

198

101

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROJECT

A Note on the Activities of the Asian Region

I. Network-building:

- (a) Initial letters introducing the project and its objectives have been sent to 34 persons in different institutions from 12 different countries.
- (b) All the fourteen responses received so far have shown positive interest in the network.
- (c) Announcement in the ASPBAE Courier Service, September, 1978.
- (d) Announcement in Social Science Research Journal, 1978.

II. Types of projects being linked up:

- (i) 'In Quest of Certain Heritage: Programs by and for Aborigines.' This research project is launched by Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, The Australian National University. It is aimed at examining the impact of government services on the life styles of aboriginals and to develop programs within the communities congruent with the life style being sought by them.
- (ii) Scientific knowledge among rural women in the formal and non-formal education. Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand is doing the project supported by UNESCO.
- (iii) Family Planning Implementation project, Council for Social Development, New Delhi has initiated this project to identify the problems experienced in the implementation of family planning in the rural areas.
- (iv) Poverty and Illiteracy in West Bengal. Council for Social Development, New Delhi has started the project to develop economic activity based education for the landless rural population.
- (v) Problems of education among children in urban slums, Indian Institute of Education, Pune has completed one phase of this

project in developing new ways of stimulating education among slum children.

- (vi) Television Media for rural conscientization. Space Application Centre, Indian Space Research Organization, Ahmedabad has been developing and transmitting a series of television programmes with the involvement of the rural population.
- (vii) Spearhead Team Project. National Institute of Bank Management, Bombay has been engaged in a project of developing cadres of young change-agents among the rural population.
- (viii) Peer Group Leaders Project. Seva Mandir, Udaipur has been engaged in an effort to create the organizations of the rural poor.
- (ix) Training rural cadres. Public Enterprises Centre for Continuing Education, New Delhi is engaged in participatory training for rural cadres.
- (x) Unskilled industrial laborers project. PECCE, New Delhi has started a participatory research project in an industrial belt of Northern India with a view to catalyzing some developmental efforts as identified by this community of harijans (untouchables).
- (xi) Two other projects are being planned by PECCE, New Delhi:
 - (a) Study of deforestation and socio-economic exploitation of tribals in the seven North-eastern states of India. It will begin in early 1979.
 - (b) A series of developmental projects in the district of Madhubani, Bihar based on target population approach are planned. The participation of scheduled castes and women in the formulation and implementation of these projects and in deriving benefits from them is the key methodology of this approach

III. Proposed Activities

1. Publication of monographs.

(a) Two monographs are already cyclostyled and circulated among members.

(b) It is proposed that ten monographs will be published by July, 1979 (three already committed).

2. Meeting of Indian members:

Proposed for end of February, 1979. Focus on case studies and extending the approach. Planning joint ventures. Funds?

3. Regional Workshop:

Proposed in June, 1979 through Region-3 of ASPBAE? Thailand? Focus?

IV. Issues in Participatory Research

A variety of nomenclature is currently in vogue connoting the concepts similar to Participatory Research. 'Action-Research' is one such concept. It implies that action is an important method of research. 'Research-Action', also being used by some, connotes that research has impact/action over the phenomenon/system being researched. 'Action-Learning' implies learning by doing and is also mentioned as a method of inquiry.

What are the distinctive characteristics of PR?

In my view, some issues need exploration:

(a) What is the relevance of PR in organizational research and change? Can organization change efforts initiated with the involvement of rank and file employees be called PR? How is action-research approach (with direct participation of those under focus) different from PR?

(b) What is the theory of learning underlying PR? What is the implication of this theory of learning for the 'rigour' of research?

- (c) To the extent that PR rejects some established principles of conventional research, does the concept of validity remain relevant? Can the approach of consensual validation be adopted?
- (d) The ideological and action components of PR tend to make it a movement. How is PR different from or similar to a social movement? Can PR be a vehicle for social struggle? Or is PR itself a social struggle? Is there a coherent ideology associated with PR?

Rajesh Tandon