DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 213 SO 013 436

AUTHOR Shumavon, Douglas H.
TITLE Applied Research in a Cross-Cultural Setting.
PUB DATE Mar 81
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (Philadelphia, PA, March 18-21, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Differences; Developing Nations; *Ethnocentrism; Experimenter Characteristics; *Foreign Countries; Political Attitudes; *Research; *Researchers; Research Methodology; Research Opportunities; Research Problems; Research Skills; Social Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Researchers working in foreign settings are often influenced by a number of factors which are quite different from factors which influence research activities in one's own culture. The hypothesis is that these cultural differences can influence research in a positive or negative way depending, at least partially, on the degree of sensitivity shown by the researcher to the unique cultural characteristics of the society in which he/she is attempting to carry out research activities. Data are based on experience and interviews gathered while working in community development in Bolivia. Factors deemed particularly influential with regard to research efforts in Bolivia and in developing nations generally include educational level and literacy, attitudes toward government within the host country, feelings of efficacy in social and political interactions, the organizational milieu, geographical considerations (such as arranging activities/interviews to coincide with the work/leisure cycles of an agricultural calendar), and the influence of cultural differences on the interpretation of data and findings. The conclusion is that difficulties pursuant to conducting research in a foreign setting can be alleviated if researchers make every attempt to be sensitive to the cultural setting. One way of increasing cultural sensitivity is to rely upon host-country personnel to assist in the research activity. (DB)

APPLIED RESEARCH IN A CROSS-CULTURAL SETTING

Douglas H. Shumavon
Miami University

Prepared for presentation at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, March 18-21, 1981, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

INTRODUCTION

Consultants and entrepreneurs in both the private and public sectors are more and more frequently being required to conduct systematic research for the completion of tasks they are assigned. These range from marketing and locational studies in the private sector to programatic and administrative inquiries in the public sector. They also range in their level of systematic discipline: from ad hoc administrative assessments to logically designed, empirically testable hypotheses of projects with specifically identifiable goals.

This paper draws from data through personal experience and interviews gathered in Bolivia while working as a consultant to the National Community Development Service (NCDS) in the mid-1970s. The NCDS has been the recipient of several loans and grants from the United States Agency for International Development.[1] As a component of a loan granted in late 1972, the NCDS contracted for technical assistance in a variety of areas. The principal responsibility of those involved with the consulting effort was to leave in place a formal evaluation system which would measure both the success of the activities undertaken by the agency and the impact of those activities on the communities involved. Secondary tasks included project planning, budgeting, training and marketing studies for certain agricultural sub-projects.

During a twelve month period in 1973 and 1974 (and during several months again in 1975 and 1976), the author was the senior advi[illegible] signed the responsibility of coordinating the technical assistance to the evaluation system. Two principal goals were desired by the "Servicio" and the AID supporting units: some measurement of the community development process and success (exito) and

some measurement of the impact (impacto). The ultimate design of the evaluation system permitted data collection on the amount of contributions from within the communities to permit the construction of projects (labor--mano de obra--, materials, or cash) and user rates for both social (schools, medical posts, portable water supplies) and economic infrastructure (roads, bridges and agricultural projects). Data were also collected on the amount of governmental effort placed in each community (work days of promotional activities, the presense of other government agencies) to see what relationship could be found between NCDS effort and success as defined by the user rates.

At the time of the study there were no base-line data, thereby preventing the use of a pre- post-intervention methodology. This necessitated the use of a post-project completion methodology, severly limiting the scope of the evaluation. While it was the desire of the agency personnel to collect data which would demonstrate impact (generally defined as "improved economic status"), it was not possible to draw the linkages between project design and economic improvement in the communities. The best that could be accomplished was to measure user rates and community contributions to the maintenance and upkeep of the projects. Those projects constructed in rural Bolivian communities (with a population of 3000 of less) three years earlier were the subject of the initial evaluation. Of 154 identified projects, data were collected on 128.

When one becomes involved in applied research efforts in a foreign setting, certain characteristics unique to the host-country culture become evident. Such characteristics can significantly influence the relative success of one's research efforts. How aware and sensitive one is to the differences between one's own culture and that of the host country is not necessarily a new element

toward which little attention has been directed.[2] What is of concern in this paper is how those cultural differences influence the research effort. What are these unique characteristics? How do they influence the various phases of research? What are the potential advantages or pitfalls that await the researcher who demonstrates or fails to display that sensitivity?

This paper identifies several categories of examples derived from the experiences in Bolivia. The first, educational level and literacy, looks at these two factors and how they impinge upon research effort. The second area, trust in government and efficacy, looks at the difficulties peculiar to working in a government organization in a society where skepticism and doubt best characterize peasant attitudes toward government. Third, the paper looks into the organizational milieu to understand both internal and external factors which can influence the relative success of conducting research. A final section looks at two other conditions before offering some conclusions.

EDUCATION

Education obviously involves a broad variety of concerns, many of which are a consideration whether conducting research in one's native culture or in a foreign one. In this case, I explore two particular dimensions of education which directly influence the research effort: the level of education within the organization that conducts the research, and literacy levels of the general population that interact with the organization.

Organizational Considerations

The range in educational background of employees within the NCDS is extremely wide. During the period of the research, 299 of the nearly 400 employees were located in the eight regional offices; the remaining staff were in the headquarters office in La Paz, the nation's capital. Most all senior level staff in the central office had at least a high school (colegio) education, and most of these had some university training. University education was highest in those technical areas which required professional degrees (e.g., engineering or agricultural economics). In two instances NCDS personnel had sufficient graduate education and experience that they also served as occasional consultants to world-wide organizations such as the United Nations or the Organization of American States. However, these highly educated and experienced individuals certainly must be considered exceptions. For the most part, the organization was staffed by individuals far below the level of university training. At the regional office level, at least one college-trained individual (usually an engineer) was employed. But the field-level staff (promotores)--which numbered over eighty--were seldom found to have more than a grade or two of schooling completed. It was this group of individuals that had line responsibility and

constant contact with the population being served by the agency.

While the educational level of individuals will vary in all organizations, the wide gap between those with a considerable amount of formal education and those with only a year or two can produce unique tensions for one involved in applied research tasks. The level of conceptual development and understanding among employees will vary accordingly. The ability to think in terms of organization generally presented little difficulty for those with completed high school or university education. When we spoke of research design, developing measures for project impact, or the analysis of data, few of the ideas presented confused employees at the central office. This was quite significant as the intent of the consulting effort was to institutionalize the capacity for ongoing evaluations within the organization. Yet at the level of an individual who has received but first- or second-grade education, one cannot expect such ease in understanding. Care must be taken to explain how evaluations work, what the intent is and how such activity fits within the organization; and one must allay any fears employees might have about how evaluation results will affect them. Accordingly, the researcher must be sensitive to the different capabilities of individuals at all levels of the organization.

Level of educational attainment in employees also influences accuracy in reporting and compliance with directives for conducting the research. The acceptance of new techniques and innovation meets resistance in all organizational forms. This is exacerbated when the techniques have the potential for pushing beyond such fundamental capabilities of the staff as reading or writing. For those with a minimum of formal education, requirements for collecting and recording data that test the limits of one's knowledge--even in tasks so simple

as completing questions or blanks on a form--can severely challenge the reliability of the data gathered. While progress may be made in presenting ideas to a central office staff capable of understanding the model or framework employed, initial enthusiasm may have to be tempered and complexities reduced to a more simple form so as to insure accuracy in that which is collected.

In spite of the potential pitfalls attributable to educational background, it may become imperative to rely upon the weakest link. Because of the large number of cases and the kinds of data that had to be collected in diverse geographic regions, we relied upon those field-level staff who were already familiar with the program's efforts. In many cases, locations of specific projects were too remote for easy access--yet field-level personnel knew and visited such communities on a regular basis. In some instances only field-level personnel knew the specific site locations--officers in the central office did not know all communities in every region of the country. Finally, any data collection effort that involves 150 projects in nearly the same number of communities is too large and diverse for one individual to cover. For these reasons we chose to utilize field-level personnel for da[illegible].

To insure reliability in spite of [illegible]ver of educational attainment of the data collectors we took several precautions. First, we attempted to balance the need for extensive amounts of information with the potential for error in data gathering. One cannot expect an individual who has only minimum reading and writing skills mastered to complete a questionnaire about a site that requires extensive narrative statements or complex data compilation or calculation. Such trade-off obviously limits the comprehensiveness of the study and the significance of the findings. But the alternative is to have a beautifully designed study which generates no valid information.

Second, at the outset we involved selected field staff to assist in idea generation. This served to temper the idealistic expectations of the research by providing general information about the communities being served, the variety of projects being implemented and the working environment of the organization. In the process of designing and field testing the questionnaires, we were made aware of the unique nature of secondary and tertiary indicators of economic wealth in the communities; glass in window openings, ownership of bicycles or transistor radios, materials which roofing on houses was constructed. This interaction also provided those field-level employees with the opportunity to become aware of the research endeavor. It served to lessen anxiety about the purposes of the effort and built confidence in data collection activities for those who would ultimately have the principal responsibility during that phase.

Additionally, once the design phase was completed, we held pre-collection seminars involving all field-level personnel. We were permitted the time and resources necessary to hold two such seminars (one on the altiplano, another in the Cochabamba region). The training seminars permitted the only formal explanation to all field personnel why such a process is necessary and provided the only real opportunity to specifically guide those collecting the data. A brief general discussion of the data collection process was given with the identification of specific difficulties we anticipated data collectors might encounter. We also devised a brief simulation with some role-laying to facilitate the learning process. This breaks the ice for the skeptics by familiarizing participants with the processes to be followed. Everyone was permitted the opportunity to play both the role of data collector and of respondent (in our case, community resident).

Finally, reliability checks might be required to insure that accurate data has been gathered. We delegated oversight responsibility to the directors of the regional offices. Rather than have such responsibility remain in the hands of a foreigner or even someone from the central office, we felt directives from immediate supervisors would be less threatening. We also felt that delegating such responsibility would facilitate institutionalization of the process. Personnel in the central office provided a third means for reliability checks by spot glances of received questionnaires. For those forms with obvious errors or suspicious data, additional checks were run with data already compiled in central office files.

Population Considerations

The second dimension of education and literacy deals with those who are going to supply the data from the community. Two problems present themselves. First, the level of education and literacy create potential difficulty in keeping records. This, in turn, presents reliability questions as literacy generally preceeds accurate record-keeping and organization of information. Second, while language itself may be a problem, particular difficulties arise when one finds several subcultures which make tri-lingualism the medium for gathering data.

The literacy rate in third-world nations varies greatly; it is significantly low in Bolivia where approximately 62% of the population cannot read or write.[3] This becomes problematic in collecting data if no one in the community is capable of keeping formal records on what has transpired during or after completion of project construction. In communities where schools were the designated project, most had teachers (a few did not). In such cases, the teacher

is the ideal contact in the community. However, in Bolivia only 55% of the teachers are graduates of normal schools.[4] In spite of this general statistic, most teachers were the only individuals in the communities to have command of the languages, and they were also highly respected individuals. Furthermore, much of the data we decided to be most useful and informative in our analyses was available through records kept by local school teachers (more so in school projects). But this was generally the case even in those communities where projects other than schools were included in our evaluation. At that, in our investigations we found that some schools did not have a teacher assigned continuously (over three or four consecutive years). In a couple of examples, the remoteness of the community was too much for the teacher who left before a year was complete.

In those communities where accurate records are not kept or where no one in the community formally records any information, the problem is considerably more complicated. While such cases were rare in our inquiry, one is left with two alternatives. Either the data must be omitted or further investigation must determine what information is available. Again, reliability may be a factor, for if community residents do not keep written records, the possibility exists that incorrect data may be supplied by the respondent. In summary, continuity of record keeping can be quite troublesome in the collection of reliable data.

Nothing has been mentioned of the fact that in most research conducted in Latin America, a second language--for most North Americans--is also required. Certainly, a facility of that language will provide additional ease in the work to be completed. Furthermore, when one ventures into research for the first time, generally a specialized vocabulary must be developed. This is true in

program specific and research specific instances. Colloquialisms also may be predominant in different regions which necessitate careful wording in a second language.

In Bolivia an additional language problem complicated the research effort. As many as half the population do not speak Spanish, but rather the indigenous languages of Quechua, Aymara and Guarani.[5] Thus a native North American can find him/herself using a second language (Spanish) for communicating with field staff or community residents who also use Spanish as a second language. With field staff this generally does not present problems as their bilingual capabilities are quite good. But in certain communities, it may take a period of time to locate an individual who is capable of fluency in their second language. Obviously, the more remote the village, the greater the likelihood of such an occurance. In any case, language difficulties also necessitate careful consideration in both questionnaire design and in data collection.

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT/EFFICACY

A second category of concerns in which researchers in a foreign culture may become involved deals with the relationship between the citizenry and the government. Trust in government and political efficacy as perceived by community residents (and in our case questionnaire respondents) can also significantly influence the success of the research endeavor. To a large extent, both factors are related; but I separate them for the purposes of understanding how each influences different aspects of the research.

I believe it safe to say that the level of trust in government by the peasantry is considerably lower in Bolivia than we are familiar with in the

United States. While we are exposed to public opinion polls which frequently ask the citizenry how they feel about such trust, polling and pulse-registering devices are not so common in Latin American nations. Several factors which are different in kind from those in North America contribute to the level of trust in any given nation. First, most government services are not as numerous nor do they reach as extensively throughout the population in many countries. For example, the U.S. government estimates that some 300,000 children between the ages of 10 and 14 have no access to formal education; and that about half the population has access to medical attention, mostly from public institutions.[6] Such statistics are not conducive to building confidence and trust in government. The political history of the nation is an additional factor which influences the level of trust. In countries where freer and more open political processes predominate, fear of governmental involvement in the community is likely to be less prominant. Conversely, in a nation that has had a history of civil violence or a series of military regimes which frequently find themselves in conflict with the peasantry, the weariness of civilians toward those who represent the government is likely to be high. Given the unique character of such attitudes, place yourself in the role of a researcher, questionnaire and pencil in hand, walking into a community to collect data. Carry it one step further, what might happen if one wished to collect data at the level of the individual or household?

In the design of an evaluation system to measure the contributions of infrastructure projects to the economic well-being of a community, the objective is to demonstrate the link between the change in economic conditions and the project. This entails controlling for a wide variety of possible inter-

vening variables--a difficult task in and of itself. But assuming that is possible, one needs to develop indicators of changed conditions. As census taking and tax or income data are not generated by anyone in any regular or systematic fashion (if at all), it becomes part of the research task to identify indicators. The logical place to start is at the level of the individual or household. However, this requires direct questioning of individuals (with data reliability issues raised) or secondary indicators that represent less obtrusive measures. We deliberately delayed collection of personal- or household-level data for two reasons. First, we didn't want to receive wide variations in successful entry into the different communities (where one might collect data easily in some communities and get absolutely closed out in others). Second, reliability of information collected might be dubious. We were frequently warned about strangers entering in the community to collect data as they were perceived by residents as being government representatives collecting information for the purpose of taxation. While the likelihood of such an individual appearing in a community is remote, in my opinion, the concern of community resident who lack confidence in the intent of government, could be quite detrimental to the collection of reliable data.

Aside from the facility of having the manpower to assist in the collection of data over a wide geographic area, this was another factor (the fear of strange government information collectors) which influenced the selection of field level personnel for data collection. With individuals who are known in the community, their association with the government in any negative connotation is minimized. A stranger, particularly a foreign stranger, would likely meet with more resistence. While we felt we had identified indicators which would

assist in the measurement of economic improvement, the obtrusive nature of such an inquiry guided our decision to postpone that set of questions.

Efficacy also may present unique considerations for the applied research effort. The Bolivian Community Development Service, which employs a self-help, locally initiated and oriented program, functions under a non-democratic military regime. A fundamental precept of the community development process is that community members work together in some collective form to identify community problems and agree on some means to resolve those problems. This is precisely the job of field-level staff (the promotores): to facilitate that process. At the same time, the agency is an arm of a government desireous of positive visiblity in the countryside that assists in the construction of needed infrastructure. The push from the government is to have tangible results delivered by the regime with less concern for the process involved.

These dual, and potentially conflictual, perspectives also present research design difficulties. As field-level staff are responsible first for the activities related to project construction, they may not perceive the utility of collecting data for evaluation purposes. The previously mentioned training seminars provided an opportunity to explain the value of such information and illustrate what the intent of data collection was. Furthermore, in the design considerations, one must weigh the appropriate value each perspective is to receive during the analysis. How much should the inquiry reflect upon the process? How much should the inquiry be directed to illustrate the successful entry of the government into the countryside? Indeed, in the case of National Community Development Service, agency personnel prided themselves on the belief that the agency was one of the few arms of the government which en-

joyed a high degree of popularity among the peasantry. While this was the case precisely because of the effectiveness of the field staff in successfully entering the community and gaining a certain confidence among residents, it put a certain pressure on the research effort to have an evaluation system which reflected that success. On the other hand, the intention of an evaluation system is to illustrate both strengths and weaknesses of program activities; to find out what [illegible]t does not; to identify, if possible, what community-wide changes [illegible]red because of the construction of needed infrastructure. Thus, design work must permit the collection of data which illuminates an open inquiry into the successes (or failures) of the community development process. This would more than likely include some measure of government popularity.

ORGANIZATIONAL MILIEU

A third category of concerns involves the organizational setting within which the research effort is conducted. The influence of organizational conditions on research and evaluation is a fact noted in the literature extensively.[7] As in a domestic setting, the researcher must be cognizant of the organization and its environment. Pressures on the researcher in a foreign setting may be aggravated because he/she is an outsider who must be aware of possible resistance to suggestions or recommendations made. I use the distinction between internal and external factors to illustrate potential obstacles to the research.

The Internal Dimension

The evaluation research with the NCDS provides two examples to illustrate the potential difficulties associated with the internal dynamics of the organization. One of the crucial factors to insure utilization of an evaluation research effort is the division within the organization that is assigned the responsibilities of design and analysis. In this case, the division responsible for the study of communities and conditions which influence the field workers' domain was Division of Investigations and Training. The division had two sections related to each other only in the vaguest ways. The training section was responsible for conducting seminars for NCDS personnel and for selected communities' leaders who were brought together for instruction in the community development process. The activities of the training section were important as they provided a basic understanding of the processes involved through a course directed toward potential recipients of NCDS activities. The investigation section, on the other hand, conducted in-depth community studies using an anthropological approach. Lack of funds and general disregard for the investigation function by the organization's leadership had led to the section's relative lack of importance in agency decision-making and a decrease in the number of studies conducted. Locating the responsibility for design and analysis in this division (the original intention) was tantamount to death of the research and whatever the analysis might demonstrate.

To facilitate the incorporation of research findings into the decision-making process, it was decided that evaluation activities would be incorporated into a newly created planning and evaluation section, directly accountable to the agency director. Such action obviously has far-reaching implications and

one must be aware of the potential drawbacks to such recommendations. Long held attitudes and values become obstacles to change and the foreign researcher can easily aggravate an already delicate situation.

A second internal consideration was the necessity to insure the cooperation between two distinct and independent divisions. In this case, the cooperation involved sections in the central office and the eight regional offices. Planning, design and analysis responsibilities rested in the central office; data collection responsibilities were assigned to field office personnel. The former activities took place within a group that operated relatively freely and generally with its own independent scheduling. The latter were responsible to regional directors and also operated within their own self-established schedules. Fortunately, coordination between these divisions were required with other activities. The training seminars involving community residents required the identification of participants from the communities by field-level staff. Scheduling required close and continuous communication as there were only two training facilities in the nation. Even the investigations section required coordination with those promotores who worked in the region where studies were to be conducted. Costs for failure to coordinate in a research effort are significant. The majority of the communities from which we were unable to collect data came from one particular regional office. While it was fortunate that only a relatively small number of projects were omitted, timing of the analysis prohibited applying additional pressure and waiting for the results.

Both of the examples--where to assign responsibility and the coordination among divisions--serve to illustrate potential complications and the awareness a researcher must develop to insure successful implementation of any research

effort. In considering the internal dynamics of the organization, care must be taken to understand the idiosyncratic nature of the personalities involved, the particular ways in which tasks are accomplished or disputes are resolved in the organization, and the cultural characteristics which influence the organization's operations.

The External Dimension

The external environment of the agency represents the second dimension of the organizational milieu. Again, the literature in organizations is replete with the significance of the organization's environment.[8] Conducting research for a foreign government adds an additional complexity. The relationship between donor and recipient agencies raises the issue of compliance with donor-agency demands or requirements.

In the NCDS example, a requirement was made for the design and implementation of an evaluation system in order to receive a loan. This placed the recipient agency in the position of needing something tangible to comply with the loan agreement. Here, the loan agreement established a "condition precedent"[9] (and earmarked the necessary funds) for the NCDS to develop an evaluation component. Such a situation, of course, can facilitate cooperation with agency personnel. But this is not necessarily the case. First, the agency may not be aware of the complexities involved in such a research effort. Second, the personnel may be willing to agree to a condition precedent because it permits the awarding of a loan, not because of any inherent commitment to the idea or the results which might be forthcoming. Third, the agency may not be aware of the additional costs which they may incur and which may not be covered by the loan agreement. Such costs must be born from funds beyond those granted

through the loan. For example, travel and per diem costs incurred with the pre-collection training seminars provided to field-level staff had to be assumed by funds from the Bolivian government.

The issue of relations between one agency and others within the host-country government may also be of concern to the researcher. Some agencies may find themselves with considerable dependence upon other agencies in completing their activities or missions. Questions of territoriality or prestige can influence the degree of cooperation one might encounter. Hostility might exist because of a lack of communication between a central planning agency which knows nothing of the host-agency's loan obligations. An agency such as the NCDS might also require the cooperation of other service-providing institutions once the local infrastructure project has been constructed. Schools necessitating the placement of teachers is a classical example.

It has been noted that inter-agency cooperation in Bolivia is a problem, and not always because of poor relations between agencies.[10] In the data-collection and analysis we found several examples where coordination was quite necessary, but had not occured. The NCDS constructed many schools and several medical posts as part of their community development programs. In several cases, while very rare, we found that teachers had not been assigned by the Ministry of Education and were left vacant. We also found an example of a building constructed as a medical post, then used for crop storage because the Ministry of Health could not equip or assign medical service personnel to staff it. In the design of the evaluation we were concerned with identifying how successful the agency was and attempted to identify what difference such success had in the community. In the preceding examples, one can certainly conclude a

relative amount of success in project construction, but little in the way of utilization--at least as designed. The way in which the research accounts for such findings influences the outcome of the evaluations. While such findings would suggest the need for cooperation in the future, action taken based upon the results may be inhibited because of long-standing animosities between two agencies or because there are not sufficient funds.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

One can identify two other factors which do not fit within the previously mentioned categories. One of these is a geographical consideration, the other one involves the presentation of analysis and findings. Aside from the obvious differences in the northern and southern hemispheres (remember, their summers are our winters and our summers are their winters), attention must be paid to the implication of those differences. As the NCDS was concerned with rural community development, this example is peculiar to the rural environment. A unique agricultural calender influences the activities of the rural population, and subsequently, that of agency field-level personnel. The planting and harvesting seasons are relatively short in certain regions of Bolivia. The wet and dry seasons are also unique. Accordingly, the amount of time when subsistence-level farmers have freedom to engage in communal activities is somewhat restricted. This becomes significant in determining when and how field-level staff can coordinate their planning and promotional activities. Release of funds from the agency which are held up because of administrative difficulties can delay project construction for a complete year. This can have a highly detrimental effect on community enthusiasm and cooperation. As regards utilization of agency personnel in the research effort, timing of the data collec-

tion activities must take into consideration the constraints attributable to the agricultural calender. Agency personnel must be able to free themselves from promotional activities in some communities to permit evaluation activities in others. Planning of the research effort must, accordingly, consider the agricultural calender and its implications for community residents and agency personnel responsible for data collection.

The final concern to be addressed involves a combination of several of the previously mentioned issues. To be useful, an evaluation must provide information in a timely manner with decision-relevant data. At the same time, the individual responsible for the completion of the work task must maintain allegiance to the methodology of evaluations. Ultimately the analysis provided must be presented to decision-makers for incorporation into their processes. Alas, evaluations can not, and frequently do not, provide everyone with the information they need, or in some cases, the information they want. And decision-makers will process the information through their own perceptions.

A final illustration of how cultural differences can influence the research effort is in the interpretation of the data generated on several medical posts. User rates illustrating the extent of services provided, number of patients treated, and costs associated with each project were made available to three sets of individuals. Each group responded differently and in accordance with their needs and perceptions of relevant information. The leadership of the NCDS were particularly pleased with the findings. The general response might best be summarized by the quote, "Look at the number of people now receiving medical treatment who previously had to do without." The project manager of the AID Community Development Section was pleased that the data and

analysis were in. The eval[illegible]ystem's first run was complete and the original goal accomplished. The loc[illegible] officer within the AID mission refl[illegible]ted an interpretation unique to the position he held: he quickly pulled out pencil and pad, calculated a relationship between project cost and the number of individuals served, and concluded that the cost-benefit ratio was insufficient and questioned the value of continued efforts in the construction of medical posts. Even in the use of data presented, cultural differences account for varying interpretations.

CONCLUSIONS

Conducting research in a foreign country requires being cognizant of the unique cultural setting and the potential difficulties one might encounter. A researcher's sensitivity to that cultural setting can influence the success of one's efforts. The categories of education and literacy, trust in government and efficacy, and the organizational milieu are merely conveniences for understanding how cultural factors can effect the researcher's activities. The related difficulties are overcome by how sensitive one is to that foreign culture.

Any research activity in a foreign setting should result in a learning experience for the researcher. In the role of consultant one certainly brings expertise to be transfered to the recipients of the service provided. At the same time one gathers extensive experience which can and should be returned to his/her native culture. Reliance upon host-country personnel to assist in the research activity provides three benefits to all concerned. First, it facilitates adoption of new techniques for those being trained. Hands-on, supervised experience provides immediate feedback and build confidence. Second, utilizing

advice and counsel of field-level personnel enriches the data collected. One often fails to ask the right questions, assuming that their own perspective is the appropriate one. Looking to those who understand and know the environment can compensate for cultural blinders worn unknowlingly. Finally, the insights provided by host-country personnel can be incorporated into the researcher's world view.

NOTES

1. The loan through which an evaluation system was mandated was the third from AID to the MCDS. The total amount of the loan was (US) $3 million. Alliance for Progress, Loan Agreement, AID Loan No. 511-L-044, September 15, 1972.

2. A particularly insightful book which treats the nexus of cultural change and technology is George M. Foster, Traditional Cultures: And the Impact of Technological Change (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

3. Development Assistance Plan, United States Agency for International Development (Washington, D.C., 1975), p. viii.

4. Ibid., p. 10.

5. Ibid., p. 9.

6. Ibid., p. 10.

7. See, for example, Carol Weiss, Evaluating Action Programs (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1972).

8. All texts in Public Administration devote a significant portion to the external environment of organizations. Two of the more recent ones are J.D. Williams, Public Administration: The People's Business (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980) and Harold F. Gortner, Administration in the Public Sector, 2nd edition (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1981).

9. A "condition precedent" in AID parlance is a requirement to be met before or during the disbursement of the loan. Failure to comply can result in halting the transfer of money.

10. Development Assistance Plan, p. 18.