

**COOPERATIVE ANTAGONISM: A SOUTHERN
PERSPECTIVE ON PROBLEMATIC
DIALOGUE BETWEEN PROGRAMERS
AND RESEARCHERS IN DEVELOPMENT**

By

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INTRODUCTION

Until the last decade, NGOs in Bangladesh did not realize the need of the research in development. Since 1990, NGOs started to see the value of research as they find it a mean to capture and represent various aspects of development. Research, in general, has contributed to forming ideas and notion about development. Research in development is primarily done on projects¹ that are aided by donors. This paper considers development research as a broad term to include all sorts of research, training, evaluation and monitoring reports that provide development prognosis. Researchers evaluate and assess impacts of projects that are implemented by NGO managers. Often both researchers and managers cooperate to gauge the impact of development, but such cooperation may generate antagonism and contentious relationship between the two.

Usually development research is a process that has two phases. The first phase is the process of compilation of data and writing reports through the interaction and negotiation among researchers, development managers, beneficiaries, etc. The second phase is the final completion of reports. Usually, everyone is content with the written form of reports, but hardly try to understand the interactive dynamics among actors through which research reports take its final form. The interactive dynamics produces tensions which play important role in shaping the character and nature of reports itself. Thereby, this paper focuses on the hidden process of interaction and the problematic relationship between the researchers and NGO managers through which development research is completed. The reflection on the hidden dimension is what I call the Southern perspective. Southern perspective calls also for looking at the need of research from inside out, that is, the research needs from the Southern end and not from Northern end of the development continuum.

The paper starts with an assumption that the quality and the outcome of development research are not much determined by the quality of findings, analyses and skills of researchers, but by the mutually reinforcing power relationship between researchers and NGO managers. The relationship has implication on the quality and direction of the research itself. The bond between the two starts with the functions of NGOs, which translate transcultural values into projects for development interventions. Increasingly, development deals with transcultural values like gender, good governance, participations, grassroots democracy, human rights, civil society, etc. These transcultural values have exogenous roots in the North which are translated into projects for implementation at the South. These transcultural preoccupations suggest that certain sets of values are not negotiable (Marsden 1994:35). As an outcome, development aid sets the agenda and issues to define 'development language' which has also come to dominate development research (Mikkelsen 1995:27).

¹ NGO projects are small scale by nature which may be defined as the investment of 'capital' in a 'time-bound' intervention to create productive assets. Project encompasses the energy and inventiveness of people supported by physical and financial resources so that 'capital' can refer both to human and material resources.

This paper is built on the data and information from everyday experience and practices that were gathered from BRAC and a few other NGOs while I was working as researcher, trainer and manager. I have rather tried to put data in a perspective. It thus tries to explain the problem of research from two angles: how researchers confront NGO managers and how managers confront researchers. Experience in BRAC is a unique one since it is one of the few organizations in the development community of Bangladesh which has not only a large research wings, but also uses research findings, at least in rhetoric, to enhance the quality of programs and projects.

DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AND ITS CONTEXT

Development research has started with a very narrow base as a requirement of international cooperation. Since donors finance most of the Southern NGOs' activities, it is largely considered that researches have not only become donor driven, but also heavily drawn toward impact studies. Donors want to know the impacts of projects which receive financial support from them. Impact studies are proven documents through which donors may become accountable to their tax payers. Moreover, impact studies may allow donors to gauge not only the projects' activities but also the performances of NGOs. The performances of NGOs would allow donors to select good partners for future development interventions. Donor-NGO continuum place demands on NGO to implement more and newer activities, but all activities and projects have to be justified by continuous feedback to donors through good proposal, documentation, and monitoring and evaluation reports.

Although development research is biased towards the impact studies, a gradual shift is taking place from assessing project impact to focus on the various aspects of intervention and improvement of project qualities. Over the year poverty has not reduced in the South, but poverty has changed its fundamental character. As considerable efforts are given to capture the changing face of poverty, the North is continuously evolving research tools and methods. In the process, by 1990, research and evaluation works from previous emphasis on project management and the logical framework has shifted towards a new emphasis on stakeholder analysis and participatory approaches (Cracknell 2000:48). On the contrary, in the South, the development research finds its different expressions whereby the assessment of project impact appears not to be important tasks, but research should aim at representing poverty discourse. The representation of poverty expands the scope of development research beyond the exclusive domain of researchers. It makes a demand on development practitioners, managers and beneficiaries for becoming stakeholders in the research process.

Conceptually and theoretically, development research offers an interdisciplinary perspective to cover a wide range of issues, but the range, types, topics, forms, methodologies, etc. of development research seem unlimited. The unique problem of development in relation to research is that while ever-increasing new agenda dominate the development scenario, new problems from intervention creep into development industry. Research seems to fall behind project because researchers are not always clever

enough to evolve methods and methodology to analyze new problematic phenomena. To catch up the development jet, new and innovative research methods are always in the making. Development research methods have been developed for specific disciplines and sciences, often long ago when the research questions were different from today's issues (Mikkelsen 1995:22). The challenge for development research is perhaps that there is no infallible formula for choosing correct methods, techniques and tools for researching development. Broadly, development research in concurrent practices is a combination and permutation of various research approaches and typologies like basic research, applied research, summative evaluation, formative evaluations and action research (Patton 1990:160-161). Research even more becomes complicated with an increasing tendency to mix qualitative and quantitative research (Bamberger 2000), participatory research (Chamber 1995), gender in development (Moser 1993), etc. Research now faces real challenges as there are fewer discrete projects with a shift towards qualitative programs such as good governance, community empowerment, human rights, etc., and also types of aid that are intrinsically difficult to evaluate (Cracknell 2000:48). Importantly, a challenge remains for researchers, particularly to North, that their competence and experience, which are developed from established disciplines and pertinent to the industrialized countries could seldom be directly applied on Third World countries (Ofstad 1984:12).

STATUS OF DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH IN BANGLADESH

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Bangladesh have become a part of the institutional framework of international intervention for managing developmental outcome. NGOs are working in more than two-thirds of the villages of Bangladesh. Over the last 27 years, NGOs have reached an acquired organizational and management capacity for conducting the poverty alleviation and income generating process. Some NGOs have gained world reputation for their roles, for example, Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GSK) for its contribution to community health management, BRAC for Non-Formal Primary Education, ASA and Grameen Bank for micro-credit, PROSHIKA for environment and social mobilization.

Historically the term “non-governmental organizations” was first coined at the formation of the United Nations in 1949 to imagine agencies that would remain at a distance from government, acting as their conscience and offering a moral critique to states. Since then the classification of NGOs remains deceptive because it lumps a broad and contradictory array of diverse organizations together in a single category (Leve and Karim 2001: 53). To serve our purpose, we define NGOs are those agencies that receive foreign aid and donation from Northern states and international agencies to carryout the poverty alleviation activities. NGOs in Bangladesh have grown from virtual non-existence in 1970 to a large organizational movement of 1370 NGOs by 2000 (Ahmad 1999:27). Table 1 shows the phenomenal growth of NGOs in Bangladesh.

Table 1: Growth of NGOs

Year	Number of Development NGOs		
	Local	Foreign	Total
1947	7	2	9
1970	21	19	40**
1975	45	56	101
1980	107	63	170
1985	157	79	236
1990-91	395	99	494
1991-92	523	111	634
1992-93	600	125	725
1993-94	683	124	807
1994-1995	790	129	919
1995-96	882	132	1,1014
1996-1997	997	135	1,132
1997-1998	1,096	143	1,239
1998-1999	1,215	146	1,361
1999-2000	1,223	147	1,370

Source: (Ahmad 1999:27); ** Mostly are missionaries or family planning organization

Over the last 30 years, NGOs in Bangladesh have reached a level of organizational maturity in managing the poverty alleviation process. NGOs carry out diverse activities, but the quality of these activities is yet not properly understood and analyzed. A reason could be that the increase of management capacity is not balanced with the in-house research capacity of NGOs. Building the capacity to do research is a relatively new area of NGO capacity building (Chen 1995:5). As NGOs implement more and newer activities, the need to understand the growing complexities in managing development has also increased dramatically.

The International Cholera and Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) in early seventies has set the tradition of development research. However, they mainly remained confined within health research. Since 1975, BRAC has commissioned and opened new dimension in development research that gradually focuses its research activities on both health and non-health issues. BRAC has understood clearly the importance of research, which sees research as an integral part in the process of project formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of various development interventions of BRAC (PFRB:1).

BRAC is largest Southern NGOs with 136,442 thousand staffs which is serving over 4 million beneficiaries at poverty level (BRAC 2001) of which not more than 120 staff are engaged in research. It seems that BRAC systematically builds its Research and Evaluation Division (RED) not for the purpose of improving the quality of projects and programs, but for meeting the needs of donors and expatriates. BRAC knows that donors and consultants at first search for internal documents and reports in order to articulate the ongoing programs of BRAC. RED plays a strategic role in promoting the images of

BRAC and RED systematically pursues two pronged strategies. The first strategy is to create scopes and spaces to foreign researchers to do research on various projects and impact areas, if not on the operations researches of BRAC. BRAC under the collaborative study invited foreign friendly researchers from the institutes of global reputation. These foreign researchers and scholars have written and published couple of books and articles that work as image builder of BRAC among the donors (Chen 1983, Korten 1980; Lovel 1992, Chowdhury and Cash 1996, Smille 1997, Roa and David 1995, NET 1979). The second strategy is to develop a pool of indigenous researchers primarily for documentation purposes. Till the beginning of nineties, BRAC discourages its researchers to claim authorships of the research and evaluation reports. Later a teamwork approach is developed that gives collective authorship to the direct detriment of individual authorship of research reports.

BRAC maintained a clear boundary between the two in the sense that BRAC encouraged friendly foreign researchers to write books and articles to promote its images based on the project data and information collected by the indigenous researchers. Such approach of maintaining its own pool of indigenous researchers has created tension over the hegemonic presence of foreign scholars and consultants. Indigenous researchers at available opportunity oppose the foreigners (Mannan 2000).

The overall status of research in NGOs, unlike a few large national and international NGOs, is extremely poor as NGOs themselves do not see the value of research in development. In most cases, they employ consultants to evaluate projects. Even if few NGOs which have research wing or units, engage researchers in the following three areas:

- Monitoring of the progress of projects to compile annual reports.
- Development of base line survey to measure the impact and change caused by project in some later stage.
- Carrying carry out evaluation at the last phase of project cycle or when projects complete its life cycles. In few cases, researches are done during the progress of projects, but hardly during the initial phase of project experiments.

One of the acquisitions against NGOs is that often research results are “managed” or “filtered” to suit the purpose of the NGOs and donors. Although, a number of researches are carried out by NGOs, most of these researches often fail to confirm minimum research standard deviated from the purpose of research. Apart from the increasing need of research, the purpose of development research is also being distorted.

The present status of research in the NGO community reveals the following typical pictures:

- A few NGOs have research wings or units. In these NGOs, wide gaps persist between research and program. There is hardly any attempt to develop rapport by sharing and exchanging the experience of researchers and programmers.
- Many NGOs value research, but they have problem in developing research capacity and also in using research recommendations for improving program effectiveness.
- Many NGOs, particularly middle sized and small NGOs, do not see the necessity of research or are unaware of how research can contribute to expanding project choices for development intervention.

In recent years, the changing aid conditionality created pressure on the Southern NGOs to open up internal research wing. The pressure has originated of the Northern end of development community with gradual drying up of resources for aid. This is forcing donors to maximize the utility of the remaining aid funds by highlighting the need for more feedback from experience to understand the growing complexity of development problems (Cracknell 2000:28). This also means that the Southern NGOs under two impulses felt the need to increase their research capacities. First, NGOs are in obligation to highlight the nature of impact of project activities. Secondly, since 1990 NGOs started to scale up their ongoing projects or to implement new projects, but such efforts have to be rationalized by producing objective prognosis of projects. Thus, the growing trend is that NGOs are recognizing the importance of research to develop documents at different levels of project identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of various development interventions. Apart from these, the scope of research has been expanded to incorporate the research at several levels. For example, research is required to develop proposals; capture concrete and normative experience of managers; develop projects and programs; assess the quality of programs; capture impacts of development programs; improve organizational and management incapacity; identify institutional weakness to improve performance and manage result; capture the nature of “projectization” of development; articulate and find a “fit” between the objectives of a development program and the need of the recipients, and the organizational structure of NGOs; identify training need of managers and researchers (Mannan 2000).

PROBLEMATIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Before I proceed further, I would like to highlight two events in form of dialogue whereby negotiations took place between researchers and managers before the implementation of project. The first deals with the Save the Children Australia (SCA), an international NGO, which supports its partners to implement education program with underprivileged children. The second event took place in BRAC between its Rural Development Programs staff and researchers from RED.

The first event took place at the Save the Children Australia (SCA) which implements projects in cooperation with its partner NGOs. In the eve of introducing a new education program, SCA took help from an educationist researcher to implement a new approach in order to prepare disadvantaged children for mainstream schools. The basic premise of project was to offer experience based education with group teaching approach. It had also made provision to have children from both under privileged and privileged classes so that underprivileged children could learn the culture of privileged class essential for sustaining higher education. New approach also made provision for tutoring underprivileged children, as their uneducated (or unlettered) parents were unable to tutor them at home. The aim of the new approach was to promote career of deprived children after the completion of education. As discussion proceeds, a gulf of difference surfaced between the educationist and the NGO managers which are reflected in box 1.

Box 1: The difference of perceptions of dialogue between educationist and NGO managers

Educationist's Perspective	NGO Manager's Perspective
Educationist emphasized on the modification of existing structure of project to overcome its weakness and strengthen the system	Manager considered a new program is required as existing project structure proved to be ineffective
Educationist emphasis was on the school-based education.	Managers rejected school based education in favor of life and skill oriented school.
Educationist emphasis was to isolate children from working place for education	Managers would like to transform working place into schools, e.g., garage and workshops would work as schools.
Educationist offered academic curriculum is offered to ensure quality of education.	Managers emphasized for developing curriculum based on the experiential learning skills.
Educationist viewed that children lacks real reading, writing and motivational skills for attending schools. Teachers could motivate children by visiting their parents	Managers viewed that by inducing life skills that would not only ensure income, but also would motivate both children and their parents to send children to schools.
Educationist method and approach were designed to prepare disadvantaged children for mainstreaming schools	Managers methods and approach were designed to prepare children with vocational education so that they could contribute to family economy
Educationist saw education as an external input in order to covert leisure time of children to relax and play	Managers saw education an internal input in order to utilize leisure time of children for educating them.

The second event is a dialogue between Researchers and Managers of BRAC. Over the year, BRAC has developed a culture of dialogue between researchers and development managers. Every year they seat together to identify research agenda and priority to benefit the program. Research issues are also formulated by BRAC management and BRAC's donors (PRRB:1). The dialogue is reflected in Box 2.

Box 2: Dialogue between Researchers and Managers at BRAC

Researchers	Managers
Researchers were critical about change and transformation. Transformation was looked with suspicion as losing the “old” values in favor of “new,” which was not always helpful.	Managers were complacent about change and assume projects always brought change and transform the poor. Thus, managers were interested to expand projects.
Researchers measure development from either input-outcome perspective or try to capture the process and pathways.	Managers saw development in terms of increasing project coverage and providing service to more poor persons by incorporating them in program.
Researchers use different quantitative and qualitative indicators to gauge poverty and impact of projects	Managers view that impact was not measurable with researchers criteria as the latter super imposed their own preconceived perspective
Researchers were complacent with definition, tables and information	Managers were complacent with annual target figure and achievement.
Researcher discovers “problem” in the projects	Managers view the “problems” of researchers as “success” stories
Researchers recommendation was superficial and they have more “questions” than providing “solutions.”	Managers view the completion or phase out from the project means that they worked toward solution of a problem. Managers had more “answers” to problem than “solutions.”

The two dialogue situations are brought in order to show the gulf of differences although purposes of the both researchers and managers are to ensure that development projects yield maximum benefit to its clients. Although they differ in purpose, type, form, contents and duration, development research and development practice have one thing in common - they provide information about people’s lives, their way of organizing themselves and acting in society (Mikkelsen 1995:26). The dialogue between the researchers and managers is continuously taking place with an implicit understanding that researchers would evaluate projects in order to enhance the quality of the projects.

Three sets of dynamics and realities often lead to create gap of communication between the researchers and development managers. First, NGO managers represent the mainstream of development and implement projects, but researchers exercise their power of knowledge to assess and evaluate the projects’ performances. Being outsider to the mainstream when research offers critiques to projects, it is natural to accept reaction from managers. Managers nurture the idea that the researchers are like auditors whose prime tasks are to find weakness of project. Secondly, managers view researchers as overseers of projects, who have no realistic idea on the operational dynamics of projects. Researchers are for criticizing or tracing faults of projects. Managers are often not in a position to accept criticism. Often they argues,

"We have lots of experiences that have been developed over 20 years, but researchers with two/three experiences cannot grasp the realities of programs".

Finally, both managers and researchers start their careers in development without any scopes to learn research techniques and methods. On the contrary, in their work situations, they are in constant pressure to use research findings for improving the quality of programs. This constitutes in forming a typical situation. On the one hand, development managers are unable to understand research that intends to improve program quality, and on the other hand, researchers with training in particular academic disciplines are unable to capture the multiplicity of project dynamics.

Both managers and researchers have a common problem in apprehending development as they have hardly any prior knowledge of development after entering into profession. They start career without familiarity with diverse tools of development research. They too have problems in conceptualizing the impact of project from development perspective. The universities and colleges in Bangladesh do not offer comprehensive or partial courses on development and development research.

By every definition, development research poses certain problems. Research tries to address and reflect the development reality, but when a report is produced, many managers fail to comprehend the content of the report. Research reports easily provoke controversy, which contributes to mutual misunderstanding between researchers and development managers. For example, managers say, "*Reports are for donors; not for us,*" or "*Research reports do not help us to find solutions.*" Managers prefer minimum information only to grow more and expand their programs. Any discovery of the problem is met with sharp remark that "*researchers do not understand program*"; "*researchers only understand their own report*". Similarly, researchers argue, "*Our purpose is not to provide solutions; but to open dimensions for increasing understanding,*" or, "*Managers have know it all attitude.*" Often, managers misinterpret debate among the researchers as conflict within the researchers.

Problems of Researcher in Development Organizations

Researchers apply research tools and methods to analyze in depth development issues that they learnt from academics and training in particular discipline. These tools and methods are often linear and biased toward particular discipline resulting in the inappropriate articulation of complex development problems.

Manager's typical complain against the researchers are that the later may

- fail to comprehend how the program dynamic creates impact from a holistic perspective. Often researchers isolate projects from impact and measure impact among subjects by dejecting the dynamics of projects;
- adopt research methodology from one's own theoretical preferences, which may or may not be appropriate for development research;

- construe a report influenced by disciplinary linguistic and jargons with a tendency to “intellectualizing” development. This intellectualizing of development fails to comprehend the language of program managers and also of participants; and
- become unable to understand the evolving pattern of active relationship and different interfaces resulting from program intervention.

Apart from selecting and applying appropriate research methodology, there are significant methodological problem in evaluating impact of development projects, which revolve around two traditions in evaluating projects. The first tradition is set by debate between the outcome model and process analysis. This debate takes place primarily between economists and anthropologists. While economists evaluate project by looking into input and outcomes, anthropologists evaluate project from process perspectives. Economists test whether a modeled process is consistent with the measured outcomes (chosen levels of farm inputs, rates of inflation, etc.). Anthropologists analyze outcomes of relationship among people with emphasis on structure and functions of these relationships themselves (Bardhan 1989).

The methodological concern looms large in research which is often seen as a waste of time by managers. Even the researchers have to struggle on choosing appropriate methodology before carrying out any research. This often led to argument as both economists and anthropologists try to negate each other’s methodologies. Anthropologist may think, researchers with quantitative methodologies formulate questionnaires only to narrow down the issues, only to discover what they wanted to "discover": neither a less nor a more. On the other hand, economists accuse anthropologists for being vague and not capable of generalizing findings to be usefully compared with findings of different projects.

The second tradition is of paradigmatic window. Researchers have the particular paradigmatic windows, which they have learned from their academics. The general trend is to view development from either a “hard systems” tradition taking the world systemic, or a “soft systems” tradition, which create process of inquiry as a system (Engel 1997:25). Majority of the researchers are influenced by hard systems tradition as dominant approach to evaluate project impact only to view how inputs are processed or transformed into outputs determined by the functions of the projects. These transformations are captured by models and constructed with the help of black boxes².

Increasingly, there is a tendency to form multidisciplinary team for project evaluation. This formulation is done primarily to avoid criticism or to give validity to research findings. There is a hierarchy of power relations in the composition of multidisciplinary teams. Multidisciplinary teams could be formed either with indigenous researchers from different disciplines or could be a combination of indigenous and foreign researchers. However, the composition of multidisciplinary team may not have happy endings

² In 1995, BRAC and ICDDR,B have taken up joint evaluation project to understand the pathways within the black boxes

because of the feeling of exploitation among researchers. Amidst numerous examples, I cite only two examples from positions of indigenous anthropologists. Anthropologists may face typically two situations in locating their relationships in a multi-disciplinary team.

Situation One: Indigenous Versus Foreign Anthropologists

Occasionally, indigenous anthropologists may have to work with both foreign anthropologists and also pseudo-anthropologists. Their works could easily complement each other since the indigenous anthropologist is close to the subject and the foreign anthropologist have their latest methodological tools and approaches to which indigenous anthropologists have rare access. Usually, foreign anthropologists prefer young local anthropologists. The advantage for the young indigenous anthropologists is that they could learn from foreign anthropologists how to apply anthropology to the study of development.

Situation Two: Anthropologists versus Social Scientist

Normally, both the indigenous and foreign anthropologists work with researchers and social scientists from different disciplines. Usually, indigenous anthropologists become junior partners in research teams. Thereby, the indigenous anthropologists in multi-disciplinary research team have to typically deal with (i) a supervisor, who is non-anthropologist; and (ii) team members, who are not anthropologists either. In such circumstances, indigenous anthropologists get rare opportunity to carryout anthropological study; rather the quality of anthropology is dictated and decided by non-anthropologists senior member. This also indicates that others will try to undermine anthropology in order to establish the supremacy of their respective disciplines. However, in a multi-disciplinary situation everyone tries to scale down his or her disciplines instead of seeking for a 'fit' and integrating their research findings. Often, anthropologists could be easily accused of writing anthropological fiction about societies and development.

In a multi-disciplinary team, there is considerable skepticism about the contribution of anthropologists. First, development professionals often are unsure as to exactly what the anthropologists do. The anthropologist deals with exotic knowledge and culture of people, which are not visible like quantitative data of economists, sociologists, engineers or technologists. Secondly, there is a doubt on the question of transferability (or relevance) of anthropologist's knowledge of a particular society to the other societies in different environments (Evans 1986:27).

A multi-disciplinary team is also a source of tension. For example, the relationship between anthropologist and sociologist could be depicted as, in peasant societies, differences in social status which may invisible to the airport sociologist, but may loom very large under the anthropologist's microscope (Worseley 1971:26). Similarly, it is also difficult to integrate economists and anthropologists. When economists put more

emphasis on input-output models; anthropologists look into process of development. It thus becomes a conflict of perspectives as respective researchers analyze development through different research 'windows.'

A fact of research in development is that all researches are supposed to contribute to developing the quality of ongoing programs and measure the 'impact' of the development projects. By that, the acceptability of research by NGO managers and practitioners is of crucial importance. In most cases, managers want that researchers should justify the action and praise the programs, rather than offering a critique and highlight the negative impact of the project and NGOs. Thus, the acceptability of researchers, whether anthropologists or not, depends much on how well NGO managers do understand research and follow the research recommendations. In NGOs, wide gaps persist between research and programs. Programmers do understand figures, statistics and numbers; and not the qualitative data. To them, qualitative data mean anecdotes and a few case stories.

With this gulf of difference in attitude and understanding, when researchers form a multidisciplinary team to conduct a study it leads to real confusion on two levels. First, within a single framework of report, different chapters and aspects are written by researchers only to establish their own discipline's supremacy. Secondly, in name of multi-disciplinary research what the researchers do are to reduce their own discipline to the level of other disciplines to find a point of compromise.

Problem of Managers in Understanding Research

The value of research increases when development managers know, at least, how to apply different research tools and use research findings. The familiarity of managers with different research tools, methods and fair knowledge on aspects of research will contribute to enhancing the analytical skills of managers. Perhaps, because of research background, managers develop have "anti-research," "anti-knowledge" and "know-it-all-attitude." Managers want that research should praise and evaluate their hard efforts as they are engaged in transformative politics. The research that opens new dimensions for improving the quality of development is feared and also any critical report is avoided. A distinct problem is that managers may be good in implementation of projects, but many of them lack the quality of analytical managers. A reason is that NGO managers start their careers in development without sufficient analytical background. Development requires analytical managers but NGO managers start their careers in development without any knowledge and skills to analyze development process, project management, organization, etc. Thus, researchers complain that development managers are not analytical and they are conceptually underdeveloped. Managers have a tendency to inflate project success. Many of them do not learn from the experience and failures of projects.

NGO staffs are managers in development. They are implementers and much interested to achieve their projects' targets. They give effort to achieve their annual project target, but such project target necessarily may not fit with the ultimate objectives of project

beneficiaries. They often understand the project problem with their intuition and develop insights to the problem from experiential learning. The managers because of the absence of any forum do not find avenues to share their experiences. Their experience are not retained and written. On the contrary, managers' experiences often are manifested in authoritative control over their subordinates. In most cases, managers have convoluted loyalty towards their project and organization rather than transforming themselves "analytical managers." Programmers are not discoverers rather they abide by rules, regulations, procedures and guidelines of projects. Moreover, in development programs managers not only manage projects, they are also involved in the continuous process of solving problems and provide day-to-day analysis. Using their intuition with an aim to providing an "answer" to problems, managers occasionally do analysis. Such analysis offers "answer", rather than a "solution" to problems.

Another distinct area that requires attention is the timing of research. The timing of research has implications on researchers as NGO managers want to complete, particularly qualitative research, within 15 to 30 days. Even to complete small qualitative studies, it might take at least five to six months. In general, programmers are either conceptually under-developed or unable to reflect their concrete experiences in order to conceptualize the implication of their work and action. (Mannan 2000: 54-55). Program staff wants immediate solution to their problems. Researchers are often unable to provide instant solution, as it requires time to identify, analyze problems and produce reports followed by recommendation. Often it appears that researchers may take longer period to complete and submit a report. One of the problems is that programmers want immediate solution to their problems. The problem with the researchers is that when problem is identified, analyzed and recommendation is made, by then programmers went ahead and resolved or created another new problem. When report is submitted, the project may change its focus; when researchers come up with solution, by then, program staff may change their priorities and began to deal with new set of problems. The researchers when come up with solutions, by then, solution itself becomes obsolete or loses project relevance. Further, it is not that easy to disseminate the research findings.

The overall problem is that the development managers are unable to use research findings for improvement of program qualities. Development managers complain that they seldom understand research. Moreover, evaluation reports that aim at improving the quality of program and projects might not have any relevance to managers. They also reproach that researchers evaluate projects without having any proper understanding of the dynamics of projects. Importantly, managers are often puzzled with research findings. The language of researchers - highly theoretical, abstract, subjective and figurative - can not easily communicate with the different levels of program staff. Programs use modules and manuals or how to guide and stir programs. Programmers feel comfortable with operations management and development management modules rather than debating with researchers on issues like institution building, capacity development, good governance, etc. While researchers are occupied with conceptualizing development, the program moves ahead without theory of development. The apparent gap between the two continues to grow bigger.

THE FIELD

Managers conceptualize their project activities in terms of field. They largely believe that without comprehending field to its fuller extent it is not possible even to carry out research. The longer one is acquainted with field research, the more one learns about field by deconstructing theoretical orientation and conceptual biasness one learns from academics.

The misperception of managers against researchers has originated from the notion of field. The field is a project activity that has to be understood in the changing context of time and space whereby projects phase-in and phase-out. The development context changes with the progress of the life cycles of projects. This changing context in relation to project growth means that the expansion of development space which links transcultural values to the poverty alleviation efforts and endeavors. Thus, a field means how projects are evolved from transcultural values, which are implemented by engaging the poor into a myriad of conceptual networks to achieve development goals. Often researchers miss this point because of their participation in the last or final phase of project life cycle.

The notion of field sets the boundary between the managers and researchers. On the one hand, managers see development discourse from inside as they learn from daily discourse, but unable to capture and represent development reality in reports; and on the other hand, researchers see development discourse from outside, but they write on development with their disciplinary biases, which may not reflect the development reality. Often development research to fulfil the obligations of donors' requirement ignores the question of field and thus, development research allows both the researchers and NGO managers to cooperate only to contribute to develop antagonism resulting in the production of research without development prognosis.

Any understanding of the field requires the deconstruction of theoretical mindset with simultaneous reconstruction of knowledge from the experiential field learning. Managers assess researchers' performances by their exposure to the field. Usually, managers construe three categories of researchers. The first category of researchers is a few experienced researchers who have long experienced and exposure to field that allows them to understand the normative experience of the managers. This category of researchers finds pattern and draw inferences from raw field data in order to deconstruct their own theoretical mindset. The second category of researchers is those researchers who locate themselves between the research world and the field. These researchers understand less about the field, but make a real effort to develop modest understanding of programs and try to modify their theoretical understanding with field experience.

The majority of the researchers, both indigenous and foreign, fall in the third category. These researchers are preordained by their prototype ideas shaped by preconceived abstract ideas, perception, theory and paradigm. It is usually this category of researchers

with whom managers develop often hidden conflict. This means that managers may explicitly agree with researchers, but tacitly totally disagree. Visiting the field with predetermined paradigm may result in tensions at three levels. First, tension is created as expatriates visit field with the Western positivist ideas that fail to capture the normative learning experiences of managers. Secondly, priority is placed on Western ethnocentrism to analyze the indigenous development reality. Thirdly, development is not conceptualized by capturing the experience of practitioners, rather what researchers define.

In most of the cases, managers ignore the researchers or often fix them with information what researchers would like to think and discover. A manager opines, *"We accept consultants and researchers because of the donors. The case becomes worse in case of foreign consultants who are winter guest birds and hardly understand development."* So, when consultants approach to programmer, the latter is very polite to give those information and data which consultants want to know and believe. It is also an experiential learning of programmers that these consultants come only for information and write voluminous reports. Researchers look into the transcultural values, not pathways between the "input" and "output." Thus the perception of the researchers is largely construed around impact of project on the poor either as good or as bad and how the poor benefited from the projects.

Over the years, the systematic dehumanizing of normative experience of managers by researchers; particularly by foreign consultants, and over importance on expatriates by elite management of NGOs led to staff discontent. The mismatch between positivist approaches of expatriates and normative approach of local staff is largely interpreted as inefficiency of managers by senior management. A manager remarked, *"Why we have to learn our problems through eyes of Westerners. We have a lot of experiences to change women's social and economic status, but suddenly researchers discover that we are wrong because they have their latest theory of women and poverty."* Usually the researchers are unable to see the hidden transcripts. The researchers are considered as "problem creator" and "problem solver" through recommendation. Whereas the managers are considered as "decision-takers" and "decision-makers" as they implement projects.

The fact is that many development managers do understand research, and similarly, many researchers do understand programs. Development managers do have wide learning experience, but they equally fail to capture their experience. Researchers when carry out research and evaluation by observing the output and impact, they usually ignore the normative experience of managers that largely shapes impact.

CONCLUDING THOUGHT: A SOUTHERN PERSPECTIVE

Does research matter from the perspective of Southern NGOs? Do NGOs use research findings to improve their quality of projects? The reply is negative more than positive. Research report is seen more as strategic documents whose purpose is to response

donors' paradigm to local reality. The problem between the researchers and managers is more than the question of their exposure to development realities, methodological reorientation and the field. A deep reason could be how the research reports represent of the poor and poverty to the donors. The donors when fund NGOs to implement projects, always assume that NGO managers are carrying out good works and activities with the poor. But when researchers intervene to evaluate projects, it subtly challenges the managers. Indigenous researchers being insider are feared more than the foreign researchers.

However, strategic development research appears to be problematic for both researchers and NGO managers. One strategy managers take is to systematically undermine researchers' capacities to understand projects and programs as an ongoing process. Researchers have yet to articulate the art to defend them. One distinct problem for researchers is that they learn and apply research tools and methods from academics, which are inappropriate to analyze development process. Development research requires an experience based interdisciplinary research methods for analyzing complexities of development.

The development researches become strategic research to win and capture the donors' paradigm. For example, NGOs want strategic evaluation reports to capture the impact of their projects as representation of poverty. Experience suggests that donors may use a positive report on projects as pretext to phase out from financing the ongoing project; or a negative report is sufficient to stop funding. Thus, a pressure on the researchers is to "manage" or "filter" research result in order to serve the purpose of the organization, project or program in order to win the donors support. Moreover, by focusing mere on impact studies development research ignores an important aspect of development knowledge. NGOs have generated new knowledge that is the logical outcome of the development intervention, but there are hardly any attempts to capture this knowledge, as NGOs have neither fund nor capacity to do so. Importantly, because of the strategic research, researchers aim to fit how donors think. For example, NGO has created a space of non-government mentality, that is, the idea that development is possible without government help. There is hardly any study how one can do it.

The problem of research to the project evaluation, if any, revolves much not around the question of how effective or ineffective a project could be; but it is much more important how donors would perceive the project after reading the report. Research then becomes strategic one to win the support of donors and thus, the issue of poverty elimination is undermined. That is why often projects phase out successfully, but poverty continues. Strategic researches try to respond how transcultural values are linked to the question of poverty alleviation rather than mere highlighting the strength and weakness of project. Report may highlight problem in such a positive way that it allures donors to fund project a few more years. The researchers appraise the development projects. Researchers have to do strategic research, discover findings and carry out analysis in such a way that report must satisfy primarily the purpose of the donors' staff and the NGO managers; and secondarily the purpose of government officials. By that research compromise with

donors objective rather than aiming at improving the quality of life of the poor via projects.

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