

# *Action Research for Micro-Level Planning : A Self-Appraisal*

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## *Purpose*

The Indian Institute of Public Administration in collaboration with certain other Institutes in the country was involved in an experiment designed to improve the capabilities of planning and implementation among local level officials. It was assumed that improved capabilities among these officials would lead to changes in district administrative organization and its procedure. The experiment was tried in six districts of the country for three years. This paper describes the process adopted in undertaking the work and attempts to analyse the experiences of the researchers.

The problem of developing capabilities at the local level for planning has concerned the national planners from the very beginning of planned development effort in India. The expression of this concern, however, underwent a shift from decentralised popular participation-oriented planning in the first three Five Year Plans to centrally administered and directed intervention strategies in the later plans. From people's organizations like Panchayati Raj or cooperatives, attention moved to bureaucratic special agencies sponsored by the Government of India to plan and implement local development programmes. Backward regions or groups were identified for help through such specialised agencies.

The report of the task force on Integrated Rural Development (1973) and the mid-term appraisal of the Fourth Five Year Plan recommended an institutional framework to take care of those areas that were afflicted by chronic drought. The Drought Prone Area Programme was consequently initiated for 74 districts in the country, and planning and implementation of the programme at the district level was entrusted to a special agency (DPAP). This agency did not form part of the regular

district administration but was established as a registered body with the District Collector as Chairman. Because of its autonomous character, all personnel working in the agency were formally seconded from the Government. The major aim of this agency was to merge an "integrated area development" approach with "target group oriented" efforts towards the alleviation of poverty. The objective of this agency was to stabilise the income of the people, particularly those from the weaker sections through optimal utilization of land, water and livestock and through restoration of the ecological balance. The agency represented a basic shift in policy dealing with drought concentrating on well-planned preventive measures rather than the wasteful and inefficient rural relief programmes hurriedly conceived to deal with emergencies.

For this well planned preventive effort the DPAP agency was enjoined to provide a new method of administrative functioning. As land, water or livestock resources were managed by different departments having their own priorities and programmes, they prepared their projects for implementation in the district independently. The agency was required to develop attitudes leading to the formation of inter-sectorial and inter-departmental projects that served the interests of the district as a whole.

However, it soon became clear that the agency was not equipped to undertake this kind of work in a sustained manner. There was a small professional staff provided to the agency. All the investment of the sectorial departments did not flow through the agency and it was spending only that money that came to it through central and state government funding provided specially for DPAP. The result was that from the very beginning the capacity of the agency to look at the dis-

strict as a whole was seriously impaired as substantial amounts of funds and personnel were placed outside its responsibilities. Nevertheless, the expectations from this special agency continued to be of systematic drought protection and integrated area development.

It is within this context of high expectations and constraints that the idea emerged of providing support to the DPAP agency in its professional tasks of planning. It was suggested in the Ford Foundation grant proposal that District Planning Cells should be established on an experimental basis to provide, among other things, (a) management skills into local project formulation and implementation; and (b) a local point from which the tasks of improving district administration could be undertaken. The intention was also to explore whether the district administrative system would accept and sustain a professional cell whose sole task was to intervene at that level to bring about improvement in the processes of planning and implementation.

#### *Financial and Institution Arrangements*

The expression of the need to find ways to support the agency tasks professionally emerged from the discussions among the representatives of the Government of India, the Ford Foundation and the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA). The DPAP was a centrally sponsored programme and therefore its implementation a central concern. The states where the research was to be undertaken were consulted later, after the funding and the mode of research had been firmed up by the three agencies concerned.

Supported through financial grants from the Ford Foundation and the Government of India, six district planning cells — one each at Jodhpur (Rajasthan), Mahendragarh (Haryana), Panchmahals (Gujarat), Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh), Ramanathapuram (Tamil Nadu), and Purulia (West Bengal) — were established in 1978 under the overall coordination of the Indian Institute of Public Administration, Delhi. In the face of the complexity of the tasks and the varied roles that were to be undertaken, three of these cells were linked for professional guidance and administrative coordination to Institutes other than the IIPA. Such a linkage was established between the Panchmahals cell and the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research at Ahmedabad (SPISER), the Kurnool Cell with the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad and the Ramanathapuram

Cell with the Institute of Financial Management and Research (IFMR), Madras.

The grant proposals also envisaged that these District Cells would work under the overall administrative supervision of the DPAP agency. This, they hoped, would help in providing the necessary linkage with district administration without breaking the professional relationship with institutes. The professional staff for the cell was to be recruited for the three-year period 1978-1981 which was the financial life of the project. It was hoped that the state governments would finance the cells after this initial period was over. The professional staff was to be recruited from several specializations including project planning, management, sociology, engineering, soils/agronomy, forestry, animal husbandry and development.

In actual practice, different cells came to acquire different sets of professionals. Even the number of professionals employed by each cell differed. This happened for several reasons. Action research perspective demanded people who would not merely be interested in producing academic reports but would be committed to bringing about changes in a system which was at times both rigid and inhospitable. Such people were not always easy to find. The three-year contract period and the temporary nature of the project appointment were also deterrents especially as the link institutions were not able to assure jobs to this staff on a long-term basis. In some cases it was felt that these institutions could offer a compensating salary to overcome these disadvantages. But this could not be done because of the rigidity of rules and regulations. Thus, despite repeated efforts, the full complement of professional staff could not be recruited at the co-ordination or cell level.

#### *Task Sequence*

The formal objectives of the cells were put into a work plan that was phased to cover the three-year period of the project. The first phase of six months was marked out essentially to get acquainted with the district, its environment and its organizational framework. Studies that would take stock of the situation through analysis of existing information and data were encouraged. The second and third phases, lasting for about eighteen months, were to be used to prepare and formulate projects and help the district staff to implement them. The second phase was for the

direct involvement of the project professionals in the planning and implementation of DPAP projects. During this period, the aim was to identify the reactions of the local administration to this kind of intervention. This was the crucial phase of the project, for the way the project professionals went about their task at this stage determined the outcome of the final phase, of which the aim was to institutionalize the improved methods of project formulation and implementation. The last phase was, therefore, devoted to developing guidelines for future project planning, training the district officials and consolidating the research findings for district use.

Even though the formal objectives of the project were operationalized into a work plan that was phased to cover the three-year period, the varied nature and quantum of the professional strength at the cell level and at the link-institute level strongly influenced the way the work proceeded. The work was further influenced by the differing socio-economic, political, administrative and ecological characteristics of each district. The result was that different cells chose different strategies to achieve the same objectives. Probably the strength of the project lay in deviating from the blue-print. The complexity of the ecology of the districts, the administrative milieu of the implementing agencies, perceptions of those who set themselves up as change agents and the imperfect understanding of how the governmental and planning systems work, all combined to prevent the total application of a blue-print of pre-conceived interventions in a pre-judged district system. In some senses, then, the whole project unfolded itself as knowledge and experience grew and the work plan and work methodology responded to the changing situation.

It is important to emphasize the adaptive process in the running of the project, because from the very beginning, little faith was placed on strict adherence to a pre-conceived plan of action. In fact, flexibility of this nature was accepted as a method of developing the capability to deal with effort.

There was consistent demand from the district cells to share information among themselves and learn from each others' mistakes. Unfortunately, time was a serious constraint in standardising an internal information system. However, even without a formal or informal system, a lot of information and ideas were exchanged. Thus, the work plan in all three phases was constantly debated and re-

designed. The half-yearly meetings of the project staff, district and state level officials, link institutes and the IIPA were used as a forum for exchange of information and debate. It was also the forum in which the work plan was constantly debated and redesigned. This was supplemented by visits from the central cell at IIPA to the districts and among the district professionals themselves which strengthened the informal information exchange process. One of the most noteworthy features of the project has been this capacity to formulate and reformulate the objectives within the ultimate goal of institutionalizing planning culture at district level.

#### *The Process and the Administrative Milieu*

As indicated in the work plan, the action research involved three distinct but interrelated processes legitimization, intervention, and institutionalization.

#### *Legitimization*

The basic and first effort in a project of this type is to gain acceptance of the cell as a desirable means of intervention. The relationship between those who hope to intervene and those whose organizations are identified to be changed is often influenced by the images they form of each other. Even the assumption that change is desirable may not be equally acceptable to the interventionist and the intervened. Many a district official, for example, while accepting the need for change thought it was needed more at the state or central level than at the district level. Legitimization of a researcher's role could be accomplished through various factors, such as the relative academic advantages of the researchers, their capacity to stimulate change, or mutual appreciation by the researcher and researched of the need for change. The fact that the IIPA was entrusted with coordination and guidance of the project because it had done many studies in district planning helped to establish researchers' credibility. It is another story that expectations concerning transference to the district of academic experience of the IIPA — or for that matter of all other institutes like NIRD, SPISER or IFMR — proved far-fetched. Except for the project coordinator and, on occasion, one or two other members of the faculty, not many who had done academic studies in this field felt sufficiently inclined to get involved in such an experimentation process.

The capacity to stimulate change, as will be discussed later, was determined more by

the individual commitment of the personnel involved and by the direct intervention of the coordinator than by any innate value of the management techniques, skills used or the body of knowledge available.

The image reciprocity is a vital element of legitimization. Sometimes the inertia and hopelessness experienced by the officials at the grassroot level impinged itself so effectively on the interventionists that they too started developing inertia and hopelessness similar to that which existed already in the minds of those being researched. In other cases, through a continuous dialogue about and data-based analysis of the problems already identified by the researched organization, an understanding of district environment was achieved.

### *Intervention*

The designing of intervention was an extremely complex process. It had a direct bearing on the continued legitimization of the interventionist. Various structured and not so structured approaches were adopted — such as diagnostic case studies, sample surveys and involvement of officials in interpretation of research findings. Some more informal but at the same time more interactive approaches were also used. Through analysis of previously documented minutes of various district coordination meetings, the problems identified already by the district officials were taken up for data based analysis. In this sense the intervention design assumed a historical congruency. The deliberations continued about the way an identified problem could be used to intervene in the system. This sometimes meant involving the officials in defining what data to collect, in which manner and from what sources. The main intention behind such efforts was not to solve the problems or create heightened awareness for the need for change but to identify the more appropriate problem-solving processes or procedures that could be institutionalized.

Before discussing how the process of institutionalization was perceived in the project, two important issues regarding intervention need to be mentioned :

- (a) the receptivity for change;
- (b) the initiative for change.

The receptivity for change, as already partly elaborated under legitimization, did vary from district to district. Apart from factors like the strength of the DPAP agency, the existing bureaucratic culture or the professional strength

of the cell itself, one of the most important factors which influenced receptivity was the authority from which the strength for designing and experimenting intervention was derived. In some cases, for example, the mandate from the state government was used to impress upon the district official the need for change and the role of the cell in effecting it. In other cases, however, the cell did not have a sufficient professional complement and as such its role in designing or effecting a change was neither stressed nor recognized. The professionals from the link institutes were in some cases accorded a greater legitimacy by the officials.

Regarding the initiative for change, whenever and wherever a cell wanted to go it alone, even if the intervention itself had great merit, district authorities did not allow that effort to be sustained. In other words, it was possible to initiate a change and partly carry it through on one's own, but the bureaucratic culture at district level did not allow it to progress or be repeated because it did not consider such a strategy conducive to its own interests. The lesson that could be probably learnt from this is that even if intervention, as identified and designed by an *outside* agency, was valid, there should be time allowed for the initiative to come from the local officials themselves. The intentional delay, though tiring and frustrating for many young professionals, was discovered to have positive bearing on the institutionalization process.

### *Institutionalization*

Institutionalization at this stage was understood to mean the creation of conditions for the ultimate withdrawal of professional support for district planning. It was expected that individuals in the local organizations, by imbibing new knowledge and skills, would develop the capability themselves to design interventions for changing the implementation system. Institutionalization of an intervention in forms of change in procedures and processes would also require appropriate government orders and/or a structural change in the organizations.

It may be mentioned here that within the project we were not absolutely agreed on what we wanted to institutionalize. There were differences among us on this issue. Some, for example, viewed the acceptance of the cell by the district administration as the aim, while others viewed acceptance of certain decision-making processes, with or without the

cell, as the institutionalization of management culture. Some also thought that any effort to graft an institutional setup on a district system would fail because the change at any micro level could not be divorced from the macro-economic policy framework. As mentioned earlier, some viewed the necessity of simultaneous changes at the central and state levels as necessary preconditions for sustaining any process of change at the district level or below. In their view, the system had an extraordinary resilience to revert to its original form no matter what interventions were made at any time, unless these interventions also brought simultaneous changes at central or state level. Institutionalizing (within three years) a process of decision-making that would call for an approach to problem-solving radically different to the one existing was agreed by most to be a stupendous task.

However, as already indicated, the administrative milieu in which the actions, based on the conceptual frame described above, were to be undertaken, determined to a great extent the course of the project. For example, while we directed a lot of our attention towards the District Collector expecting him to actively promote change, the Drought Prone Area Programme was only one of his responsibilities. He had only a limited time available for future oriented programmes, especially as most of the government operations moved from one "crash" programme to another. Nutrition programmes, for example, demanded immediate attention, and if the District Cell could not provide expertise in planning schemes in these areas, placing the cell at the district headquarters was of little use to the District Collector. Interests of the Collectors also varied. In one case, where a credit intervention was being designed, the District Collector remarked, "My interest is in social amenities. I want them mapped for the entire district for I believe if the infrastructure is provided development will follow".

A second characteristic of the administrative milieu was the high turnover of officials located in the local implementing agencies. Some District Collectors and Project Officers had very short tenures. Quite a few officers working in backward, drought prone districts considered it as a punishment posting. Accordingly, while in the district, officers devoted a large part of their energies to finding ways of getting out of the district. In such a situation, before a Collector or an official was ready to spend some time understanding the activities of the cell, he had left for greener pastures.

The cell had to begin its legitimization processes all over again.

Another characteristic was that most sectorial agencies in the district work more in competition with each other than in a spirit of co-operation. Departmental loyalties are strong, and most coordination meetings are marked by this feeling. In consequence, the cell had to work in an inter-organizational network which had its own pulls and strains and often tended to involve it in its manoeuvres. The image of the cell usually suffered in the process.

Finally, an important influence of the administrative system that constricted the future oriented efforts of the cell was the appraisal system followed in the government. Agencies were evaluated on the basis of the extent of their ability to spend the amount allotted to them in the budget. The DPAP being a centrally sponsored programme had to respond to the central government's urging to utilise the allocations. The state government was therefore anxious that the professional staff be directed to prepare schemes quickly to exhaust the budget. Both the governments felt that the cell's capability could be judged on its ability to help DPAP incur expenditure and not on its ability to train officials to submit viable projects.

### *Structuring of Roles*

The interaction of the cell with the operating system and its culture led to the emergence of three broad styles in which the action research was conducted.

The first style represents the format in which intervention for credit planning was designed. Here the legitimization was sought by seeking the identification and definition of problems through repeated interactions with officials and farmers. Problems for research arose through such interactions. Old documents like minutes of various district consultative committee meetings were referred to as mentioned earlier, so that the discussion of the problem had historical roots. The attempt at this stage was to get the officials themselves to identify the problems that needed solutions. Having got the problems from the officers, the researchers collected data and went back to the officials with it in an attempt to show that this would help in solving the problems raised earlier. The process of data collection itself involved the active help of the officials. They were then also involved in analysing and interpreting the data collected by the

researchers. Thus, the researcher by involving the officials at every stage triggered off a thinking process which led to a reflection on inter-organizational relationships and on the strategy of credit plan formulation. It was hoped that this active involvement of the officials with the researchers will lead to changes in organizational procedures related to credit plan formulation and implementation.

In the second style, the strategy of intervention and the methodology of institutionalizing was modified by establishing counterparts for the professional staff among the officials.

In this case legitimization was sought through discussions of case studies with the sectorial officials. The idea was that each cell professional would work with his counterpart in the sectorial department concerned and through this close working gain an insight into the actual planning process within that sector. Simultaneously, the hope was that such close interaction would improve the planning skills of the official concerned and therefore lead to changes in the institutional processes of planning.

The intention of intervention in this context was that with close participation of cell professionals with sectorial officials, formal guidelines for preparing and implementing projects would be improved. These improved guidelines are now under discussion with state and district officials. It is hoped that if the improved guidelines are accepted, systematic changes will occur.

In the third style, the district cells sought to work in close collaboration with the state level administration to establish legitimacy for its activities at the district level. When the cell did certain diagnostic studies or presented district profiles, it sent these studies to the DPAP agency as well as to the Planning Secretary. The fact that the Planning Secretary was taking an interest in the work of the cell impressed upon the district and planning officials the need to take it more seriously than they would have done otherwise. The Secretary's visit to the district and the allotting of exclusive time for reviewing the cell's activities in its office further reinforced its importance.

This way of articulating the importance of the cell led to the emergence of a kind of autonomy for it from the day to day district administration. The identification of problems in project planning and implementation emerged more through interaction of cell pro-

fessionals with state planning officials than with district officials.

The styles of work may have differed, but the professionals devoted considerable time in all the districts to the undertaking of research studies. (List of studies available from the authors). An impressive number were actually completed. These included socio-economic profiles of districts and in some cases of certain blocks, and process studies of planning and implementing projects. In certain instances, actual project plans were also prepared, and in one district the professionals were also actively involved in monitoring their implementation. In all the districts these studies were presented to district officials in seminars specifically convened for the purpose. In order to disseminate knowledge and information concerning the use of management techniques in project planning and implementation, three districts started periodic newsletters. These newsletters elicited reactions to the work of the cell from the district officials too. Only one district formally enunciated guidelines for project planning. These are being considered for adoption by the state government. The cells have continued to work in two districts after the withdrawal of the IIPA.

### *The Perspective*

The idea of action research for improving planning and implementation of projects at the local level was based on the introduction of professionals through the cells into the district system. It was hoped that during a three-year period such an arrangement would help develop individual capabilities among the officials which in turn would lead to systematic change. Locating the planning cells in the district and giving administrative and financial supervision over them to the DPAP authorities, were conceived as methods of internalizing the role of the interventionist.

However, this also opened up several problems, some of which have already been mentioned. Frequently, for example, this arrangement led the cell to spend the majority of its time on projects that did not necessarily figure among its priorities. As is well known, there is a multiplicity of schemes at the district level and the District Collector coordinates all of them. The District Collector also happens to be the Chairman of the DPAP agency, which is only one of his responsibilities. How much attention and priority he gives to the specific responsibility depends on a host of factors but primarily on his perception of the

state government's desires and wishes. In such circumstances, when a priority programme was implemented, the whole district was galvanized. The cell was consequently easily sucked in. Indeed, heavy demands were placed on it because it had the expertise to plan projects and evaluate programmes quickly and professionally. Frequently when such "crash schemes" demanding immediate attention cropped up, cells sometimes started working in the same gear as the administration.

This resulted in the cell neglecting its future oriented activities. For example, an immediate task in one district was to prepare block credit plans. Any delay in meeting the deadline would mean an indictment of the district by the state government. The DPAP agency could not rely on its Credit Planning Officer. The cell was asked to do this work. In keeping with the aims of developing district capability, the cell wanted to prepare the format, discuss its feasibility, demonstrate the process of collection data and leave the actual plan preparation to the Agency. This was not acceptable to the administration because of its own urgency.

Thus, the district administration looked upon the cell as a ready resource for its intermittent 'fire-fighting' activities while the cells set their sights on a longer perspective. Some conflicts did arise because of these differing perceptions, but it became very clear that the District administration needed such a set of professionals who while maintaining their autonomy and linkage with modern planning techniques were able to support district planning activities. However, it was difficult to establish the extent and content of autonomy. The question was: When did autonomy spur interveners on the one hand, and when did it alienate them, on the other?

Further, one did not get a clear indication of whether suggestions for changing the planning and implementation processes had been accepted. The district officials continued to talk of the need for transforming financial procedures, interorganisational relationships or departmental hierarchical systems that inhibited change unless directed from the state or the central level. However, there seemed no general consensus either on desirability, efficacy of intervention at the local level or on the nature of such interventions. The project has been as such a one-sided exploration attempting to answer the question: Where do we begin and how?

This would also imply that the responsibility for effective performance at the local level cannot be placed only on the shoulders of the lowest rung of bureaucracy. With the types of organizational hierarchies and departmental loyalties that prevail and the extent of decentralization that exists, this responsibility has to be shared by the upper echelons of administration too. Consequently intervention at the "window level" where services are delivered or resources are allocated cannot be divorced from the way the services are conceived and resource allocation is planned. Most of the time, performance at the local levels depends largely on the planning activities at other levels. Changes at the local level are tied intimately to these processes and cannot be institutionalized without concomitant support emanating from the higher levels. One weakness of the project was its inability to work at both the levels in such a way that linkages could be defined and established and the entire process of change and its implications identified.

Addressed in another way, we were not sure at the end of the project whether in order to introduce effective local-level planning it was necessary to strengthen only the local planning and administrative machinery. Perhaps corresponding changes were also necessary at the state and central levels. The intervention strategy that we had worked out did not take this question fully into account.

The people for whom the effort at improvement was being designed did not get explicitly involved in the action-research process, although some conceptual headway was made in that regard (1). In fact much of the cell's interaction with officials and their organization was less encouraging than we had thought. Our intervention strategy also did not involve the local political leadership explicitly in the action-research process. In one district, the Panchayat leadership demanded that the cell should help to strengthen the capacity of people's organizations in monitoring and preparing projects. The Zilla Pramukh felt that the strengthening of the bureaucracy to perform its role more efficiently may not be so helpful to the district. We recognized these conflicts

(1) Gupta Anil K., "Social Effects" of Rural Projects: Monitoring through People's Participation', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. XLVII, 1981, No. 3, pp. 241-251. Also Gupta, "Monitoring of Rural Projects through People's Participation", *Ekistics*, 291, Nov.-Dec. 1981, pp. 434-442.

but were limited by the predetermined design for action research.

Finally, the evidence suggests that the action research undertaken was a rich learning process. We are still learning to cope with both the self-imposed task of a researcher and the social demand of bringing about change. Often, there is research with little action or action with little research. This has been particularly true for governmental bureaucratic systems. We hope that this analysis of our experience may be useful in further designs.

We are mentioning below some issues that future researchers might like to note.

1. The shift in the objectives was considered an essential condition for an action-research project to become truly participative, adaptive and effective.
2. Whether one was expected to *act* at the level where the *research* was being done? Was it not true that while one could do research at district level, the action for changes was needed at state or central level?
3. To institutionalize even a small change at micro-level, several simultaneous minor and major changes were required at middle and higher level not only in the organization or department concerned but also in several other supporting public systems.
4. Improving the task specific skills relevant for a micro region through training will have only a limited impact on the working of bureaucracy at lower level because of a very high turnover of employees through frequent transfers.
5. It is difficult to attract social scientists to work on the projects imposing an activist role upon them. The career rewards in the social science research establishments are incompatible with such a role.
6. The skills developed by the young professionals hired for the project could not be retained or sustained by any of the link institutions. This dispersal of skills created a doubt as to whether hope of retaining and sustaining skills of district officials through regional training was any longer justified.
7. The relationships between a change-oriented planning cell and a status-quo oriented administration were bound to be strained. However, the issue that emerged was how to reconcile local initiative in an organizational structure when the entire top down approach breeds a culture of conformity in the administration.
8. For the monitoring of development programmes implemented at grassroot level, it was considered whether the cell could be used by state planning boards as was attempted for some time in one of the districts. The issue was: would it not imply that the cell would be looked down upon as a vigilance or audit cell? Whether such a role would be conducive towards the functioning of the cell as an agent of change?
9. In bureaucratic systems, it was learned that too quick an acceptance of an idea was a sure sign of its eventual abortion. Whenever cells pleaded for acceptance of their ideas, a ready acceptance 'in principle' was rarely followed by acceptance in practice. In action-research, initial resistance to an idea could imply a serious effort on the part of the host agency or institution to analyse the repercussions.
10. In an hierarchical system, unless the vertical links were loosened, the horizontal link amongst different organizations could not be forged. When most of the developmental projects are interorganizational in nature, the implication of this lesson is that systematic loosening of vertical links should be an inalienable component of any change strategy at microlevel.
11. Bureaucratic systems have a great resilience, i.e., the capacity to come back to their original forms. It has therefore been suggested that since monitoring generates design, any attempts to change at the micro level should be accompanied by the institution of a monitoring system at central level that could sustain changes at local level. A change not monitored is a change not desired. Likewise discontinuance of an old system is necessary for the emergence of a new one.

There were many other issues which emerged in the three-year action research project that have not been mentioned here for want of space. For example, when we invited some of the leading social-scientists of the country to a national seminar at IIPA in 1982 to scrutinize our experience and deliberate upon the lessons, some of the questions raised were: who learned in the project — the researcher or researched? Whether action-research by aca-



demic institutions should also necessitate a reappraisal of their internal value system which was oriented towards data based desk reports?

Perhaps, a techno-managerial solution to a problem which was essentially socio-ecological in nature, was inherently inadequate. By subjecting our experience to a wider scrutiny we hope to trigger a debate on the current ap-

proaches to development through administrative reorganization *only* at micro level.

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