



Participatory Assessment of Development

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Langbinsi info sheet, no.2

PADev: The way forward by Zjos Vlaminck (summary)

Zjos Vlaminck's Master's dissertation assessed some strengths and weaknesses of the PAdEv methodology. As PAdEv takes a progressive learning perspective, such an exercise – by someone who was not involved in the design of the method – is very useful. Vlaminck describes PAdEv as a new participatory evaluation method with a holistic and historical intake. The problem statement is:

... to what extent can PADEV evolve into a catalyst of sustainable development and empowerment, rather than a means of extracting beneficiary information...

The dissertation first constructs a theoretical framework based on a review of the literature about aid effectiveness, participatory research methods, participatory monitoring and evaluation, the use and influence of evaluation findings and downward accountability (see box below). This framework serves as the basis for the fieldwork conducted in Langbinsi from 6 June to 19 July, 2011. The fieldwork sought to answer the following two research questions:

1. To what extent do the key actors in the health and education sector in East-Mamprusi District have the intention to use the findings of the PADEV evaluations?
2. To what extent can PADEV become a motor for downward accountability?

Defining **downward accountability**:

The ability of less powerful actors (here: common people) to influence the actions of more powerful actors (here: NGOs, government agencies)

Hence, this study looks at two desirable outcomes of PAdEv that have not received full attention at the onset of the project, namely the

uptake of results by development agencies and its empowerment potential for beneficiaries.

The research was qualitative in nature and the data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with ten agencies in the health and education sectors, two chiefs, and several key players in the local development scene, such as PAS, ACDEP and CARE. In addition five focus group discussions with intended beneficiaries were held.

The interviews with agencies revealed that if they had been more involved in the organization of the workshop and the drafting of the reports, this would have increased their uptake of results.

The discussions with intended beneficiaries revealed that more downward accountability could have been attained if reports had been presented in a more comprehensible way, enabling people to confront agencies with the results and to propose changes to current practices.

The study concludes that PADEV has the *potential* to become an innovative participatory evaluation method that increases evaluation utilisation and downward accountability. However, the road towards fulfilling its potential is still long. Utilisation can only increase if all relevant stakeholders are involved throughout the evaluation process. Empowerment will only be achieved if people gain ownership over the evaluation findings and are enabled to use them.

Full reference: Vlaminck, Z. (2011). PADEV: The way forward: An Assessment of the Utilisation and Empowerment Capability, based on Fieldwork in East-Mamprusi, Northern Region, Ghana. *MA thesis*, University of Antwerpen.

