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Collaborative Research and Development Activities
for Social Science Researchers and Development Policy Makers and Program Planners

By

Amri Jahi
COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES
FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCHERS AND DEVELOPMENT
POLICY MAKERS AND PROGRAM PLANNERS

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Collaborative Research and Development Activities
For Social Science Researchers and Development
Policy Makers and Program Planners

Introduction

Most of us, attending this seminar, probably are aware that
the concept of single solution to identified community problems
has long been replaced by recognition of the necessity for a
multipathway approach to the challenges of development (Salmon

As the result, many development activities now involve
experts from various disciplines and other relevant parties.
Along this line, this topic invites us to throw the light upon
some aspects of bringing together researchers, in this case from
social science, policy makers and program planners in research
and development activities.

So, what could we expect from the interaction of social
science researchers, who see development process from the
academic point of view, with decision makers, whose considera-
tions often times are loaded with politics, and program planners
who are bound by predetermined policy and priorities.

Having a tri-partite affair, research is probably best
considered as a significant component of the whole development
activities. In this conjunction, research is purposively included
as an important means of information generation for the decision
makers and program planners.

Having the decision makers and program planners in their
team, the researchers will have the opportunities to learn and to
get acquainted with their ways of thinking, their expectations,
and the way they operate in making decisions and deciding on priorities as well as to get their supports for ongoing and future research projects.

On the other hand, for the decision makers and program planners, who are mostly working in a political or bureaucratic environment, being in the same team with researchers would also mean opportunities to see something from the scientific point of view.

The Task and Expectation of Researchers in a Collaborative Project

In a collaborative project involving decision makers and program planners, the main task of the researchers is mainly to help them to get adequate information, which they need to understand the complex nature of the community problems, to decide on priorities, and then to formulate better ways of solving the problems.

Additionally, a part of the responsibility of the researchers is also to help the policy makers and program planners assess the adequacy of current development policy and practice.

For example, the researchers may show the policy makers and program planners that the top down and trickle down approaches in development do not always work, especially for the small farmers (Lionberger and Gwin, pp. 206, 209, 1982).

In this conjunction, the researchers must show a better way of conducting agricultural or rural development to the policy makers and program planners. A recent farming system research,

In this project, researchers from relevant disciplines, including from social science, collaborate with extension workers, policy makers, program planners, production input retailers, rural bank and cooperating farmers (Amri Jahi et al, pp. 29-30, 1989).

Through this approach, researchers may interact not only with extension agents but also with farmers, as well as with other parties directly involved in agricultural development. In this way, development activities could be planned and accomplished in a much better way, especially in terms of integration and coordination.

As the result, appropriate information, technology, and other support services could be packaged according to the farmers' needs and delivered timely.

On the other hand, as the fruits of their works, the researchers may expect that the policy makers and program planners will continuously support their research projects by providing adequate budget, needed equipment, facilities, time, etc. These are required for producing good and reliable information, tested model of development and recommendations that will become inputs for future policy and program formulations.

The Task and Expectation of Policy Makers

The main concern of policy makers is how to come up with wiser decisions on social priorities and allocation of scarce
resources for the welfare of total community.

Through interacting with researchers and program planners in a collaborative activity, the policy makers will have the opportunities to get information and opinions regarding various community problems and issues from credible sources.

Then with field observations, the decision makers will have more ideas about what is going on in the field. For example, they may see directly how much progress a group of farmer makes as the result of their interactions with and support from researchers, extension workers, program planners and others in comparison to other groups that do not receive such assistance.

In this way, the policy makers will receive feedback about whether current policy will need to be altered in order to maintain effective support for development process.

Additionally and more importantly, They will obtain expert/academic support and legitimation for their future development policies.

The Task and Expectation of Program Planners

The program planners are aware that they operate within a given policy environment. In this situation, the program planners will make decisions regarding situations, needs and problems and/or the directions and solutions for those identified needs and problems.

During interaction with policy makers, the program planners could provide information about their attainments and feedback regarding difficulties in pursuing development objectives in the
local communities as the results of rigidity of implementation of current policy and other difficulties.

On the other hand, from researchers, the development planners may expect assistance in better techniques for making and communicating better plans to the decision makers so as to win approval, needed budget and facilities for implementing certain development policies.

Then, they may also benefit from their interaction with the researchers in terms of getting assistance in formulating and implementing better project monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusion

The following conclusions are draw based upon the above discussion:

1. Collaborative research and development activities will be beneficial to researchers, policy makers and program planners, if they could establish a good pattern of interaction and cooperation for mutual benefit.

2. Through this activity, researcher may contribute significantly to the development policy formulation and implementation.

3. Through this activity, policy makers may obtain good and reliable information, opinion and feedback necessary for deciding on priorities and resource allocation.

4. Through this activity, program planners may develop better ability to formulate, present and deliver development programs, and also plan for project monitoring and evaluation.
As demonstrated by farming systems research project, interaction of researchers with extension workers, policy makers, program planners, production input retailers, rural bank and the beneficiary, could accelerate progress attainment among the beneficiary.

References


