

INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT IN A COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Development has long been associated with an increase in income, the level of poverty and unemployment. However, these three elements are merely the quantitative aspects of development. Robert (1979), however, relates another facet of the outcomes of development to the process of personal and social growth. This includes the creation of new attitude, new resilience and new optimism. This paper describes some of the indicators that explains both the physical and aesthetic aspects of development.

INTRODUCTION

The indicators of development are two-dimensional. The first is the visible and tangible change in the physical and economic state of the people in the community, the amenities they enjoy and the material resources at their disposal. The other dimension relates to the attitudes, self concept, personality and relationship of the people in the community (Robert 1979). These two dimensions have a close relationship to the approaches used in development programmes. Project oriented development programmes produce tangible results or physical and material types. On the other hand, process of personal and social growth approach produces new attitudes, new resilience and new optimism.

Among the indicators that can be utilised to indicate development are things related to education, infrastructure, health, mechanization and housing. The following discussions will be based on these five indicators.

1. Education

Improvement of the education system in a particular community or nation is an indicator that development has taken place. One of the changes in the education system which denotes development is the increase in the number of primary and secondary schools, in the particular locality. This enables local children to attend schools and enjoy the benefit of gaining knowledge for their future needs. Hence, the sequential change is the increase in the number of children registering for schooling.

Decrease in illiteracy rate is another change associated with development, whereby, more people are able to read and write. This in turn expands the ability of the people to be more open, more dynamic and productive. Increase in the number of qualified teachers and teaching-learning facilities are also associated with development. More effective teaching-learning process is possible hence resulting in a higher passing rate in the SRP and SPM examination which is another indicator of development. The increase in percentage of students enrolled in institutes of higher learning is also used to indicate that development has taken place.

From the personal and social growth aspect, change is viewed in terms of value and attitudes. The increase in the number of schools constructed in certain localities must be in line with the population distribution of that community. The increase in the number of qualified teachers should be associated with an increase in the teaching quality in the schools. The SRP and SPM examinations should be followed by an improvement in the moral and discipline of the students and the creation of independent individuals.

2. Infrastructure

One of the elements in agricultural development is the construction of highways and feeder roads. This is because roads decrease the cost of getting the requisites of agricultural production to farmers and of transporting products from the farms to the centers of distribution. As cited by Mosher (1976), a road constructed under the village programme in Pakistan has made it possible for fruits to be transported from isolated villages to Quetta by truck at less than one-half of the farmer's cost of transporting it by camel's back. In the Philippines, according to Mosher (1976), the same influence of roads have been documented. It was reported that roads have influenced the village market prices, land values, availability of fertilizers and accessibility of schools and health facilities.

Another obvious element in agricultural development is the provision of irrigation water. It was reported that social change occurs as an effect of this provision because it intensifies and extends the needs for agricultural labour through more months of the year (Mosher 1976). Irrigation facilities also increase the density of the agricultural population in that area through the increased productivity of the land due to irrigation and by the greater demand for agricultural labour in the fields.

Other infrastructure facilities includes electricity and water supply which can influence the life style of the people and enables them to enjoy the benefits of new inventions which have long been used by their urban counterparts such as television, refrigerator and easy access to water supply. Infrastructures such as the post office, bank, telephone service, community hall, shops and police stations are also associated with development. These infrastructure, opens the opportunity for the

village people to expand their business activities and contact with other cultures which in turn promote social and cultural changes in that community. In the qualitative aspect, the provision of the above facilities should also be associated with the improvement of the quality of the life, and enables a better relationship amongst the community members and their neighbours.

3. Health

As mentioned by Maimunah (1989) the health indicator is often utilised in relation to demographic criteria. The infant mortality rate and the increase in the demographic rate is another indicator of health. This demographic criteria have a close association with the improvement of health situation in that community.

Physical indicators which are used to denote the improvement in health situation are; the number of local clinics and hospitals available, number of doctors and personnel in hospitals, doctor patient ratio, types of medicines available, number of patients registered, and the availability of medical facilities as well as technology used in the hospitals.

Health indicators also have a close implication on the level of nutrition and quality of life of the people. The people of a well developed community are less likely to suffer from malnutrition. Healthy living and healthy family members indicate development.

4. Mechanization and Agricultural Technology

Agricultural technology is another indicator of development especially in the agricultural sector. As stated by Mosher (1976) agricultural development in an under developed country normally involves the introduction of new varieties of seeds, new crops, fertilizers, insecticides and new farm implements.

Heavy mechanization such as the introduction of tractor for ploughing and mechanised combined harvesters usually takes a longer time to reach the rural people. Nonetheless, the overall effect of new technology and mechanization is on the reduction of labour utilization. This means that a small farm will provide less employment for members of the farm family and some of them may become unemployed or have to look for employment elsewhere. This in turn, will drastically change the pattern of family living.

However, mechanization and new technology increases the efficiency in agricultural production, therefore improving the income of the farm operator. This is especially true for large farm operators who could afford to invest in mechanization compared to small farm operators.

The sequential change of mechanization is the alteration of the social organization of the small farm operator. These group of farmers will organize themselves into a formal organization or informal arrangements

between several farmers so as to enable them to utilise the mechanization facilities.

Mechanization also tend to bring with it a dependence of farmers on repair facilities and this forges a new link between farmers and the town. Another influence of mechanization is that it speeds up the rate of commercialization of farmers because it commits them to the production of cash crops.

5. Housing

Housing is one of the basic human needs and it is another indicator of development. According to Maimunah (1989) one of the objectives of development is for every family to have a proper house to live in. The current housing situation in Malaysia has very much improved compared to the last two or three decades ago especially in the urban and other areas surrounding it.

It is evident that a lot of low cost and medium cost houses are being constructed in most parts of the country. People are now able to purchase their houses at an earlier age without waiting for the time they retire from work.

Another quantitative aspect of housing indicator is viewed in terms of the quantity of luxury, medium and low cost houses occupied, the average of household occupants, number of houses in a particular locality, arrangement of the houses and the racial ratio in one particular residential area. From the qualitative point of view, this indicator could be measured in terms of social interactions and harmony of the community, cooperation among community members and family status in terms of education, health, development of the children and the moral of the young generation.

CONCLUSIONS

Numerous types of indicators could be utilized to indicate development. However, the measurement of these indicators depends on the item to be measured. Increase in certain phenomena does not necessarily indicate development, it can be otherwise. For example, the increase in number of patients registered in a hospital does not indicate any sort of development but implies that the health situation is not in a good shape. In contrast, a decrease in the number of people who are illiterate indicates that development has taken place.

Another feature which can be used in describing development is the equal importance of the two dimensional measurement that is the physical, visible and tangible measurements as well as the qualitative or abstract type of measurement used for the personal or social growth dimension.

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