stakeholders. Although originally developed for use in rural areas, PRA has been employed successfully in a variety of settings. The purpose of PRA is to enable development practitioners, government officials, and local people to work together to plan context appropriate programs.

In PRA, local people undertake data collection and analysis, with outsiders facilitating rather than controlling. PRA is an approach for shared learning between local people and outsiders, but the term is somewhat misleading. PRA techniques are equally applicable in urban settings and are not limited to assessment only. The same approach can be employed at every stage of the project cycle and in a country's economic and sector work (Chambers, 1992). Another important tool in the area of participatory approach is PAR (Participatory Research Action).

According to Allen and Unwin (1997) PAR is a systematic learning process in which people act deliberately by remaining open to surprise and responsive to opportunities. It is a process of using critical intelligence to inform action, and developing it so that social action becomes praxis (critically informed, committed action). Checkland (1992) noted that PAR is contingent on authentic participation, which involves a continuing spiral of planning**;** acting (implementing plans), observing (systematically), reflecting and then re-planning and so that the spiral goes round again.

Kemmis & McTaggar (1998) indicated that PAR establishes self-critical communities of people participating and collaborating in the research processes of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. It aims to build communities of people committed to enlightening themselves about the relationship between circumstance, action and consequence, and to emancipating themselves from the institutional and personal

constraints, which limit their power to live by their legitimate, and freely chosen social values.

4. Community development

4.2. Community development theory

According to Christenson & Robinson (1980), people have been making carriers of stimulating improvement or development of communities for generations. However, untill know there is no clear point at which a type of approach directed toward this end became identified as " community development".

The term community development gained its popularity after the Second World War with the objective to induce improvement at the community level. Accordingly, enormous agencies, institutions, voluntary associations, development associations and governments fanned out to encourage community development. All these organizations pounced the pavements and footpaths to bring community development to the people. However, during the earlier days, they all began, and continued for some time without anything approaching a comprehensive theory (Cook, 1994). However, Cook argues that theoretical assertions have always been seen at the heart of practice–oriented development and over the years, an elaborative network of theoretical elements under girding community development practice has emerged.

According to Cook (1994:3) " because of the wide-range circumstances and workings of communities, content from almost all of the disciplinary theories may be relevant in community development. Therefore, community development theory has used and will continue to borrow from the theories of the standard disciplines. In a very sense, most theoretical developments of the discipline lines form a reservoir for community development theory".

4.3. Community development and system theory

Tamas (2000) and Cook (1994) refer community development as a very complex activity and there are so many elements involved that it seems almost impossible to describe development in a clear and organized manner. However, Tamas (2000) argues that although it is indeed a very complex field, there is a method that can be

used to identify many of the components and processes involved in this work. This way of organizing information has been called "system theory". Tamas also indicated that some of the key concerns of community development, such as understanding the dynamics of inter-group relationships, and considering the changes involved in planning development activities, can be clearly described using system theory. Bertalanffy (1968) noted that system frameworks have a number of advantages in descriptions, explanations, predictions and prescriptions as well as searching out relationships and patterns of interactions.

4.4. Community development and the participatory approach

The debate on community development began to place the question of participation as a critical variable for community development in mid and late 1970s. This is due to the fact that the emerging failures of top-down, expert-designed development projects and programs supported the promotion of participation as a central concept in development. He also argues that the indigenous knowledge and skills of those who are critical participants and central actors in the development process should be central (Chambers, 1982).

The main tenet of participatory community development approaches is that all stakeholders collaborate in any development activities from the very beginning of project identification, prioritization, planning, implementing, evaluation and monitoring. It is also geared towards achieving a sense of ownership and sustainability of the projects (GTZ-OSHP, 2002). In contrast to the traditional community development approach, the participatory approach gives a greater emphasis on building capacity, empowerment, self-reliance and sustainability of the projects. Participatory approaches can also challenge perceptions, leading to a change in attitude and agendas (Farm Africa, 2002).

According to Farm Africa (1996) the participatory community development approach provides the following advantages to the targets groups at the grassroots level:

- **Sustainability and self-reliance:** participatory development leads to increased self-reliance among the community and to the establishment of a network of self-sustaining organizations. This carries important benefits such as greater

efficiency of development services and opportunities for the community to contribute constructively to the development processes.

- **Building of democratic organizations**: the settings and size of a community in a particular location is ideal for the diffusion of collective decision-making and leadership skills, which can be used in the subsequent development of inter-group federations.
- **Higher productivity:** given access to resources, the community share fully in the benefits of their efforts. They also become more receptive to new technologies, services, and achieve higher levels of production. This helps to build net cash surpluses that strengthen the group's economic base and contribute to the community capital formation.
- **Reduced costs and increased efficiency:** the contributions of the community in terms of knowledge of local conditions, labour, locally available materials and finance to projects reduce costs. The community also facilitates the diagnosis of environmental, social and institutional constraints, as well as the search for solutions for local problems.

5. Conclusion

Attitudes towards development approaches have changed over the years in exactly the same way that attitudes to development itself have changed. Originally, academics, theorists, social planners and development practitioners thought that they knew the answers to the problems of community development. Currently, there is a paradigm change and they have become aware that development requires genuine community participation in the decision-making processes. For any community development program to be appropriate and sustainable, local communities must be an integral part of the development activities. Such an approach has been termed "participatory development" or the "humanistic approach".

The simplest description of participatory community development is that it is an approach to development works in which all those involved directly or indirectly contribute to decision-making processes. The focus and rationale behind the

participatory approach for community development requires a methodology that is sufficiently flexible and compatible to communities.

Involving the community in the decision-making process and analysis of problems that affect them is a good way to achieve sustainable development. As opposed to the traditional approach of community development, participatory approaches generally lead to development efforts that are sustainable over the long term because the people themselves have a stake in their success.

This study clearly identified that the participatory community development approach is useful to bring about sustainable community development at the grassroots level.

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Annex-1 Widely practiced participatory tools and their acronyms

1. **APRM**-Accelerated Participatory Research Method.
2. **GOPP/ZOPP** -Goal Oriented Project Planning.
3. **PAD**-Participatory Action Development
4. **PAL** -Participatory Action Learning.
5. **PAR** -Participatory Action Research.
6. **PCAP** –Participatory Community Action Plan.
7. **PFLM**-Participatory Forest and Land Management.
8. **PFM**- Participatory Farm Management
9. **PIM** -Participatory Impact Monitoring.
10. **PLUM**-Participatory Land Use Management.
11. **PPCM**-Participatory Project Cycle Management
12. **PPM**-Participatory Project Management
13. **PPP**-Participatory Project Planning.
14. **PRA** -Participatory Rural Appraisal.
15. **PWD**-Participatory Women Development.
16. **RRA**- Rapid Rural Appraisal.

Annex-2 Some of the major methods of PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal)

1. **Transect walk**
2. **Mapping**
   - 2.1. Natural resource mapping
   - 2.2. Social mapping
3. **Ranking**
   - 3.1. Wealth ranking
   - 3.2. Preference ranking
4. **Analysis**
   - 4.1. Trend analysis
   - 4.2. Historical analysis
5. **Venn diagram**
6. **Seasonal calendar**
7. **Key informants**
8. **Photographs**
9. **Observation**
10. **Community Action Plan**
11. **Secondary data review**
12. **Key informants**
13. **Semi-structured interviews**
14. **Workshops and brainstorming**
15. **Stories, portraits and case studies**
16. **Team management and interactions**

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