

ROLE OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS IN
CPR MANAGEMENT: A PROPOSAL FOR A FORESTRY EXTENSION
PROGRAM¹

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INTRODUCTION

11-15-93
WORKSHOP IN POLITICAL THEORY
AND POLICY ANALYSIS
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Reprint File - CPR

The purpose of this paper is to study the relative role of local organization and private individual in forestry extension activities. In this paper local organization means an organization of local people that works fully or partially for forest management. The individuals are those local people who use the resources in order to fulfil their requirements. The logic for importance of one or the other is presented. There can be alternative arguments depending upon various contextual factors. My argument, however, represents a limited knowledge and experience from Nepal where I have been a practicing forester.

For the purpose of this paper extension means sharing of knowledge. In this regard, extension is a reciprocal business. In this paper the forestry extension incorporates both learning and

¹ Paper prepared to submit to the Second Annual Meeting of the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP), to be held at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada, 26-29 September, 1991.

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teaching activities. This study advocates that learning from local people is important because they are "the resource dependent experts"; teaching to them is important because they are the one who can manage the resources most effectively. Forestry extension, therefore, should include both teaching and learning program simultaneously. The study further proposes that learning through individual people and teaching through local organization should be the strategy of forestry extension.

The next section elaborates the elements of forestry extension -processes of learning and teaching. Some examples from real world regarding these processes illustrating relative importance of local organization and private individuals in forestry extension are the subject of the third section. Finally, implications are drawn for policy purpose.

ELEMENTS OF FORESTRY EXTENSION

Traditionally top-down transfer of information is broadly termed as extension. It is supposed to influence the targeted audience through organized agents. In forestry extension the audiences are the local people as users of the forests. The extension agents are the personnel of a planned or programmed organization such as forest department or its parastatals. These agents use numerous tools and techniques to achieve their objectives of informing people with new knowledge.

Two models of forestry extension are discussed here. These models are drawn from the theory of distribution of authority. The first is centralization model which assumes that all information are located at the top where interests and capacity of handling the information lie. This brings us down to the generic definition of extension assuming a programmed organizational typology where ends and means are clear and controlled by the top. This model of extension clearly fails to appreciate that the means - the agents and the knowledge - are not perfect rather need supplements and feedbacks. The goals too, may be questionable because of these reasons. The second model of extension settles down to grass root through the theory of populist participation. This model assumes that the people are the repository of knowledge. The first focusses on teaching process whereas the second centered on learning process. They do not go beyond a mere linear relationships. These models have no leverage to explain the possibility of their beneficial integration. My model - which I call an interaction model - assumes that forestry extension includes both learning and teaching processes and that their varying combinations have differential synergistic effects on the productivity of extension activities. My argument is to go beyond the limits of linear combination to the beneficial integration of the two processes simultaneously.

Learning involves gaining new information. There are various processes of learning (beyond the scope of this paper) . But the most important thing is that, one has to furnish new information to another intentionally or unintentionally. For this reason we must consider the experience and creativity of each and every individual personality as well as the benefits from organization.

Present analysis assumes that the learning process in the context of forestry extension is in the rural setting and the extension workers are outsiders. In this situation members of an organization have several direct and indirect limitations to speak up openly. The relationships among the people may be so varied that the members, many times, do not feel comfortable to express themselves in the group. For example, they have information which they do not want to share with fellow members. Moreover, it is seen that interaction with a group in such an environment has been a mere formality than a serious business. This means that, to take people in confidence to uncover various mysteries needs intense personalized communication.

It is also necessary to note that forestry is a long term endeavor. Learning from its research involves large amount of time. The people who have been using trees for century immemorial have definitively seen a number of pros and cons of several intentional or unintentional forestry activities. Their knowledge in this regard is incomparable. On the other hand, technological innovation

and research in human history is not less promising than indigenous knowledge. Sharing the tremendous wisdom, and blending with new innovation opens avenue for the resource conservation. This does not mean that every individual needs to be contacted. Personalized communication with some educated choice does throw a lot of light. Local organizations are useful, however, to set up the process such as to get acquainted with people, the surrounding, and introduce oneself and the program. This first step is important to move ahead smoothly. It is, however, seen that consensus in group meetings is a rare thing. Many times private individuals are to be contacted to resolve the conflicting answers, any way.

Teaching is in fact reverse process of learning as this involves providing new information rather than obtaining one. But its application is not in contrast with learning, rather synergistic. Here the client is much larger. We can not really make a choice among audiences, rather need to motivate people to participate in group. Organizational approach, therefore, is efficient. This is effective as well because the people will have uniformity in new information for internal debate. Of course, the perception may be differential. But they have opportunity not to be differentiated. This, however, needs continuous feedback and monitoring on individual basis. Learning process needs to be repeated here. That is, individual contacts are important once the teaching program is implemented.

These propositions of forestry extension are now viewed in terms of actual experience from Nepal where forestry extension program has been given a high priority in its national policy.

EXAMPLES

Some examples are discussed based on practical experience in Nepal. Purpose of this discussion is to see where the strengths and weaknesses lie in implementing an extension program. How an individual and a local organization play an important role will then be analyzed latter.

Example 1:

A village forestry program is implemented. The purpose of the program is to carry out plantation in private and communal lands motivating the local people. People's preference for species is surveyed by asking them. The response is some what undigestible to the extension worker. The people prefer an exotic species that is not really good enough to meet their felt household needs. The program develops various means of motivating and educating people about advantages and disadvantages of foreign species in general, and drawbacks of that particular species that people liked.

This program experiences a problem, the people are not motivated or they have little incentive to go along the extension

agent. Why are the people not motivated? One reason is that some people think it is true that the exotic species are better. Other people simply think that the people (village elites) who like exotic species have the ability to make such decisions. So, other people just follow that. This is the case in many rural and subsistence areas. Another reason is that the people have seen wonderful forest of this species in nearby areas. But that forest has certain purpose which the people may not have realized or simply ignored. They want to make a good looking forest. This has happened with *Cryptomeria japonica* (dhupi) in eastern Nepal.

Example 2:

Another program is implemented in various localities of one region. The program tries to grow seedling of fodder species. Preference varies from one location to another within the same region for species. The extension agents are confused now. They end up with developing plantation manuals and nutritional information on different species. It seems that an important information is missing. That is, why the variation in preference is for? People have different purpose regarding species preferences eg. some sell milk, some manufacture butter. This means that there is differential requirement for milk fat and milk quantity, and so on. Similarly, other information would be that some people need fodder exclusively for dry season, some need throughout the year, some need for milking cow, some need for draft animal. In this regard a

uniform approach simply does not work. This is very unlikely that everything is documented and understood thoroughly. One has to learn from localities of concern. This is what we have seen in rural Nepal. One village requests one species and the adjacent village requests another species. Even within a village the variation has been reported.

Example 3:

A new forestry development project is designed. But the components of the project portraits this as being something different than a forestry project. A tremendous amount of resources are being planned to expend. For example, the forestry project seems like a drinking water project for it has more resources budgeted for water supply; it looks like a food production project for it aims to distribute plants for fruits, tea, coffee, etc.; it is like a rural transportation project for it has path construction as a big activity, and so on. This endeavor, although, reflects broad level of learning, it seems to have weak implementation or very costly learning to replicate - the agency can not have the required expertise of all kind.

This happens because people have priorities for their felt needs. One can certainly see why drinking water is more important than growing trees in a subsistence economy. Here comes time factor, resource availability, and so on - immediate visual

requirements versus long term needs. Forestry extension therefore, needs to be blended with other prioritized sector. I am not pleading for the generic integrated approach, but at the incentive or motivating level it has to be mixed with others to make it affordable and implementable. There are examples from central Nepal which give impressions that program may run fine but with extra burden on the resources required - hard to carry over a long run.

Example 4:

There is an area with subsistence economy. People end up with deficit food despite their hard work. Productivity is low and so is the land holding. It is studied that forestry helps agriculture through rotational cropping, wind and shelter belts, organic matter, high soil expectation value, and so on. Accordingly, forest development program is implemented and programs developed to motivate people to plant trees (in place of food crops). Techniques are developed to highlight advantages of forestry crops against food crops. Extension agents try to justify their profession, but with little success. Here both learning and teaching processes seem weak. Learning is weak because it is one sided - ignorance of local desire. Teaching is flawed because the program is based on generalized perception of forest advantages. It seriously lacks specificity pertaining to micro conditions. It fails to assess and realize if people will be able to respond to the injection or not. Teaching program looks further less organized as it has no

information on alternatives such as marketing - if alternative crops can be exchanged directly or indirectly with food crops. In one instance, we wanted to buy food (corn) to eat in far western Nepal. People did not sell no matter how much we could pay. They knew that they could not buy any food when they ran short (they always do there). This clarifies the fact that when the question is of survival, then choice slims down to food crop whether it is costly or profitable.

There can be numerous examples showing variations in local conditions resulting in importance of learning and teaching processes. For example, variation in gender and ethnicity bring different picture. Women have certainly different attitude, knowledge, requirement, and overall different voice for any forestry related program. So does a black smith. His/her requirement and choice may be totally different than a dairy manager. Accordingly, their knowledge in terms of strength of wood charcoal (calorific value) or vegetative propagation of fodder trees are different.

All these examples give the basis for asserting that forest management program needs both learning and teaching processes. They also suggest that teaching follows learning so that the program developed suits the local needs. There are a number of ways to carry out these processes. Since details of this is beyond the scope of the paper, I am going to analyze the relative importance

of private individual and local organization in forest management which is the purpose of this study.

LOCAL ORGANIZATION AND PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL

No matter how old it is or how democratic it is, a local organization is biased towards those segment of the society who are in the upper strata economically and socially. This is especially true in rural developing areas. But the resource use in absolute sense is almost the same for all the people in a society. This disparity makes us analyze local organization as against individuals. In other words, local organizations have hard time to represent all the people in terms of their requirements, problems, and so on. Therefore, it seems appropriate to go to people's level rather than to organization in order to understand the processes of learning and teaching. But there are many limitations in working which makes extension agents follow short cuts to reach to the people. Finding this short cut is the objective of the study. Is the route local organization or the local people is short cut, and under what conditions?

A few points of consideration about extension programs first. These points are useful in considering teaching programs through local organizations.

1. See if the program has unlimited resources in terms of time and money. The answer is usually discouraging. The program must run efficiently. We must consider multichannel of knowledge dissemination as far as practicable. That is, use local organizations more than individuals.

2. The working environment in a rural area is heterogenous in collective sense. This is because the places are different from one another in many ways such as social and economic conditions (although they may be similar in some respect). The extension programs are temporal. The objectives include long term institutional reform. That is, the knowledge transmitted to the people should get into them. They should be able to interact with themselves about their problems. From this logic a uniform dissemination of knowledge is important. Therefore, a teaching program based on organizational involvement is essential.

3. Organizations have some sort of authority or power. Many times they are politically very strong. To avoid their involvement is simply unavoidable and costly to the program. Overall support that a program needs will not be achieved if much emphasis is placed on individual than the organization. Use of the organization in teaching is obvious for this reason.

4. Transfer of technology or knowledge is the purpose of extension. It intends the people develop some kinds of strategy to use the new

knowledge to modify certain lifestyles. If the knowledge transmitted is varied (this may happen if this is not done through organization), then development of such strategy is in jeopardy.

5. Asking some one to do something needs development of rapport. An outsider can not simply ask or suggest an individual in a new place. But s/he can listen to. That is, listening to some one does not violate the norms as compared to asking some one some thing. In this way, learning from individual and teaching to an organization look superior to the opposite.

A local organization working for forest management can be a traditional, old, or recently induced. In any case it claims to be an organization working for the people who formed this. But there are certain things that are typical about organizations.

1. Local organizations under represent the weak section of the society, namely poor, women, lower caste, and so on. Women have different requirement and opinion about forest. Their definition of forest quality may be different than any body else's. What they know, want to know, or need to know can be understood through them. So is the case of other people like a black smith in a society. In this regard, the local organization barely reflects the information that an extension worker, program analyst, or manager needs. The private individuals are the good source of information.

2. Many times local organizations do not have legal status. So they are weak functionally. Other organizations such as a political organization can interfere turning the local organization into frustrations. This has happened several times. This scenario presents a case where an extension agent will simply waste time because of the non-functionality of the organization that is supposed to look after the forests. The political organization may function well, but it does not have that much interest or capacity to exert on forestry cases. The program has to depend upon local individuals more than the local organization.

3. Local organizations may not have been formed exclusively for forest management. In this case the organization may have different priorities. Forests are not managed. This is analogous to the preceding case. The difference being that the organization here is powerful, but considers the forestry case as least preferred. The interest is lacking. The extension program here should be people dependent rather than relying on the multifaceted organizations.

4. In some cases newly formed organizations or historically modified organizations are not capable of or are not a representative of the forest users. Forest users are another important issue in forest management. If they are not properly identified and represented in the local organization, then use of the latter is not convincing. Many times it is seen that the users are not fairly represented. This is some what similar to the first

case but differs in variation within a class itself. For example, this case may represent a situation where the users even from the higher caste are not reasonably represented.

5. Some organizations are simply new. So, their stability, authority, and functionality are questionable for information gathering. Once the wave of community or social forestry came throughout the third world, new committees have been formed with different names, such as forest committee, users group, forest village, and so on. The stability of the organization is untested. So are the authority and its functionality. In such socio-political organizations a number of modifications and improvements are needed before we can rely on them for any social information. When age of the organization is the question (it is the question in many instances), then private individuals are the better sources than the concerned organizations.

Having said the relative importance of the local organization and private individuals, I want to synthesize by recommending a general check list of going ahead with forestry extension program. Let us consider that a new extension agent goes to a village. How will he/she will/should proceed?

1. First of all knowing about the place and the people are important. Consider contacting member(s) of any suitable local organization. Get acquainted with the local conditions. Introduce

the program and yourself to the members.

2. Learn through the individual people as much as possible.
3. Use the organization to teach people about the program.
4. Contact individual and get feedback about how the teaching program is going in the ground (i.e. at the people's level).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that forestry extension reinforcing management strategies includes not only learning but also teaching processes. The extension program must then include both the processes simultaneously. Private individuals and local organizations have differentials impacts on extension activities. Learning from people is faster with individual meetings rather than local organizations. But teaching to people is effective and easier with local organizations than private individuals. However, local organizations are useful in early stage in order to organize things for learning whereas individual meetings are helpful once a teaching program is implemented.
