

Participatory Governance and Development- Global and Indian Experience

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Abstract

This paper has explored the relationship between participatory governance and development. The objective of this paper was to understand how participatory governance and participatory development intersect with each other by reviewing studies done in this area from a global and Indian Context. The findings of this study highlight that highlights the importance of bottom up planning and keeping people at the centre of development and governance. Wherever participation of people have been facilitated by development agencies whether Government and Non government organizations in a pro-active manner they have been able to successfully implement the development programmes in an inclusive manner. Therefore participation of People should be integrated in Governance and development.

Key words- *Participatory Governance, Participatory development, people's participation, participatory budgeting and citizenship.*

I. Introduction

The idea and practice of participatory development gained currency in development discourse in mid 1980s. The evidence from studies on participatory development indicates that participation has deepened and reinforced its role in development with a new range of approaches to participation emerging across theory, policy and practice (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). Then following the works of Paulo freire in the decade of 1960-70, the approach of development shifted towards Emancipatory Participative Development which tried to analyse and confront structures of oppression with existing forms of economic development. It used methods like Conscientisation and Participatory Action Research.

Participatory Governance emerged as a prominent approach in development discourse in late 1990s based on the work of IDS, Brighton (UK) and organisations like Participative Research and Action (Delhi). It stressed that development requires liberal or social democracy with a responsible state and strong civil society. It argued for convergence of social and political participation, scaling up of participatory budgeting, citizens hearing to ensure accountability of service providers, Participatory Poverty assessments. This approach viewed participation as a key right of citizenship. The locus of change that participatory approaches seek to engage with may be individual / institutional or micro / macro. Citizenship has been promoted as a normative goal of participation in most approaches. The point is whether the focus is on political participation or on community development and whether the emphasis is on participation as a right (alternative development) or as an obligation of citizenship (community development). Citizenship is viewed as the convergence between participatory development and participatory governance (Hickey and Mohan, 2004).

“The recent move towards participatory governance helps bring together these different political spheres and holds out the possibilities not only for a more unified notion of citizenship but also a radical and transformatory form of citizenship” (Gaventa, 2004). The literature on participatory development emphasizes that the aim of participation is to ensure the transformation of existing development practice and more radically the social relations, institutional practices and capacity gaps which cause social exclusion. Williams (2003) notes that the transformation which happens at the grass root level because of participatory governance does not necessarily involve reversals of power relations but a strengthening of the bargaining power of the poor within these relations.

Blair (2006) opines that first great innovation in Participatory development after the Second World War was the community development programme (1952) in India and Panchayati Raj which succeeded it. He further argues that later inspired by the work of Robert Chambers who emphasized including local communities in planning development programmes, a school of thought on Participatory Development emerged which stressed bottom-up approach and inclusion and empowerment of women and marginalized in the development process and giving primacy to their views in decision making.

The main advantages associated with participatory development lay in the better knowledge of local conditions and constraints (environmental, social, and economic) that communities or user groups possess as

well as Social Capital. As a result of these two features, local communities are assumed to be better placed than a central government or an external agency not only to chalk out priorities, identify deserving beneficiaries, formulate projects but also to enforce rules, monitor behaviour, and verify actions. Also, people's motivation to contribute effort and resources is expected to be stronger when they are allowed freedom to choose and decide their objectives and how to achieve them, rather than outsiders and external agencies setting and dictating their objectives and methods of achieving them (Bardhan, 2002).

Participatory Governance

Since the emergence of the concept of participation in development discourse, mostly it referred to participation is social arena, in communities or in 'Development Projects'. The concept of participation is now increasingly related to democratic governance. The intersection of the concepts of community participation and citizenship is more clear in the programmes of decentralised governance across the world. "A first key challenge for the 21st century is the construction of new relationships between ordinary people and the institutions - especially those of government which affect their lives" (Gaventa, 2004).

The voices of the poor report prepared for the World Development Report (2001) finds that poor people across the globe feel the gap between them and institutions of governance and these institutions are perceived as corrupt and unaccountable. The work done by Robert Putnam in US points to the decline in civic participation and the enlarging gap between citizens and state institutions.

Fung and Wright (2001) observe that "the right has taken advantage of the decline in the legitimacy of public institutions to escalate its attack on the affirmative state. Deregulation, privatisation, reduction of social services and curtailment of state spending have been the watchwords rather than participation, greater responsiveness or more effective forms of democratic state intervention".

So when the state is not delivering well the response should be not to dismantle the state but to deepen democracy.

There are two strands of thought on deepening participatory governance. One seeks to strengthen processes of citizen participation to influence institutions and policies and other strand seeks to strengthen accountability and responsiveness of these institutions by focussing on building institutions which enables good governance. Across the world there is a growing consensus that the way forward is to focus on both a pro-active civil society which can express the demands of citizens and responsible and accountable state which can deliver needed public service (Gaventa, 2004).

The commonwealth study (1999) argues that "at the heart of the new consensus of strong state and strong civil society is the need to develop both participatory democracy and responsive government".

Linking participation to the political sphere means re-thinking the ways in which participation has been conceived and practised (Gaventa, 1999).

New approaches of looking at citizenship are gaining ground and "these approaches look at citizenship as practiced rather than given. It recognizes the agency of citizens as 'makers and shapers' rather than as 'users and choosers'" (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000).

DFID (2000) argues that rights will become real when citizens are allowed to participate in decisions and processes which affect their lives. It highlights three principles underlining rights perspective-inclusive rights for all, right to participation and accountability of state institutions.

Ferguson (1999) stresses that people cannot enjoy right to health if they are not allowed to participate in decision making regarding provision of health services. So participation can be seen as a positive freedom which enables people to realize other rights.

A number of mechanisms have been explored around the world which can promote more inclusive and deliberative forms of engagement between citizen and state. Goetz and Gaventa (2001) have analysed these mechanisms and proposed that these mechanisms can be seen along a continuum ranging from ways of strengthening voice on the one hand to strengthening the receptivity to voice by state institutions on the other. They propose a series of strategies ranging from advocacy research to citizens lobbying for policy change and citizens monitoring of performance which can strengthen citizen voice in the governance process. Then there are areas where state and civil society intersect. They also propose strategies which strengthen the receptivity to voice with in state which range from making citizen consultation compulsory, holding government accountable, bringing change in institutional culture and making legal provisions which make participation in governance a legal right.

Osmani (2007) also points out that in cases where the participatory decentralisation has happened, it has led to greater equity and efficiency in delivery of services.

Participatory Governance and Performance of Development Programmes

Global Experience

In contemporary times, emphasis on good governance as the basis for sustained and equitable development has led to widespread interest in participation in the development discourse, as effective participation by all stakeholders, especially at local levels of government, has come to be seen as essential for promoting good governance. In the developed countries also, people's participation in social decision-making processes is increasingly being emphasised as a tool to solve social problems, including the problems of social exclusion. Social action which can turn the idea of effective participation into reality has begun to emerge in many parts of the globe.

Participation of citizens has important implications for the formation of social capital, which consists of the networks of relationships between different individuals and groups operating outside the market sphere. There exists a synergistic relationship between participation on the one hand and empowerment and social capital on the other – both these mutually reinforce each other.

Participation is always a matter of degree, reflecting variations in both scope and intensity of citizen's participation. Participation is also context specific. Therefore, any attempt to transfer lessons of successful participation from one context to another should be conscious of this fact.

The World Development Report 1994 on infrastructure reported that in a study of 121 completed rural water supply projects, financed by various agencies, projects with high degree of local participation in project selection and design were better placed to enjoy good maintenance subsequently than those with more centralized decision-making which do not involve local participation (World Bank, 1994).

Participatory Budgeting in Brazil

The participatory budgeting, has evolved over the years as a structured process in which citizens participate as individuals and as representatives of civil society groups at different stages of the budgetary process. In this process, citizens discuss and decide on projects for specific districts and on municipal investment priorities, and they also monitor the outcome of the projects. The success of participatory budgeting in Brazil has been impressive enough which has led to its widespread emulation and acceptance all over the world (Osmani, 2008).

Participatory budgeting has been successful since its inception and has many achievements to its credit. Approximately one-third of the total participants are poor, so it has helped poor to participate in public spheres (Koonings, 2004). One important achievement of participatory budgeting exercise has been that the poor citizens not just attended meetings have actively participated equally as others. Though poor are not represented into elected offices in municipalities in proportion to their population but the very fact that they have been elected into offices and their active participation in the process of discussion and decision making is a landmark achievement (Biochhi, 1999).

Second, participatory budgeting exercise has replaced a patron-client political structure where there was vertical relationship in the political structure and delivery of services. Citizens were expected to be loyal to get political largesse but now institutionalization of participatory budgeting has led to preparation of budgets based on neighborhood wants and objective assessment of needs and which provides equal participation of all in the decision making process.

The third important achievement is that participatory budgeting shows that it is possible to overcome the disincentives to cooperate that characterize a patron-client system. Poor people, more importantly will have to see themselves as gaining in public services and investments which will be enough to outweigh the transaction costs, risk of embarrassment, time spent, and so on, in the participatory budgeting process (Abers, 1998). In doing so, Baiocchi (1999) observes, participatory budgeting 'offers a particularly successful resolution to the problems of equity in distribution among unequals.'

In a paper on Reducing Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Need for Participatory Governance, Jean Claude Saha (2008) argues that most sub-Saharan African countries have been experiencing fairly good economic growth since the late 1990s, but are not able to translate these growth rates into poverty reduction proportionately. Efforts made by governments and many international donor agencies have not succeeded in solving the problem of inequality and poverty. This failure to reduce poverty and inequality may be because of absence of participatory governance.

According to the study *Voices of the Poor*, done as part of the World Bank's World Development Report, poor people themselves define their situation less in terms of insufficient income, but more in terms of social exclusion and marginalization. So in these contexts to reduce social exclusion and provide entitlements to people, participatory governance is required in addition to traditional approaches to combat poverty (Browne, 2002).

UNDP (2000) study in Cote D'Ivoire has brought out that in 1994, public interventions in health benefited the richest quintile of the population by more than 30 per cent, with only 10 per cent going to the poorest quintile; in Guinea, more than 50 per cent expenditure on health was received by the richest quintile, and less than 5 per cent went to the poorest. In education also, more than 30 per cent of the expenditure of the Guinean government went to the richest quintile, while less than 10 per cent of spending went to the poorest quintile. In Uganda in 1992, more than 30 per cent of public spending on education benefited the richest quintile, while only 12 per cent went to the poorest quintile. So these findings bring out the inequalities in these countries and inequities in provision of public services. Therefore, only having

adequate resources are not sufficient for eliminating poverty, because these poor countries do not have institutions and mechanisms which promote participatory governance. In certain countries, such as Cameroon, bad governance actually proves to be an obstacle for development.

Gaynor (2013) opines that the evolution of the concept of participation has resulted in much critical debate on its impact at both grassroot and policy levels. Her arguments are based on field research conducted by the author in 2011 on local governance in Burundi. Findings of this study shows continuance with the top-down, hierarchical and marginalizing practices of the past.

Gaynor (2013) further finds that despite a legislative and institutional context which aimed at broad-based community participation in local development, international support to the actual beginning of local governance reforms has gone back to an instrumental, apolitical and technocratic approach. When considered in a historical context, author argues that such an approach reproduces and reinforces a dangerous old 'tyranny' – elite manipulation, exploitation and intimidation of communities in the name of 'community participation'.

The author argues that participation is not just about local revenue generation, it is inherently political. Failure to acknowledge this by international development organizations who in supporting so-called participative processes can undermine both the instrumental and political gains and reinforce old inequalities and exploitations.

Gaynor (2013) argues that, in the context of participation, important questions are whether the process of participation adequately represents the poor citizens and how effective they are in empowering people. There is a need to work with communities on equal terms. Meaningful support to participatory processes involves beginning where people are at and moving on from there with people and at their pace. Traditionalists look at this process as a challenge. But Burundian civil society activists see real potential in these initiatives to promote participation of people at local level and are keen to work for transforming their society. But this should be done by bringing the political issues to the centre of discussion and debates otherwise it will reproduce the old exploitations and abuses meted out to poor people, in the process further marginalising communities and undermining the effectiveness and sustainability of community development interventions and initiatives.

Blair (2006) opines that 'Participation' means citizens apart from the state, whether as individuals or in groups, playing an important role in the governance process. 'Governance' will mean the whole range of state sector activity government institutions at local levels. In this paper, Blair presents several case studies, with three from Latin America (Bolivia, Brazil and El Salvador), one from Europe (Serbia) and one from Asia (the Philippines). All these programmes promoted decentralisation. All devolved some degree of resources, while three devolved significant accountability mechanisms and four a significant degree of power to the local level.

The paper highlights that to enhance participation in local governance Indigenous political will is critical and goes on to add that with care, elite takeover can be prevented. This paper also mentions that in a context where power asymmetries are strong. It is in this sort of context that an empowerment approach is needed to help the poor not only to articulate their needs and assert their interests in front of the village elite, but also to monitor the behaviour of the latter, to confront them if needed, and to take leadership positions. The author quotes few studies which seem to suggest that, where credible empowerment mechanisms exist, poverty can be effectively reduced through decentralized development.

Cornwall, Shankland and Romano (2009) in *Brazilian Experiences of Participation and Citizenship: A Critical Look* suggest that the contribution that Brazil's democratic innovations have made to promote participatory governance lies not only in their innovative institutional design, but also in how to create the enabling conditions for genuinely inclusive and participatory governance. They explain how in key areas of social policy as well as delivery and provision of services millions of historically excluded people in Brazil have begun to claim their entitlements. This paper finds that there is emerging evidence that citizen participation in public sphere has contributed significantly to enhancing equity and efficiency of public services.

Key findings of these studies are that political will is crucially important in the process of instituting participatory governance and in the design of participatory institutions, strong, organised and mobilised civil society organisations have a vital role to play in making participatory governance stronger and effective, emphasis must be given to issues of representation and accountability within civil society and with legal frameworks and guarantees, participation moves on from being something that government can selectively use to consult with its citizens, to a binding obligation. The paper concludes that in a country marked by deep-rooted inequities and inequalities of race, gender and class, where corruption and violent crime pervade and where dictatorial and clientelistic political culture pervade political conduct at every level, the prospects for realising the vision of a socially just society may seem quite far. Yet Brazilian society is becoming more inclusive and just.

Indian Experience

Education Guarantee Scheme, Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh Government's initiative to universalize access to primary education through Education Guarantee Scheme is a good example of the Practice of Participatory Governance in India.

Ramachandran (2004) in her paper on “Education Guarantee Scheme A Community-Government Partnership That Gets Millions into School in Madhya Pradesh” states that in the course of a decade Madhya Pradesh Education Guarantee Scheme radically improved the access to primary education for children from poor and marginalized section.

She observes that “The Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) was initially designed to specifically address the issue of access. After a tentative start, the program went to scale in a brief period. Between July 1997 and July 2000, a staggering 26,571 EGS Schools were created (42 per cent of them in Tribal areas) catering to 12,33,052 children (47 per cent girls and 44 per cent being tribal children) out of which 91 per cent of children were from Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and other socially disadvantaged communities. As of June 2003, the program appointed a total of 31,815 Gurujis (teachers) who were identified by the community and trained by the education department of the government. The program guaranteed that on receiving a written request from the Panchayat, (local self-government unit) the EGS program will provide a school within 90 days”.

Vimla Ramachandran (2004) opines that the most important impact of EGS was that it led to a very sharp reduction in out of school children in Madhya Pradesh. It provided access of education to a large number of tribal children who were hitherto deprived of primary education.

EGS in Madhya Pradesh empowered communities by giving them a say in the selection of teachers as well as having a supervisory role in the functioning of the schools. EGS in Madhya Pradesh led to a collaborative relationship between State government, Panchayats and Civil Society. These schools are accountable to Parents Teachers Association and village Education Committee who in turn are elected by Gram Sabha.

The Success of EGS in Madhya Pradesh shows that when poor are confident that their voices will be heard and there is scope for participation through formal or informal mechanisms they will be able to make positive changes, their motivation to participate in institutions of local governance goes up and they participate in large numbers in local governance.

Joint Forest Management, Madhya Pradesh

Joint Forest Management in M.P is also a successful example of the practice of participatory governance in India. It also involved co-operative and collaborative approach between local communities and forest department in the restoration of degraded forests and gives local communities a share in the forest produce.

P.N. Mishra (1992) observes that the state government issued resolution in 1991 to involve the local communities in the management and development of forest resources of the state. A total of 12,038 Forest Protection Committees/Villages Forest Committees are managing about 5.80 million ha forest area under Joint Forest Management programme. It accounts for 56.60% of the total forest area under JFM in the country at present.

The forest areas which can be taken up under the JFM programme include degraded forests as well as well stocked forests. There are two types of committees VFCs and FPCs. In case of VFCs, 70% of the net benefits shall go to the government, 15% to the committee fund, 10% to the individual members, and the remaining 5% shall be ploughed back in the area for its development. In case of FPCs these percentages are 90%, 5%, 3% and 2%, respectively.

He concludes that community participation can go a long way in ensuring sustainable forestry and JFM in M.P. has led to restoration and sustainability of forest resources. It is an example of co-operation between forest department, local communities and voluntary organisations. Participation of people in such programmes increases when there is more transparency in the implementation of the programme and local communities are pro-actively made aware of the every aspect of the implementation of the programme.

It is seen that JFM is now being considered as a solution to the problem of conservation of forests in India. According to him, participatory forest management is a programme essentially to induct villagers into forest management system and this means government responding to the needs of local communities, empowering them by giving them ownership of forest produce and this leads to conservation and restoration of forest resources (FAO, 1992).

The success of JFM in MP was also contingent on the forest department's pro-active role in empowering the communities by giving them share in the forest produce and ensuring the participation of local communities in it by keeping every detail transparent. So the important conclusion one can draw is that participation and transparency which are the key indicator of participatory governance were integrated into JFM and this ensured its success in restoration and conservation of forests.

II. Conclusion

The findings of the studies from global and Indian context highlights the importance of bottom up planning and keeping people at the centre of development and governance. Wherever participation of people have been facilitated by development agencies whether Government and Non government organizations in a pro-active manner they have been able to successfully implement the development programmes in an inclusive manner. Therefore participation of People should be integrated in Governance and development.

The first published document on governance, ‘Governance for Human Development’ was included as a chapter in the planning commission published first ever report on Human Development (2001). The document provided an ‘alternative framework’ for conceptualising governance. It viewed governance as the process of intermediation as

involving a continuous interplay of institutions, delivery mechanisms and the supportive frame of rules and procedures, each of which has to work in harmony with the other to discharge the functions and roles for which the institutions have been created (India Human Development Report, 2012).

So this report focussed on devolution of powers to local bodies and procedural reforms to increase government interface with the public as well as empowerment of women and marginalised.

The tenth plan (2002-07) document expresses that development outcomes of the states are not in harmony with the resources of the states. This plan document states could be because of failure of governance. Thus the tenth plan document emphasises that in order to achieve the targets of tenth plan, good governance is very crucial. It also highlights the use of RTI passed by the government in 2005, promoted and adopted e-governance, and because of this in NREGA and NRHM participatory governance mechanisms were embedded in them. Eleventh plan also included a chapter on governance under inclusive growth.

So government of India has taken a number of steps to promote participatory governance at the grassroot level to involve the local communities in the planning and delivery of government programmes. So now in most of the development programmes like ICDS, NREGA, NRHM etc., participatory governance is embedded in them so that local communities are empowered to participate effectively in all respects from conception to delivery and monitoring of these programmes. So transparency through RTI and accountability through social audits are ensured. Government initiated Panchayat Shashaktikaran Yojana to strengthen Panchayats so that they can effectively discharge their functions to promote the holistic development of rural areas.

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