

Community and community development in india

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



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Introduction

According to the United Nations document (1981), community development is “ the creation of opportunities to enable all members of a community to actively contribute to and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development” (p. 5). This community participation approach encompasses locally appropriate actions, principles or decisions that contribute significantly to the development of sustainable and equitable social conditions. I have already described in my first essay, the importance of the bottom-up approach to meet the local needs of farmers from the available resources while encouraging entrepreneurship and self-help. Implicit in the community development approach, Amritsar College has established an incubator for entrepreneurship development for farming community, first of its kind, in the Amritsar region of Punjab in collaboration with Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) of Government of India, to provide training and mentoring support to the budding Agri entrepreneurs for developing self-employment skills. As mentioned in Hickman (1998), Dewey highlighted that “ the shared/collaborative activity constitutes the development of shared values and thus give rise to the prospect of a fuller community”.

During frequent Interactions with farmers in the soil testing laboratory, I realized that the asset-based approach, not a one-size-fits-all, is a wise approach to make people participate in the shared decisions that are affecting their lives. Green and Haines (2008) overtly reveal that “ the focus on the assets of communities, rather than the needs, represents a major

shift in how community development practitioners have approached their work in recent years” (p. 7). Scaffolding this approach is how communities’ perceptions, stereotypes, knowledge, and opinions are managed within the community and general public domain. Efforts to broaden this approach can be found across all over India to support rural communities. As quoted in Sousa (2015), Green and Haines define community development as: “ a planned effort to produce assets that increase the capacity of communities to improve their quality of life. These assets may include several forms of community capital: physical, human, social, financial and environmental” (p. 54).

It is important to mention that with ongoing efforts to address the needs of farmers, I realized some sense of powerlessness in the socio-economic and cultural development in rural areas. One of the farmers I met, stated that “ the social environment has been polluted and their children no longer are willing to work on farms due to rising cost of production and non-profitability in farming and environmental concerns like degradation of soil health, declining of water table etc.”. Moreover, Mijuskovic (1992) mentions this society as a lonely society where the stress is on mobility and no one goes into his father’s business any longer and, promotions are based on their willingness to relocate. As an educator, I understand that to develop the communities, especially the rural communities for a more sustainable future, the methods must focus on individuals to identify the problems and can develop their knowledge, skills and motivation to tackle these problems. In order to devise adequate answers and motives that lie behind that need, this paper will explore how the social capital practices that build on informal,

non-formal and formal learning opportunities can be the primary means to discover a strong sense of community for disadvantaged rural communities.

Overview

India is known as an agricultural powerhouse and has great potentialities because of the warm weather and cheap labour that allows the farmers to grow two to three crops each year, but the socio-economic set-up of rural society triggers the obstacles to realize its full potential. Nearly three-quarters of India's families depend on rural income. With the growing population, the disintegration of land in inheritance increases. Consequently, the land owned by a family is not enough to support them with intensive farming methods. Moreover, the farmers had to obtain loans to get essential farming supplies and seeds. As a result, one can easily see that dejected feeling on their faces as they talk about their lands and their families. However, Sousa (2015) identified that the key characteristic of a community development process is to organize existing and recognized potential assets that can contribute to a community's wellbeing (p. 55). Moreover, the individual's well-being can only transpire within the context of a supportive community (Mijuskovic, 1992, p. 150).

Freire (1990) stated in a conversation on education and social change with Myles that "there are some significant issues due to people's lack of knowledge. The educators could illuminate these issues coming from the people and it should be possible to begin by creating community development workshops" (p. 122). The people in rural communities often get overlooked by the educators and thus there is a great need for quality

educators in the rural communities where there is a real lack of understanding of policies in keyways. To support rural schools and communities requires explicitly a very strong sense of community to make a difference. As quoted in McMillan and Chave (1986), McMillan mentions that sense of community is a feeling that members have a sense of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to being together (p. 9).

Community Development Practices in Punjab, India

There are innumerable approaches to understand community development. Community development includes the approaches undertaken by individuals, informal groups and organizations to support people and community groups to identify and articulate their needs, and to take practical, collective action to address them (Community Development Foundation, 2014, Wikipedia).

The purpose of this paper is to describe the central role that community development practices had on the rural areas of Punjab, India. With a commitment to create a positive change in rural communities and addressing the issues, an initiative was taken by the college to support rural livelihoods and to enhance employability within communities with an understanding that social capital will enhance learning, economic development, social mobility, or community vitality (Wall, Ferrazzi & Schryer, 1998). In this paper, I explore how the social capital practices for community development i. e. mutual relations, interactions, and networks that emerge among groups, as well as the level of trust within a group or community, were advantageous for disadvantaged communities.

The various processes followed were:

1. Identification of farmers: To identify the farmers with a zeal for agribusiness and self-marketing who were ready to sell the local agricultural products like honey, turmeric, pickles, murabba, chutneys, papar waria, pulses, jaggery at the local level.
2. Group formation and their grooming: Attempts were taken to groom the identified farmers with those groups who produce value-added products and in turn, served as a constant source of motivation to other similar groups.
3. Incubation center for training and capacity building: The purpose of this center (a joint initiative of Amritsar college and ATMA) was to give back-end support and mentorship to Agri-entrepreneurs.
4. Organization of training programs: Different training programs on entrepreneurship development were conducted at Amritsar College Engineering and Technology, Amritsar. The choice of the modules for different groups was need-based such as business skills development, accounting, Information technology etc.
5. Kisan (Farmer's) Hut establishment for farmer brand promotion and self-marketing: Display and selling the value-added food products from its food processing unit in its final marketing form, in attractive containers, packets and labelling. The purpose of the Kisan Hut was to instill confidence among the willing entrepreneurs and to send a psychological message to them that " Yes We Can".
6. Market Linkage: Linking entrepreneurs to market and direct to consumers after ensuring quality was the sole objective behind the

idea and organized exhibitions at premises of Amritsar College. This collaborative initiative of the College and Government Agency facilitated the farmers to introduce their products to a wider audience and obtain consumer feedback.

Sousa (2015) states that “ for a community development perspective to be in place, one view identified assets as those that reflect a social value that is functional for a community rather than an individual or private business”. Being able to recognize as a team is a great achievement of the feeling of acceptance. The initiatives taken to develop entrepreneurship in farmers by establishing an incubation center and Kisan Hut aided to alleviate poverty and in turn, continually empowered the disadvantaged and women in around 700 villages with about one million farming population of the area.

Often, too little attention has been paid in providing these types of training to farmers, the social capital assets are important for preparing disadvantaged as influential workers. While providing training to farmers, the experienced educated teachers (human capital) stressed the importance of planning, organizing, directing and coordinating with the basic concepts of using physical capital from the college and financial capital from the government. This change has shown that the broader support of committed educational institutions can have a great impact on disadvantaged communities in identifying and building local assets for a sustainable community.

Conclusion

The scholarly literature on the importance and connections of formal educational institutions and communities speak unambiguously to its benefits and contemporary best practices. I strongly believe that education provides opportunities for everyone to build capacity and knowledge to make informed decisions about family. It is important to mention here that there is a lot of struggle in rural areas to access entrepreneurial education. If everyone is struggling together, it helps to build a community to develop intimacy with a strong sense of safety. McMillan and Chave (1986) explicitly mention that “ the feeling of belonging as ‘ membership’ of sharing a sense of personal relatedness”.

The social capital became a ray of hope to the disadvantaged community with a belief to discover their true potential to succeed in life. As quoted in Putnam (2002), Hanifan outlines the benefits of social capital:

“ The community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbors... When the people of a given community have become acquainted with one another and have formed a habit of coming together occasionally for entertainment, social intercourse, and personal enjoyment, then by skillful leadership this social capital may easily be directed towards the general improvement of the community well-being” (p. 5).

The common concern of reinforcing each other made them know each other, express themselves, and work together to meet their needs. The

disadvantaged community has been provided with a platform to advocate for change in their lives and their community. Through education and empowerment, this initiative helped in improving the overall life of more than a hundred families of the area with an impact on many others.

I would like to conclude this article with personal experiences that educational institutions can have a profound influence on the community to address their social, economic and physical needs. Educating communities can lead to many positive outcomes, such as an improved ability to understand policies, rights, Government schemes, available benefits etc. Education also exposes the communities to information and helps prevent the misinterpretation of information. McKnight (1988) reveals that there is a plethora of resources educational institutions can invest in communities such as facilities that can serve as places that “incubate” community activities. This reflects the reinforcing link to foster a culture based on a strong connection to creating sustainable communities. However, the vital links between experience, work, and education have been weakened as educational institutions have become more professionalized and centralized. I believe that bridging and linking educational institutions and communities can serve as a safe, secure and healthy partnership of ‘learning by doing’ towards economic revitalization. The relationship of formal educational institutions and community can be recognized as the hub that reflects a sense of collective responsibility focusing on a shared mission to foster a relationship and produces win-win outcomes (Chung, 2002)