

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION (PE)

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Learning Objectives

After going through Unit 9, it is expected that you would be able to

- ❖ Describe the historical context of participatory evaluation
- ❖ Understand the process of participatory monitoring and evaluation
- ❖ Understand the significance of participatory evaluation tools
- ❖ Derive lessons from the case-studies and apply the concept and tools of participatory evaluation in your own research and work as adult educator.

9.1 Introduction

Unit 9 introduced PALDIN learners to participatory research and Unit 9 explains the concept and tools of participatory evaluation. This dimension of planning for social action is an important component of professional activities of adult educators. Unit 9 is therefore a necessary input in the basket of various useful contributions of the course. In its Section 9.2, it deals with purpose and function of evaluation

while in Section 9.3 and Section 9.4 it describes the historical context and process of participatory evaluation. In Section 9.4 you will find a detailed description of the tools of participatory monitoring and evaluation. Section 9.5 discusses participatory evaluation tools. Hopefully this section will facilitate your application of the tools in your own work as adult educator.

9.2 Purpose and Function of Evaluation

Evaluation is an integral, yet often overlooked, component of planning for social action. The purpose of evaluation is to help us to better understand whether our hard work is having the impact we desire. Some groups may intuitively know whether or not they are doing a good job, and that knowledge is, at times, sufficient. Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons to engage in evaluation, many of which overlap with reasons to engage in research. These reasons include, but are not limited to

- ❖ Planning for more effective social action;
- ❖ Learning from successes and mistakes;
Justifying activities to disinterested community members;

- ❖ Justifying activities to external funding bodies and donors;
- ❖ Ensuring that the group or organization is developing in a sustainable manner;
- ❖ Sharing successes and failures with others to build solidarity; and
- ❖ Building community.

Evaluation fulfils two functions. First, it has an internal support function. It aims to analyze the past to understand the future. Second, it fulfils a control function. This includes control of accounts and financial operations. It is important to make a proper distinction between these two functions as any confusion between the two always leads to emphasizing the control function and overlooking the internal support function.

9.3 Historical Context

The evolution of evaluation began early in the 1950s. The rapid growth in international development assistance in the 1970s saw the shoring up of monitoring and evaluation systems, as the need for the control and accountability increased. The conventional monitoring and evaluation effort focused on physical inputs and outputs and financial expenditure against capital items. It relied on objective methods. It was usually facilitated by outside experts and often initiated by donor agencies. It was by and large concerned with

- ❖ Establishing the financial and technical feasibility of the project
- ❖ Producing a comprehensive and detailed project design or blueprint

- ❖ Setting up a project management system to ensure that all components and materials are delivered on time, and that the performance does not deviate from the blueprint or overrun cost or time limits. (United Nations Development Program 1996).

Over time, this narrow scope for evaluation became linked to the low success rates of development projects. The failure of development projects, the shrinking base and the emergence of basic needs movement led to new understanding that development is a complex process and crude indicators of economic growth like per capita income were insufficient. With newfound emphasis on distribution than growth, satisfaction of human needs

than production, development of human resources than technology, new management tools were put in place to supplement evaluation techniques. The development agencies of late are transferring the governance of development initiatives into local hands, and training the beneficiaries as researchers and evaluators themselves. Hence came into light the concept of participatory evaluation (PE), participatory monitoring (PE) or participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM and E). The concept emerged in the same era as participatory research. It maintains the same conviction as PR that is “evaluation should and can be used to empower the local citizens to analyze and solve their own problems” (Jackson and Kassam 1999: 3).

The increasing concern for participatory evaluation emerged primarily because of the limitations of conventional approach of monitoring and evaluation to assess the views and aspirations of local community who are directly affected by development and their concern for seeking greater accountability of

development agencies and policy makers. Participatory appraisal and planning, a set of new approaches stressed the importance of taking local people’s perspectives into account. The shifts in the perspectives of organizations towards reflecting more on their own experiences, and learning from them have also led to the rise of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM and E).

PM and E involves local people, development agencies, and policy makers deciding together how progress in development should be measured, and results acted upon. It can reveal valuable lessons and improve accountability. It is a challenging process for all concerned since it encourages people to examine their assumptions about what constitutes progress, and to face up to the contradictions and conflicts that can emerge.

See Box 9.1 for a look at the differences between participatory monitoring and evaluation and conventional form of monitoring and evaluation.

| Box 9.1 Distinction between Conventional M and E and Participatory M and E | | |
|---|--|--|
| | Conventional M and E | Participatory M and E |
| Who plans and manages the process | Senior managers, or outside experts | Local people, project staff, managers, and other stakeholders, often helped by a facilitator |
| Role of ‘primary stakeholders’ (the intended beneficiaries) | Provide information only | Design and adapt the methodology, collect and analyze data, share findings and link them to action |
| Role of ‘primary stakeholders’ (the intended beneficiaries) | Externally-defined, mainly Quantitative indicators | Internally-defined indicators, including more Qualitative judgments |
| Approach | Predetermined | Adaptive |

Source: Marisol and Gaventa 1999:

9.4 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Process

The four broad principles that guide PM and E process are as follows:

- ❖ **Participation** to open the design of the process to include those most directly affected by the program and agreeing to analyze data together;
- ❖ **Negotiation** to reach agreement about what will be monitored or evaluated, how and when data will be collected and analyzed, what the data actually means, and how findings will be shared, and action taken;
- ❖ **Learning** for subsequent improvement and corrective action; and
- ❖ **Flexibility** is essential since the number, role, and skills of stakeholders, the external environment, and other factors change over time. (Marisol and Gaventa 1999)

9.4.1 Key Steps

Some of the key steps in the process of participatory monitoring and evaluation are as follows.

i) **Setting Objectives: Frames of reference**

Establishing the frame of reference and planning the details of the process, keeping in mind the concerns of the stakeholders and ensuring their participation is the first task in any PM& E exercise. In this step you need to discuss about why evaluation is needed, to whom it is going to benefit, what problems one might face and what should be the objectives of evaluation exercise takes place. One must know the actors in the process, the rationale of the project, the end users of the project, and how the results and process are to

be used. End users could be multiple: community members, project staff, donors, development agencies, NGOs, researchers, national policy makers. This helps us set the frame of reference within which a pre-planned evaluation exercise then proceeds. Having decided the objectives, indicators are then established. The selection of indicators usually depends on what is being assessed, who the end users are, and how the information will be used. The criterion for determining indicator is based on acronym SMART; specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic and time frame. Indicators should capture intangible as well as tangible changes and factors such as personal and social development.

Selecting the best indicators is, however, not always easy. It is in fact a balancing act between choosing locally-relevant factors, and those that can be applied more widely. The more stakeholders that are involved, the longer the process of selecting indicators could take.

ii) **Identifying parameters and Information needed**

This is an exercise that requires some reflections on what is that we are trying to assess. It is the statement of those dimensions, factors, aspects and variables, which we are trying to assess. PM& E is generally used for impact assessment, project management and planning, organizational strengthening or institutional learning, understanding and negotiating stakeholder perspectives and public accountability. When emphasis is on impact of programs and activities within a given development context such as girl child education; an income

generating program, a health care program, the focus of such PE exercise is essentially on the field; entails active involvement local population, people, likely to benefit from the programs, field level staff and organizers. When the emphasis is on development promoting organizations, open, critical and collective reflections on various organizational issues like people to people interactions, interpersonal interactions, issues of team building conflict management, tensions between the need for routine structure and spontaneity and flexibility can bring about a common and shared understanding of problems and collective efforts to solve them.

iii) Developing methods to obtain that information and data collection

Choice of methods becomes relevant here. We can have open-ended interviews, questionnaires, structured interviews, group discussions, field observations study of records etc. Folk media, songs, role-plays, dramas, art, drawing, have also been extensively used in getting information.

iv) Analyzing data

This is a stage of systematization of information obtained. At this stage a collective process is supported and encouraged. PM and E involves at all levels all end users and stakeholders including the beneficiaries in data analysis. Stakeholders groups engage in critical reflection and thinking about the problems and constraints, success and outcomes of the activities undertaken. Data analysis primarily depends on the tools chosen for gathering data and on the information required by the participants.

v) Documenting, Reporting and Sharing

The collective analysis should be disseminated to all constituencies from where the information has been taken. This feedback is an important step. Some of the important criteria in documentation and reporting include: clarity, simplicity, brevity, use of visuals, timeliness familiarity, and accessibility. Results should be communicated in different ways responding to end users' needs.

vi) Creating Future Scenarios.

This step entails painting future scenarios on the basis of analysis developed and assessment of outside environment for their work and programs etc.

vii) Evolving Action Plans

These action plans are broadly identified and not concretely planned in detail. Multiple future scenarios are discussed, sorted out, integrated and the parties are encouraged to develop concrete action plans.

9.4.2 Some Critical Issues for Reflection

A. You may consider the following dimensions of the process of monitoring and evaluation.

1. End users (Actors/Participants)

Who are the actors in PE process?
What roles do they play? What responsibilities they undertake? Who identifies them?

2. Purpose

What is the situation and context of PE? Who decides?

3. Evaluation initiator

Who initiates? What for?

4. Question makers

Who frames?

5. Methods

- i. Who decides?
- ii. Who owns the methods?
- iii. What is the intent and purpose of methods?
- iv. Are the methods relevant to culture of the participants?
- v. Do the methods facilitate learning?
- vi. How is the methods used-for data collection; to generate interest; to mobilise participants in PE process?
- vii. Are methods gender sensitive: focus and highlight gender specific issues?

6. Facilitators' role

Why facilitate?

- i. To create an environment of sharing and reflection, encouraging participation and expressions of people's knowledge and experience.
- ii. To build confidence and capacity of the people to be active owner and partner in the process of evaluation.
- iii. To stimulate critical faculties of analysis and reflection among various constituencies
- iv. To help identify resources and ways of collecting information, analysing and systematising that information and planning actions to help bring together the view points of various stakeholders in PE exercise.
- v. To facilitate dialogue between the constituencies on the issues raised by the evaluation.

Who facilitates?

- i. A set of persons having effective facilitation skill such as sensitivity to view points of different stakeholders; understanding the context where evaluation is being undertaken;

identifying the participants; manoeuvring the process of evaluation in various stages for collecting, analysing and utilizing information.

- ii. These persons could be from within the context; outsiders; they could be combination of insiders and outsiders.

7. Impact/outcome

Who are we empowering: individuals/groups? Who has the control? Who utilizes the results?

B. The issue of unequal powers of stakeholders is also important.

While identifying various constituencies in a given PE exercise, different sets of participants have different power relations among themselves. For instance, local community feel dependent on animators; animators may feel powerless in front of their organizations; organizations may feel powerless before donor agencies. If the sensitivity to these unequal power relations is not maintained, the process of authentic participation may not take place at all. The PE exercise may degenerate into an exercise controlled by the powerful. For instance, donors and organizations are legitimate stakeholders to the outcome of PE exercise. How and to what extent do we incorporate their viewpoints? How not to distort PE process or undermine critical reflections by crucial stakeholders?

C. Validation of participatory evaluation process is also necessary.

How does one validate a PE exercise? What are the bases by which validation can occur?

If PE is a collective process of reflection and action on both past, present and

future then it helps the group to reflect critically upon its primary objectives, its goals, process, and how empowerment of the marginalized has taken place. The group is therefore able to assess whether their plan of action has been effective and meaningful. In such a case PE is valid if it results in consciousness of the group of their realities, helps bring about and catalyse change at all levels of functioning. The next question then follows: how does one arrive at the indicators of change? If we predetermine the indicators then we are predetermining the outcome. If we assume change as the dynamic process then we cannot predict the outcome.

Unlike the conventional evaluation process, PE highlights the inherent contradictions among and within various constituencies. If this highlighting questions the assumptions about change: individual, group, organizational, social-economic and political, then this itself is a validation of PE process.

D. Look at the links between participatory research (PR) and participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM and E).

PR perspective is inherent. PM and E is a process of learning promoting reflection and critical analysis by the powerless, marginalized, and oppressed of their reality and circumstances. It is characterised by following characteristics.

- ❖ Supports and extends participatory models of development more generally
- ❖ Empowers communities, organizations, and individuals to analyze and solve their own problems

- ❖ Values the knowledge and experience of local citizens in analyzing their economic, political, social and cultural reality
- ❖ Uses learning and education to promote reflection and critical analysis by both project participants and development workers
- ❖ Serves the purpose of improving the program and organization in a given development intervention, in the interests of the beneficiaries;
- ❖ Involves the active participation of project beneficiaries, who play a decisive role in the entire evaluation process;
- ❖ Promotes the beneficiaries' ownership of a development program;
- ❖ Uses participatory methods of obtaining data and generating knowledge, employing a wide range of predominantly qualitative methods, sometimes in combination with quantitative methods; and
- ❖ Is participatory and collective and that creates better, more in-depth, and more accurate knowledge of the performance and impacts of a development intervention.
- ❖ It is a way of learning from and with community members to investigate, analyze and evaluate constraints, opportunities and make informed and timely decisions regarding development programs. Participatory methods and participatory tools for information gathering back the concept (Jackson and Kassam 1999: 2).

See Box 9.2 for some useful questions to ask while evaluating a program with the community.

| Box 9.2 Useful Questions for Evaluating a Program | |
|---|--|
| Process | Questions |
| Initiation and control | Who initiates? Who defines the problems? |
| Critical content | What is evaluated? Why? By whom? |
| Collective analysis | How is information gathered? By whom? How is data analyzed? By whom? |
| Learning and skills developed | What is learned? develops what skills? What are the products and by-products? |
| Uses for Action | How are results disseminated? Who uses them? How are they used? Who benefits? |

Source: International Council for Adult Education. 1991: 59

After learning about the process of participatory monitoring and evaluation, let us now discuss in Section 9.5 the tools that enable us to carry out the PE process. But before moving on to Section 9.5 let us also complete Activity 9.1 so that it is easier to use the PE tools in your work as adult educator.

Activity 9.1

Read carefully the paragraph on PM and E process and explore if you are actually familiar with all the terms, concepts and phrases used in it. In case you are not clear about any of these words, seek help now to clarify before trying to use PE tools. You may use the Internet facility to seek clarification before writing your answers.

- ❖ Explain in 200 words what you understand by 'participatory models of development'.
- ❖ Give in 100 words your definition of the term 'empowerment'.
- ❖ Discuss in 150 words the connotation of the phrase 'economic, political, social and cultural reality'.
- ❖ Distinguish between project participants and development workers.
- ❖ What is meant by 'development intervention'?
- ❖ What is the difference between active and passive participation?

- ❖ Give your definition of 'beneficiary'.
- ❖ Distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods of obtaining data.
- ❖ List the participatory methods and tools for information gathering.

9.5 Participatory Evaluation Tools

A wide range of methods and tools has been developed to carry out PM&E. They all seek to compare the situation before and after a particular project, or set of events. They include homemade questionnaires and scientific measurement techniques adapted for use by local people, as well as more innovative methods such as oral histories, and the use of photos, video and theatre.

The PE tools are needed to

- ❖ Facilitate discussion between different groups
- ❖ Gather and analyze information
- ❖ Present conclusions and recommendations

The following are some straightforward tools that can be employed with little, if any, outside intervention. Becoming familiar with such processes can help communities to reclaim control over the evaluation of their work. It is important to remember that the tool alone does not initiate a participatory process; it is how the tool is used. Practising working

together helps people to learn to work together more effectively.

9.5.1 Cost-Benefit Analysis

Cost-benefit (CB) analysis is a tool used to compare, in monetary terms, the actual or estimated costs and benefits associated with a program. They are used, for example, in decision-making processes that determine budget allocations for public spending. When used as a simplified tool for evaluation, group together can create a straightforward list of the costs and benefits associated with the project, program, or other activities, can even think for future plans. Determining the social, economic, ecological, governance, and learning implications of a program, for example, can help to evaluate the sustainability of that program over time. Comparing costs and benefits can also help the group make decisions around 'tradeoffs', that is, which costs the group is willing to incur to achieve the benefits, or which risks they are willing to venture to meet the stated objectives.

Activity 9.2

What is in your opinion the purpose of cost-benefit analysis? Have you ever carried out such an analysis during your work as adult educator?

If yes, describe the process adopted in your exercise.

If no, describe how would you make CB analysis participatory?

9.5.2 SWOT Analysis

SWOT is an acronym that stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The first two components refer to the strengths and weaknesses internal to the group conducting the analysis. They are a basic inventory of what the group does well, and what areas are in need of improvement. The last two components refer to opportunities and threats in the external environment. Opportunities can include discovering potential sources of funding, creating partnerships with other organizations, finding out what relevant literature is available. Threats can emerge from the political-economic climate, organizations with competing goals and ideologies, or changing community demographics. Taking account of external opportunities and threats is sometimes referred to as an 'environmental scan'.

The process of a SWOT analysis can be as simple as a group brainstorming meeting, or longer-term research endeavour, depending on the time and resources available. Like PR processes, the key is that the evaluation is initiated and controlled by people in the group. Going through a SWOT analysis as a group can think about ways to capitalize on its strengths, and take steps to improve its weaknesses. They can also think about how to take advantage of new opportunities, or create plans to circumvent the threats, or contingency plans. Furthermore, while they may not have control over the external environment, knowing the opportunities and threats that exist can help them to be aware of and more prepared to deal with pressures that affect them from outside.

Activity 9.3

Imagine the situation in which you are participating in PE of PALDIN courses. Carry out a SWOT analysis of PALDIN course 2 and give your analysis in four short paragraphs.

9.5.3 Values-based Analysis

The techniques for recognizing stakeholder values are increasingly being incorporated into evaluation processes. The program beneficiaries themselves determine which values the standards against which their programs are evaluated. The process of collectively stating values can occur before a project is initiated, so that community members can return to those values at decision points throughout the project implementation. Group members

choose which values they consider important. When values are listed at the beginning of a project, these values can become measurement criteria or indicators for organization's success. While these terms may imply a rigid planning process, they are purely intended to help groups to evaluate whether their efforts are having the desired effect. As the group proceeds with the project, they can return to these values to determine whether and how the stated values are being addressed through their efforts.

Activity 9.4

Explain what is meant by 'value' in the above sub-section. Distinguish between 'value' and 'goal' from the point of view of a project participant.

9.5.4 Capacity Inventory Checklist

This approach begins with the assumption that people have knowledge and capacities, or 'assets', and working collectively, we can use these assets to better our communities.

This checklist includes questions about the following community assets.

- ❖ General Skills, such as health care, office knowledge, food preparation, music, operating equipment and machinery;
- ❖ Community Organizing Skills such as fundraising and community gardening;
- ❖ Enterprising Interests and Experience, such as business development; and

- ❖ Any other skills relevant to the group.

Groups need to adapt this checklist to serve their particular needs. This would include adding questions about other skills that the group finds useful, such as questions about which formal or informal associations (religious or educational institutions, sports clubs, etc) with which people and their family members have relationships. The act of going out into the community and talking to people about these skills can, however, build a sense of community through the formation of relationships, and a better understanding of what resources are available.

9.6 Conclusion

In this unit we have described and critiqued the conventional process of evaluation and outlined historically the evolution of participatory evaluation. After describing the process of

participatory evaluation we explained participatory evaluation tools and provided some case studies so that you draw lessons about how to go about while carrying out PE process.

9.7 Apply What You Have Learnt

Consider an example where you have been part of evaluation process as an adult educator in a community. Summarise in 1000 words the evaluation process, reflect and share the following questions.

- ❖ What is the basis of evaluation?
- ❖ Who identified the problem?
- ❖ Who initiated the evaluation process?
- ❖ Who participated?
- ❖ Who designed the process?
- ❖ Who chose the evaluation methods?

- ❖ What methods were used?
- ❖ Who analyzed and interpreted the information?
- ❖ What are the outcomes?
- ❖ How are findings utilised?
- ❖ Who benefited?
- ❖ Type of knowledge generated?
- ❖ Strength & weakness analysis?
- ❖ Control and ownership?

