8

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

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Learning Objectives

After completing Unit 8, it is expected that you would be able to

❖ Critique the conventional research paradigm

❖ Discuss the historical context of the emergence of participatory research

❖ Describe characteristics, concepts, outcomes and methods of participatory research

8.1 Introduction

Unit 8 will familiarizes you with the concepts and issues of participatory research and evaluation. In Section 8.2 you will get an exposure to a critique of the conventional research paradigm. To view participatory research as an alternative approach to conventional research, in Section 8.3 you will read about its roots, characteristics, concepts, outcomes and methodology and also mark out the major differences between conventional research and participatory research. In Section 8.4 you will trace historical context of participatory evaluation and learn about participatory evaluation tools.

8.2 Research

The word *research* literally means 'to investigate thoroughly'. It refers to a systematic process of inquiry through scientific methods to discover, interpret, revise facts about a given subject or a problem and thereby generate a new body of knowledge. You may ask as to what happens to the knowledge generated by social research. We will first look at its conventional use and then come to alternative uses.

8.2.1 Conventional Research (CR) Paradigm

The knowledge generated is used to develop general laws about the facts. The thrust of scientific methods such as experiments, comparison of case studies, observation and survey methods is to develop objective and quantifiable knowledge. The research situations are controlled in such a manner that no unaccounted for or spurious influences can invalidate the conclusions. Observation, rather than experience and abstract conceptualization are central parts of the research process. As such, researchers attempt to be neutral, objective and value-free in their data collection and analysis.

Most types of formal research generally follow certain steps, which are based on a process of problem formulation, hypothesis construction, 'instrument' construction (usually some form of interview or questionnaire), collection of data, analysis and interpretation of data. The order of steps may vary depending on the subject matter and researcher.

Researchers have a responsibility to communicate their findings to add to the existing body of knowledge about their subject. Written form is most aptly suited for communication of findings to other professional colleagues, thus publication of research findings in scholarly journals is deemed the most important form of communication.

Once approved by other experts in the field, this knowledge then adds to an existing body of knowledge within academia and is taught to new generations of students.

Most social science research carried out all over the world is related to either of two purposes.

a) First, the need and desire of administrators and policy makers to gather information from and about those who do not make decisions in order to make decisions for them. Government, donor agencies, and institutions generally conduct policy research. The professional experts and consultants are the researchers. The objective is research for policy making.

b) A second purpose of research relates to new knowledge generation and researchers' own economic and professional needs. Academic research is conducted at and by academic institutions and universities. Researchers are generally the subject experts and students. Summarizing and packaging the findings in ways that can be consumed by journals, books, seminars, and international conferences does not only lead to greater access to research funding and but also to the researcher's career advancement. Researchers who presume an ethical obligation to disseminate their findings to the general public through other avenues must work doubly hard to do so, with very little professional reward.

The conventional research paradigm by and large corresponds to the description given above. Researchers who deviate from it can suffer professional ostracism, financial restrictions, and public criticism .

Questioning the notion of traditional social research, being value-free, universal and objective, there are those who challenge the objective approach advocated by mainstream conventional scholarship. They promote the idea of active engagement with social causes. Over the years there has come about a continuous debate between those supporting conventional research and such modes of alternative methods of research as participatory research, feminist research etc. In order to fully grasp this significant discourse, let us first examine the main issues of the debate between conventional research and its alternative, participatory research.

8.2.2 Its Critique

The control over the process of knowledge production and its use and dissemination often reinforces amongst the have-nots the feelings of powerlessness, ignorance and self-blame. We can look at the critique of the conventional research paradigm in the following four categories.

i) Absolute Critique

In conventional social science research, knowledge-generation is the key purpose. There is a wide gap between available knowledge and its utilization. This lack of utilization of generated knowledge leads to research that cannot be used to improve our social, economic, and political systems. For instance, survey research is not conducive to subsequent action. Research alienates respondents, or at best treats them as sources of raw information. The abilities of people to investigate their own realities are likewise not stimulated or developed. Further, influenced by the research paradigm of natural sciences, social science research also assumes that there is one truth about social phenomena. It is difficult to present a realistic representation of any social phenomenon by believing in one truth.

ii) Purist Critique

Many social scientists assume that their research is neutral. Under the guise of achieving objectivity, rigor is maintained by the researcher's control over the focus and methods of inquiry. However, survey and interview questions, consciously or otherwise, reflect the researcher's own values and ideology. Professional researchers know all and they control the entire process of research. Therefore, respondents often experience survey research as alienating, dominating, or oppressive in character. The attempt to achieve objectivity by maintaining a strict separation between the researcher and the subjects is also problematic. Firstly, researchers share essential humanity with their subjects; they are, therefore, subject to same laws that they are attempting to understand. Secondly, the sheer presence of another person has impact over the research 'subject', or the people under study. Therefore, despite researchers' best efforts to be objective, controlled social reality is always a distortion.

iii) Rationalist Critique

The rationalist critique questions excessive reliance on thinking, observing and conceptualizing as main modes of

knowing and researching. The researchers tend to oversimplify social reality. The overemphasis on thinking and conceptualization in the conventional research paradigm intends to reduce subjectivity, but as a result, the feeling and acting processes have been largely neglected. When compiled in clear data sets, charts and graphs, the information gathered through conventional survey research masks the complexity, the richness, and the contradictions inherent to human experience.

The conventional research methods are not consistent with the principles of adult education, which is rooted in an especially strong concern for social justice and equality. These principles include: programs should be based on adult needs; adults are more able to articulate their learning needs than children; although adults' ways of learning change with age, the phrase 'too old to learn' is a fallacy; adults often work out quite complex learning strategies to achieve desired goals on their own.

The conventional research paradigm only supports two of the four types of adult learning processes: reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. The other two modes of learning, concrete experience and active experimentation, are de-emphasized. This limitation constrains the classical research paradigm in two ways. Firstly, those persons who are not comfortable in observation and conceptualization modes of learning do not easily enter the research profession. Secondly, even those who are strong in these two modes and engaged in research, lose some of their insights by denying or neglecting the other two modes.

iv) Elitist Critique

The development of modern institutions of knowledge production has de-legitimized people's own knowledge- the popular knowledge. Trained and exclusive experts and their institutions have become sole pursuers of knowledge. By conducting research to evolve new insights and theories, they subtly yet powerfully regulate the modern knowledge industry. Papers, books, journals, seminars and conferences as the only legitimate modes of dissemination of knowledge, systematically deprive the ordinary from participating in the process of knowledge production and distribution. As most research findings are communicated in written form, it is researchers, journal editors, and publishers who essentially control the outcome of research. Those who assist the research process as respondents or subjects, that is, those who are researched, have no control over the research and its outcome. The dominant research paradigm tends to ignore ethical issues in that the providers of information are denied any control over it, and political issues in that as knowledge is power, the research process further enhances the power of the elites. (Tandon 2005)

In spite of the above critiques, it is important to remember that numbers or statistics in and of themselves are not the key problem. In fact, mostly they are useful as quantitative statistics summarize social information in a form that is convenient and can be readily transferred and disseminated. Accurate statistics around poverty levels, or illiteracy rates, for example, are important information for people to gather knowledge about their own communities. But it is equally important

to be concerned with more fundamental questions around process of knowledge creation such as: who has the right to create knowledge? Who controls that knowledge? Who will benefit from the research? How is that knowledge used?

Hence you can appreciate why we insist on adult educators' awareness of the significance of participatory research. Let us now deal in detail with participatory research.

8.3 Emergence of Participatory Research (PR)

Participatory research (PR) evolved as an alternative system of knowledge production by challenging the premise of conventional social science research methodology. The premise is that social science researchers can approach research sites in a neutral, objective, and value-free manner. Instead, participatory research recognized average people as researchers themselves, in pursuit of answers to the questions of their daily struggle and survival.

8.3.1 Roots in Adult Education Practices

The discourse on participatory research needs to be understood in a historical and humanitarian perspective. By the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the research paradigm reflected North American and European models of research, which derived from empiricism and positivism, and paid rigorous attention to instrument construction, as well as statistical precision and replicability. Participatory research, as alternative perspectives on research methodology, grew out of a reaction to approaches developed in North America and Europe.

Participatory research attempted to find ways of uncovering knowledge that worked better in societies. It grew from the practice of adult educators in the countries in the geographic South, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and their critique of classical research methodology. These adult educators working with oppressed people realized that rise of specialization, and professional expertise had lead to the devaluation of both popular knowledge and alternative systems of knowledge production.

In early 1960s Latin American social scientists, stimulated in part by the success of the Cuban revolution, began exploring more committed forms of research. Paulo Freire (see also Unit 3 and Unit 4) and his colleagues in Latin America developed widely influential concepts for adult education among the urban and rural poor. He developed a theoretical framework, which shared the basic premise of adult education that adults should have control over the content and form of their education. His dialogic approach to adult education engages individuals in critical analysis and organized action to improve their situations. In these dialogues, educators and "students" move toward a critical consciousness of the forces of oppression and the possibilities for liberation. One of the most useful roles Paulo Freire played was to bring some of the current ideas of Latin American scientists to the attention of people in other parts of the world. His work on Thematic Investigation (1973), first in Brazil and later in Chile, was an expression of this search.

Paulo Freire's work on conscientization reinforced the notion that socially marginalized people could be involved

in the production of knowledge. Building on the premise that 'knowledge is power', the participatory research approach assisted socially marginalized people to critically investigate their reality, analyze it, and then undertake collective action to bring about constructive changes in their lives.

At the Tanzanian Bureau of Resource Allocation and Land Use Planning, Marja-Liisa Swantz and teams of students and village workers were involved in questions of youth and employment in the Coastal region and later, in studies of socio-economic causes of malnutrition in the Central Kilimanjaro region. A visit by Paulo Freire to Tanzania in 1971 was a stimulus to many social scientists that otherwise might not have been as impressed by the existing experience of many adult educators or community development workers.

It was also during the seventies that Participatory Action Research (PAR) gained impetus from Fals Borda's work with grassroots groups in Columbia. Borda's aim was to legitimize "popular knowledge" and develop a "science of the proletariat" with which the masses could conduct their own struggle for social transformation. Both PR and PAR focused on the importance of learning and organizing as vehicles for empowerment. Conscientization, which includes process of collective action and reflection by the people, was an important component for achieving empowerment.

While the specific term "participatory research" developed in the developing world, the concerns PR attempts to address were present in rich countries as well. Therefore, while the terminology may be different, consciousness around the limitations of the classical research methodology in a world of immediate and urgent problems was growing in Europe and North America as well. Several examples of participatory and action-oriented research traditions in Europe and North America are illustrated in the box 8.1. It is important to note here that while PR may at times appear identical to action research in the use of methodology; there are two significant ways in which PR is different. First, the ideological stance and emphasis on making the researcher's value-premises explicit are generally not mentioned in the action research approach. Second, action research is at times being undertaken without the participation and control of the actors in the situation. In essence, then, action research becomes another method in the exclusive control of the social researcher (Tandon 2005).

Box 8.1 Examples of Participatory and Action-oriented research in Europe and North America

❖ Recognition of relationship between class position and unequal distribution of wealth and power could be found in the early work of Frederick Engels with the working classes of Manchester.

❖ In Switzerland, researchers in curriculum development adopted methodologies from political research to suit their needs.

❖ In Canada, methods of evaluation along action research lines for community development work were developed.

❖ In the Netherlands, the National Institute for Adult Education pioneered in participatory research through its evaluation of the British adult literacy.

❖ In Italy, Paolo Orefice and colleagues at the University of Naples applied the metho1ogy to their investigation of community and district "awareness" of power and control.

In the USA, the Highlander Centre in Tennessee used approaches similar to participatory research for years, most recently to deal with issues of land ownership and use (Hall 1974).

8.3.2 Role of the International Council of Adult Education

With the support of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), many researchers around the world are formally and informally experimenting with and developing different aspects of participatory research. You may like to read below some of the guidelines that have emerged from these efforts to date.

❖ A research project — both the process and results — can be of immediate and direct benefit to a community (as opposed to serving merely as the basis of an academic paper or obscure policy analysis).

❖ A research process should involve the community, or the expected 'beneficiaries' in the entire research process, from the formulation of the problem and the interpretation of the findings, to the planning of collective action based upon them.

❖ The research process should be seen as part of a total educational experience, which serves to determine community needs, and to increase awareness of problems and commitment to solutions within the community.

❖ Research should be viewed as a dialectic process, a dialogue over time, and not as a static picture of reality at one point of time.

❖ The object of research, like the object of education, should be the liberation of the human creative potential and the mobilization of human resources for the solution of social problems.

❖ Research has ideological implications and researchers are not value-neutral. Research that allows for popular involvement and increased capacities of analysis can sometimes make conflicting action possible, or necessary. For example, as the research unfolds, it may be necessary for the researcher to choose to side with one group or another within the community (Tandon 2005).

ICAE has encouraged and supported the formation of network of Participatory Researchers since 1988. It summarized the following characteristics of participatory research.

❖ Participatory research is an integrated activity that combines social investigation, educational work, and action.

❖ The political impetus originates in the community or workplace itself.

❖ The ultimate goal is fundamental structural transformation and the improvement of the lives of those involved.

❖ The workplace or community is involved in the control of the entire process

❖ The awareness in the people of their own abilities and resources is strengthened and mobilizing or organizing is supported.

❖ The term "researcher" can refer to both the community or workplace

persons involved as well as those with specialized training.

❖ Outside researchers are committed participants and learners in a process that leads to militancy rather than detachment (Tandon 2005).

8.3.3 Participation in Development Programmes

In addition to its influence from the field of Adult Education, PR also drew strength from debates around participation in development programs. Several encouraging developments occurred through international dialogues between participatory researchers and development practitioners, including expanding definitions of poverty to include such concepts as deprivation of education, human rights, dignity, and autonomy, in addition to access to basic needs.

As the newly independent nations began to deliver development programs to their people, two trends began to emerge by early 1980s. First, a blind reliance on theory, models and experts was displacing the knowledge and experience of those "being developed". Second, the process of "delivery" was displacing a sense of "ownership" of local communities with Governmental control and supervision. It is to challenge such approaches to development that Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (then President of Tanzania) commented that people could not be developed; they alone could develop themselves. These ideas and emerging experiences from the ground then began a trend whereby participatory development approaches and methodologies began to be evolved in field practices of programs and projects around the world in late 1980s and in the decade of 1980s. There has also been a growing recognition of the validity of popular and indigenous knowledge, and a rising international commitment to community members' participation in development and evaluation initiatives. There has been increasing pressure from policy makers, development managers, and civil society groups to keep people at the centre of development initiatives and thought.

8.4 Key Features of Participatory Research (PR)

The underlying assumption of PR is that ordinary/oppressed people are knowledgeable about their social realities and are ca-pable of articulating this knowledge. With this assumption, promoters of PR argue that it is a process of knowing and acting. Let us now discuss participatory research process.

8.4.1 Participatory Research Process

As mentioned above, people engaged in participatory research do two things simultaneously. They enhance their understanding and knowledge of a particular situation and take action to change it to their benefit. Knowledge for the sake of knowing is de-emphasized; knowing is linked to a concrete action. This enhances the quality of knowledge and informs the basis for action. This is the starting point of PR. We note the following characteristics of the PR process.

Initial Motivation for PR
Since PR is initiated in the context of the actual reality, which the have-nots intend to change, an existing problem provides the initial motivation for engaging in the research process. In situations where people are already

aware of a problem and articulate enough about it, they may initiate a PR project themselves. They may or may not use the resources of experts, such as the knowledge of researchers from outside. In other situations, some outsiders - be they activists, educators, facilitators, community animators, or researchers - may provide the initial problem focus. However, the involvement of people living the reality of that problem, even if it begins with an external push, is a necessary element of the participatory research process.

Extent and Nature of People's Participation

While participation of people in processes of knowing and acting is a necessary part of PR, the extent and nature of this participation varies considerably. Where initiative to engage in a process of PR comes from people of the situation, their participation is quite widespread. In most such cases, they take part in the methodology of data collection, analysis of data, planning, and taking action. In other cases, where initiative comes externally, the participation of people from the situation is initially limited, but tends to increase in scope and depth as the process moves on. They may not be as much involved in methods of data collection and analysis as they may be in planning and taking action. The people in the situation must have control over the process of knowing and acting. It is easier to obtain control when initiative comes from the people themselves. In cases where there is an external initiative, it is a slow process by which the people begin to control the research process.

Emphasis on Qualitative Method of Data Collection

The methodology of PR attempts to reduce or eliminate the limitations of classical research. While it does employ methods of data collection which are prevalent in classical research, it also emphasizes qualitative and factual methods, which are otherwise considered not so scientific. The methodology of PR, however, stresses inter-personal communication among different parties and demands clarification of the motives of the external party, if any.

Focus on Collective Analysis

Participatory Research is always 'collective' in nature; the process requires groups of people to engage together. The most important step in this context is collective analysis of a given situation. This is a significant distinction from classical social science research, which is typically an individual effort. Participatory research is a collective enterprise and this is reflected in its different steps.

Networking among the Have-nots

A characteristic of PR has been the creation of organizations among the have-nots. Many marginalized people, in the Asian context and elsewhere, are unorganized and isolated. The process of PR brings such persons together; collective sharing, analysis and action generate strong connections between them. Over a period of time, these connections grow into organizations of the 'have-nots'.

PR as a Learning Experience

The process of participatory research is an educative experience for those engaged in it. The people in the situation become aware and more knowledgeable through their engagement. They become more knowledgeable about methods of knowing and analysis; they become aware of their situation and possible way to change that situation.

It is this component of learning-for-all that makes Participatory Research a distinct approach.

PR as Collective Action for Change

Participatory research is a way of taking collective action for bringing about three types of change, namely,

❖ Development of critical consciousness of both researcher and participants;

❖ Improvement of the lives of those involved in the research process; and

❖ Transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships.

8.4.2 PR Concepts

Those involved in participatory research make use of several concepts and we note here some of those regularly used.

Conscientization: People are active agents in the research process. People, if involved in an analysis of their realities; develop the understanding and the capacity to act to improve that reality.

Useful knowledge: PR is concerned with useful knowledge i.e. knowledge, which enables people to solve their problems and improve their lives.

Control and empowerment: Knowledge about the existing oppressive reality and control over the process of knowledge generation and the end-result is empowering. When people participate in determining their own future, they become empowered.

Outsiders as facilitators: Outsiders often-initiate PR interventions. However interveners adopt the position of facilitators, catalysts or change agents rather than positions of dominance. Their role is to initiate a participatory process and take steps to ensure that the control local people and groups have over that process steadily increases.

Action-orientation: Focus is on people acting to solve practical problems. These actions then lead to the generation of practical knowledge.

A vehicle for change: PR is instrumental in bringing about change at an individual level and it also emphasizes the importance of collectives of individuals in understanding and transforming social reality. The process of collective discovery and decision-making enables individuals to accept change more readily. PR has promoted the use of mobilization and community organization strategies, particularly amongst oppressed sections of society.

See Box 8.2 for a case study that illustrates some of the above concepts.

Box 8.2 A Case-study

In Orissa, India, people have suffered for years under the power of moneylenders to whom they had mortgaged their fruit trees on which they had to survive. Slowly, through the influence of Participatory Research people realized that the law did not bind them to these moneylenders. It is not merely this knowledge that freed them, but the fact that they acquired it together in a group. The process of learning was one of reflection on their situation and the realization of their strength in unity. This slow reflection and realization of their strength helped them to stand up to the money-lenders, free themselves from their clutches and eventually gain ownership of their trees.

Source: Tandon (2005)

8.4.3 Outcomes of PR

Because of the outcomes it generates, PR has become synonymous with processes of liberation of the people.

For example, the involvement of poor, marginal farmers and landless agricultural labors in PR has resulted in enhancing their self-confidence and ability to take collective initiatives in their common interest. We may here note some of the key outcomes of PR.

Refined capacities: The active participation of ordinary people/oppressed enhances self-confidence about their capacities to analyze the situation and develop solutions.

Appropriation of new knowledge: The ordinary people/oppressed learn to appropriate, incorporate and re-interpret the knowledge produced by the dominant system for their use. New knowledge is built on the existing knowledge. As people begin to appreciate what they already know, they are more open to seek new information. This desire to seek new knowledge is enhanced if it is done in the context of concrete problems that the people are facing. People are motivated to create and use new knowledge whenever they see its relevance in solving some concrete problems of their daily lives.

Creating informed options: The process of collective analyzes of given social settings provide many alternatives. As part of the process of data analysis, options are debated on the basis of concrete information. As a result, people are able to accept and reject options on an informed basis. This creates a sense of 'empowerment', which is based on the confidence that information has been understood and interpreted.

Liberating the mind: Finally, PR liber-ates the minds of the oppressed by helping them to reflect on their situation, regain their capacities, to analyze and critically exam-ine their

reality and to reject the continued domination and hegemony of oppressors.

Increased ownership: The PR process puts emphasis on the active participation of the ordinary/oppressed people in generating their own knowledge. They learn to take responsibility for their own learning. It is this active focus, which constitutes a powerful impetus for people to exercise control over their own lives.

Empowerment: When people learn to value their own knowledge, produce as well as use new knowledge, are enabled to reflect on their situation of powerlessness and ignorance, and develop the capacity to participate rationally and critically in public life, they are empowered. Empowerment, thus, operates within three dimensions

❖ **Personal**: developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity and undoing the effects of internalised oppression. *(Power within)*

❖ **Relational**: developing the ability to participate, negotiate and influence the nature of relationship and decisions made within it. *(Power to)*

❖ **Collective**: Individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact. This includes collective action based on cooperation. *(Power with)*

Ideological commitment: It should be clear from what you have read above that PR is not value-neutral, but is ideologically committed to the weakest sections. It has a necessary relationship with social transformation and action, while social science research has conspicuously avoided any active involvement. The very act of involvement in the process of analyzing a given social setting creates a sense of ownership of that knowledge, and a

willingness to transform that problem in social setting. The people are able to take concrete actions as part of their involvement in participatory research.

It is apparent that PR has made valuable contributions throughout the world as it has been effectively used in different sectors to bring about improvements in villages, urban slums, tribal habitats, and in countless other social settings. In all these efforts, particularly in Asia, PR has confined itself to micro situations (for example in a neighborhood, slum, or squatter colony) and concerned itself with the 'have nots' (landless laborers, migrant workers, tribal people, women).

For obvious reasons you too would be interested in knowing a little more about PR, especially about its methodology. Our next sub-section deals with PR methodology.

8.4.4 Methodology of PR

PR focuses on inter-personal communication among different stakeholders. A number of qualitative methods as group discussion, role play, public meetings, community seminars, fact finding tours, photo story, popular theatre, education camps are used. It also employs classical methods of data collection such as open-ended survey. The use of methods depends entirely on local condition and situations. According to ICAE (ICAE: 1981) the method serves to promote

- ❖ Production of collective knowledge; the investigation and presentation of a social reality by the groups living it, with the sense of ownership of group information;
- ❖ Collective analysis; the ordering of information in ways useful to the group in examining their reality;
- ❖ Critical analysis; using the ordered information to determine the root causes of the problems and issues apparent in the community, with a view to finding solutions for them
- ❖ Building of relationships between personal and structural problems as part of collective problem solving process
- ❖ Link reflection with action, taking time to ask who? What? Why? Where? When?

See Box 8.3 for a case study that applied PR methodology and obtained fruitful outcome.

Box 8.3 An Example of the Use of PR Methodology

Research team of Vrikshamitra was working on a mission of conscientizing the people about their problem in 1981. The researchers were touring on bicycles in 20 villages in District Gadchiroli of Maharashtra in order to come into direct contact with the people. *Mendha (Lekha)* was one of the villages selected by the team on cycle tour. *Vrikshamitra* set up in the village *Sahayog Shibirs* (discussion groups) where the entire range of issues was discussed and debated several times. A common platform to discuss each and every issue pertaining to the village proved a boon to them. They felt that the entire process of village meetings, discussions, questions and answers and again new questions emerging from those answers was an educational experience for them. Then as a matter of strategy, for every problem confronting them, they used the group discussion forum. The reflection and analysis led the villagers to decide action to transform their social reality. Knowledge of rights as emerged from discussions in *Sahayog Shibirs* in village *Mendha (Lekha)*, Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra, made the local citizens aware of the exploitative issues. As they gained control over knowledge, they organized and mobilized to fight against corruption, and contemplated the ways of developing strategies to negotiate for higher wages. They became aware of

minimum wage and exploitative practices of contractors. Formation of organization led the tribals to demand collectively for higher wages. The above case illustrates the way participatory research created a sense of empowerment and organization amongst tribals.

Source: PRIA 2000

8.5 Conclusion

Since all of us have been involved in research at some point in our academic career, it is important for us to reflect on the kind of research we carry out. As a matter of fact, it does not prove to be useful to enter into polemics about one or the other method of research. In fact being eclectic in approach and taking the best from all sources is always a more wise choice. All the same, in order to be clear in one's mind about implications of the choices we make, it is better to keep in mind the distinctions between various approaches and therefore it is very much in order as a conclusion of Unit 8 to talk about the differences between Conventional Research (CR) and Participatory Research (PR).

In broad and general terms, PR lays emphasis on authenticity as opposed to scientific validity of the information in CR. This is for two reasons: firstly, knowledge about a social setting is not equivalent to the information obtained from it. Secondly, the social generalization of information is not as important; since people are trying to change their own circumstances first, not address problems at a more general level. Key differences between PR and CR are delineated in Figure 8.1.

Indicators	PR	CR
What is the research for? action later	Action	Understanding with perhaps
Research for whom?	Local people	Institutional, professional, personal interests
Whose knowledge counts?	Local people	Experts
What is the basis of selection of problem?	Local priorities	Funding priorities, institutional agendas, professional interests choice of methodology
Methodology chosen for?	Empowerment, mutual learning	Disciplinary conventions, objectivity & truth
Who takes part in the research process?		
1. Problem identification	Local people	Researcher
2. Data collection	Local people	Researcher
3. Interpretation & frameworks	Local concepts frameworks	Disciplinary concepts &
4. Analysis	Local people	Researcher
5. Presentation of findings & useful	Locally accessible academics or funding bodies	By the researcher to other
6. Action on findings	Integral to the process	Separate; May not happen
Who takes action?	Local people with or without external people	External agencies
Who owns the results?	Community people & The researcher	Researcher
What is emphasized?	Process	Outcomes

Figure 8.1 Main Distinctions between CR and PR

8.6 Apply What You Have Learnt

Apply and analyse the conventional research paradigm and participatory research paradigm, choosing any community related issues in the following format.

Indicators	Classical research	Participatory research
Problem – What is the basis of selection of problem? Who identifies??		
Method What are the methods? Who does the data collection?		
Outcomes What are the outcomes? Who utilises the results?		