

Dear friends,

Thanks for your answers to Unit 2 question in Discussion Forum

What, in your opinion, is the most important historical influence in the growth of participatory research and why?

All of you have made lots of efforts to be precise yet qualitative in your responses. It also reflected your commitment to the course.

I shall make an attempt to consolidate the thoughts in brief:

The most important historical influence in the growth of participatory research

The historical influences in the growth of participatory research have been captured from Northern Tradition (**Kurt Lewin** as well as other European social scientists). As *Gaffer mentions*, they find out followings:

- Behavior occurs within a historical/social context
- Behavior is determined by the totality of an individual's situation
- Individuals interact in inter-connected groups as actors as well as authors of their own reality
- A fundamental premise of community-based action research is that it commences with an interest in the problems of a group, a community, or an organization. Its purpose is to assist people in extending their understanding of their situation and thus resolving problems that confront them.... (Stringer, 1999)

Southern Tradition (**Paulo Freire**) as *Khaleda writes*, believed in inclusion of people perspective and critical consciousness of oppression and the possibilities of liberation. It shows common people are capable of producing knowledge and building on the premise that 'knowledge is power', the participatory research approach assisted socially marginalized people to critically investigate their reality, analyze it, and then undertake collective action to bring about constructive changes in their lives. *Moinul says*, the work of educator Paulo Freire from Brazil, Colombian sociologist **Orlando Fals-Borda**, and **Rajesh Tandon**, an engineer from India who now runs the Society for Participatory Research in Asia, out of New Delhi. Their teachings and philosophies share the conviction that social scientists have an important role in the movement for liberation of the poor from exploitation and hierarchical social structures.

Tuhin reflects **Marja Liisa Swantz** was another early influence. Her works in Tanzania showed that adult educators can play the role of both facilitators as well as researcher of the adult education and realized that education needed to be more democratic and accessible to the people.

Wallerstein & Duran, *Eliza traces*, who re-emphasized that the management and workers have equal powers to influence quality improvement.

Hezbollah argues Callaway (1981) that women have been largely excluded from producing the dominant forms of knowledge. She argues that the social sciences have not only been a science of male society. **Jackson & Kassam** (1998) reiterate this point by claiming that “women are systematically excluded in most societies from knowledge-production processes that are dominated by men - even ones that claim to be participatory”. *Rahul emphasizes*, they supported grassroots initiatives by women and men from the marginalized communities, to create knowledge about their own problems and share these ideas with other in similar situations (**Pant & Thekkudan, 2007**). *Masudur* also talks about **Simone de Beauvoir** theory.

Nazmul adds Participatory Research has drawn considerable inspiration new thinking on adult education research (**Hall, 1975**), the Civil Rights Movement (**Horton and Freire, 1990**), South Asian social movements such as the Bhoomi Sena (**Rahman, 2008, 2011**), and key initiatives such as the Participatory Research Network created in 1978 and based in New Delhi. The Colombian sociologist **Orlando Fals Borda** and others organized the first explicitly Participatory Research conference in Cartagena, Colombia in 1977 (Hall, 2005). *Masudur further highlights* Fals-Borda preferred the use of the term action research, but some time later, perhaps through interaction with the Latin American network of participatory research, he began to refer to this kind of work as 'participatory action research'. As **L. David Brown** – PR is all leading to people centered development and it highlights local problems, facilitates collective action and attitudinal change among the poor and assists in building local peoples organizations.

Taniya shares **Participatory Action Research diagram**.



The second part of the question ‘**why?**’ evoked varied responses.

Tuhin believes, it is the southern tradition that has the most impact in developing the Participatory Research. The intellectuals from this tradition tried to step out of the traditional knowledge generation. As previous cases, such attempts were unimaginable. *Moinul* along with Tuhin further adds that although the northern tradition initiated the debate but it was southern who took the challenge and went for the field test. And through the experience of adult literacy

work in Brazil and Tanzania showed the potential of a new research process known as Participatory research.

Based on the insights mentioned in her note, *Khaleda* supports as adult educators began to rely more and more on local knowledge for the technical solution of problems facing the people, who were encouraged to contribute their own experience, wisdom, and skills to the research. Through this practice, they began to articulate the term "participant research".

Eliza argues that the major weakness of northern tradition that they ignored and oppressed the power of the groups who are the subject of research and gave over emphasis to the knowledge and power of the researcher.

Rahul feels South tradition is the most important influenced in the growth of participatory research, as because, it involve the oppressed group of people i.e. indigenous people, traditional communities in problem solving and development process for sustainability. Here community people including marginalized people involve in the production of knowledge, they analyzed their situation and take action for improve the situation.

Taniya argues that the knowledge is changed based on the demand and trends of society and the research follows the trends of knowledge. Analyzing all the factors she thinks the contribution of Paulo Freire and his followers have the most historical influence in the growth of Participatory Research.

Abdul Gaffer says that Northern tradition in particular Kurt Lewin laid out the foundation of Participatory Research but the Southern Tradition influences significantly to carry forward especially in social investigation of problems, involving meaningful community participation, knowledge management & reflection.

In Hejbullah's opinion, the worldwide Feminist and Anti-Racist Movements has the most important historical influence in growth of Participatory Research. *Masudur* further adds that the concept of 'Women as Other' by Simone de Beauvoir, the feminist critique of dominant research has also the effect of reconstructing the dominant research paradigm.

Nazmul concludes, it could be said that Northern Tradition actually laid the foundation of Participatory Research. For academics, dilemmas arise in the use of Participatory Research because it is time consuming and unpredictable, unlikely to lead to a high production of articles in refereed journals and its somewhat "messy" nature means it is less likely to attract competitive research funding.

Masudur adds there is also a debate on Participatory Research, PR is mainly done by academicians though they have the talent and inclination and on the other hand grassroots people tend to be anti-intellectual, and that intellectuals in universities generally get their views form more patently scholarly work.

I agree with all of you and believe that all those whom we have collectively acknowledged in the forum and many more unknown names who could not be acknowledged as they are not printed

in books and journals have played important role in shaping and influencing PR. Northern Tradition and Southern Tradition are the two distinct historical traditions, which have contributed to the evolution of today's concept and practice of Participatory Research. I am sure when you will develop your project and apply it in field, you will add on to the body of knowledge of Participatory Research further. Good luck!!!

Purvi