

The Importance of Measuring and Comparing Development Projects in Process

Hubert Reynolds*

The author argues for the importance of having built-in measuring arrangements for development projects.

Incidentally, and by way of introduction particularly to our coming here to Mexico with its present cultures and archeological evidences of ancient civilizations, this writer and his wife spent the first part of the month visiting some of the ruins south of Mexico City. The sites of the ancient Mayas in Yucatan, of the Olmecs, the Zapotecs and the Miztecs in the Villahermosa-Oaxaca-Mitla area, and the sites of the Toltecs of Cuernavaca have inspired in us an interest in understanding the present and the past.

Sanders and Price, in their study, *Mesoamerica, the Evolution of a Civilization*,¹ make a strong case for the ecological approach as "a significant tool for the scientific treatment and analysis of cultural phenomena," particularly in relation to cultural evolution. For applied anthropology and community development, likewise, ecology has its own significance. However, archeologists may not fully accept the statement by Sanders and Price that "Following Service's classification, we have distinguished for such evolutionary levels: band, tribe, chiefdom, and civilization or state. Archeological evidence from Mesoamerica has confirmed the appearance of each of these progressive levels in the chronological order of their ascending structural complexity."

Nevertheless, their approach is suggestive for community development projects with cultural minorities at least on an exploratory basis. Induced

* AB., Colgate University; B.D., Yale University Divinity School; M.A., Ph.D., Hartford Seminary Foundation. Dr. Reynolds is associate professor of research methods and director, Cultural Research Institute, Silliman University.

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¹ William Sanders and Barbara J. Price, *Mesoamerica, The Evolution of a Civilization* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1968), p. 216.

change should begin with the background of the evolving culture and proceed according to changing needs.

In the Philippines, where this writer has been working since 1964 as Director of the Cultural Research Center of Silliman University, it has become evident that rapid social change is occurring at different rates of speed among the more than 150 ethnolinguistic groups there. Various development projects have been undertaken by different government and non-government agencies with some degree of apparent success. However, in many cases, these projects have been without benefit of built-in devices of measurement to evaluate results of the projects. It seems that the importance of continuing scientific evaluation has not been sufficiently emphasized there. This condition may also exist in other countries where development projects are being conducted.

Despite the fact that the Philippines is an under-developed country, the local social science journals and other literature have not been stressing the importance of measuring and comparing results of development projects in process and of reporting and publishing the findings. Neither have the annual social science conferences and the various institutes stressed this concern, with the exception of the significant paper in this Annual Meeting by Swadesh, Lauderdale and Peterson on "Methods of Measuring Social-Cultural Change During the Process of Community Development."

It is herein maintained that development projects generally require built-in measuring arrangements that can be monitored on a month-by-month and/or year-by-year basis. In this way, both the ongoing results and the development program itself of particular projects would be objectively evaluated according to plan. Without this approach, much effort is wasted and the benefits of development are lost to the people concerned. Without publication and discussion of the results, the spread of knowledge, the basis of comparison, and possible mutual stimulation are also lost.

It is partly a matter of timing. It is furthermore maintained that at the time a research and development project is first offered, at the time supporting funds are being sought, the proposal should be required to state not only the goals and methods of the research and the development project, but also to include a built-in plan of measurement-in-process. The Negrito Development Project of the Mabinay Forest Reserve in Negros Oriental, sponsored by Silliman University, is a case in point.

This particular project was conceived as a "research-action" project. The first step in the proposal was field research. While Prof. Timoteo Oracion, chairman of the social science department at Silliman University, had already accomplished baseline research and publication on this particular community, fresh research data were needed in order to ascertain the condition of the traditional culture in relation to the proposed development project. The reports of other development projects sometimes deplore the lack of adequate "beforehand" data. In this case, a graduate student, Miss Aurora Pelayo, offered to gather the data, and the research part of the project was accomplished during the five months of July through November, 1967.

In the Philippines, community development workers usually concentrate upon four aspects of the community: economic development, educational development, health development, and civic development. In this research project, not only those four aspects were included but also family development and religious development. It is well known that traditional family patterns and animistic or folk religious beliefs and practices tend to resist change, often resulting in negative influences upon the other socio-cultural factors involved in development. Thus, the framework of the research was holistic and functional, as would be the development phase to follow, according to the action part of the proposal. Another semester was allowed for analyzing and interpreting the data and writing the paper.

The action part of the project began in July, 1968. Two young men were hired as development workers with the project. The men were graduates in anthropology from Silliman University and were already oriented among the Negritos with whom they were planning to work. The University's social science department already had considerable experience in "extension work" with an applied rural sociology focus. However, there was only limited experience in development programs on a cross-cultural basis.

Another asset among the planners was background experiences in social work. It was clear before the "action" program began that the staff was not to work for the people, spoon-feeding them and making them dependent upon staff, but rather that staff was to work with the people, "helping them to help themselves." Since the concept and practice of social work approaches are highly individualized, adjustment was made towards "helping communities to help themselves" not only through individual persons (especially leaders) and groups. Full parti-

icipation on the part of the Negrito people was to be sought from the beginning so that the project would become theirs and not the staff's, and thus assuring continuity of the project as staff changed or left.

At the point of measuring and evaluating results, the experience of the United Nations was drawn upon. Particularly helpful was the UNESCO booklet prepared by Samuel P. Hayes, Jr. with the title, **Measuring the Result of Development Projects**. Originally published in 1959, this manual has been revised and published in a second edition in 1966 under the new title, **Evaluating Development Projects**.²

In order to implement the measurement of results during the process of a development project, the following "four steps" are called for by that publication:

1. Describe the development project and specify its goals in written statement.
2. Decide what kinds of data will be used to indicate project results and how these data are to be obtained.
3. Collect the desired data—beforehand, during and afterwards.
4. Analyze and interpret the findings, and review findings and interpretations with the various interested parties.

This writer would add the need for publication of the findings in social science journals of developing nations. This would spread knowledge with possible benefits to other development projects, and facilitate comparison. Projects of similar population types (i.e., primitive, or peasant, or small town, or city peoples) could become mutually stimulating and of mutual assistance when compared periodically as to results and methods. Such controlled comparison could be made within one province or state, one nation and/or region, and possibly on a world-wide basis **within limits** of stages of cultural development, or evolution, where applicable.

As indicated in the manual, better measuring of project results will produce "the following direct benefits: better guidance for the community affected, for the expert, for the administrator, and for the responsible organization. Moreover certain indirect benefits are also worth noting here: clarification of goals (which is a prerequisite to the ap-

² Available at the United Nations Book Store, New York City.

praisal of results), a better morale of all engaged in development because a better understanding leads to more realism in expectations and so to less disappointment, more relevant reporting in normal administration, and more realistic development of science and teaching." In general, as indicated elsewhere in the manual, "Each well-conducted evaluation can make an important contribution to the understanding and forwarding of a nation's economic and social development."

In conclusion, along with national development as a stated policy goal of government in the Philippines (as in other plural cultural nations) is national integration of the various cultural minorities. These two goals are inter-related. National integration may proceed faster within the framework of natural development and national development may proceed faster with greater support from the various cultural minorities. Foreign minorities, such as the overseas Chinese, could be included, but such a hypothesis has not yet been tested in the Philippines. In any case, from a social science premise, **the measuring and comparing of development projects in process are important and should be implemented from the beginning.**