Critical review

How effective is inclusive innovation without participation?

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ABSTRACT

The last few years have seen an upsurge in the field of innovation studies especially 'inclusive innovation', aiming not only at economic but social development. In developing countries, like India, inclusive innovation must incorporate governance and for governance to be inclusive, it should encompass participation by all, especially the marginalized, to make public policies efficacious and deliverable. I argue that any model of inclusive innovation needs to take cognizance of participation by all stakeholders. The objective of innovation must be to enable and empower people at the periphery through awareness, accessibility and democratic deliberations rather than solely aiming at economic outcomes. There is a need to debate on the 'inclusiveness' of innovation and make it more participative. Such an endeavour may help promote United Nation's sustainable development goals by making governance participatory and expediting the process of social justice.

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1. Introduction

Inclusive innovation, a new entrant in the field of development studies has gained currency recently. As a distinct area of enquiry, 'inclusive innovation' (ININ) established itself by enlarging the scope of 'mainstream' innovation studies (Heeks et al., 2014: 175). Inclusive innovation entails innovative models and tools focussing primarily on the marginalized section of the society by involving new technology (Heeks et al., 2014: 4). ININ has become central to the study of innovation policy and a popular model for development. Yet I argue that in developing countries of Asia, Africa and South America, can innovative inclusion be successful without the process of participation and effective governance?

Heeks et al. (2014) established the need for new models of innovation for development on changes witnessed in the last decade. He enlisted this as: "significant involvement of the private sector and global value chains in innovation for the poor, the development of poor consumers as an accessible mass market, growth of technological capabilities within developing countries, and the involvement of new technologies especially information and communication technologies such as mobile phones" (Heeks et al., 2014: 1760). This coupled with the involvement of international agencies, such as World Bank and UNDP's conception of 'shared prosperity', aimed to reduce inequalities.

A thorough understanding of any model of inclusive innovation entails first and foremost the meaning of 'inclusion', and the Oxford dictionary defines 'inclusion' as "including everything or something as part of a group of things" (Oxford English Dictionary 2012, 394). In other words to include connotes addition and/or incorporation. The Heeksian 'ladder model', though pioneering, is not appropriate for cultural heterogeneous and highly stratified societies.

The success of innovative inclusion cannot be guaranteed without the process of governance because socio-economic policies

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need state support to effectively distribute benefits and resources. Governance simply put connotes who has the power of decision-making, how is power distributed and who has authority to implement policies. It also involves understanding of the process about how different stake-holders make their voices heard and what are the ways in which negotiations are carried out? Bevir (2010) defined governance as the theory and practice of complex processes and interactions that constitute patterns of rule. The World Bank (1991) defined governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (1991, i). Governance as a current concept was initially applied in studying fisheries and aquaculture (Kooiman, 1999). Later elaborating on his analysis of 'governance', he developed a model of governance incorporating governability. He defined it as 'the totality of interactions, in which public as well as private actors participate, aimed at solving societal problems and creating societal opportunities; attending to the institutions as context for these governing interactions; and establishing a normative foundation for all those activities' (Kooiman, 2003: 4). Kooiman's model was improvised by him and Devas; later it was refined further by Hohn and Neuer, who stressed the need to study institutions, structures of authority, collective action and coordination in resource allocation in societies (Bell, 2002).

Broadening the definition of governance as a process involving all people and groups, especially representing the marginalized and poor, the paper argues for participatory democratic governance. Inclusive innovation technologies and models in developing countries must have an enabling effect on those subordinated communities raising their self-esteem and dignity to claim their entitlements. Hence, for innovation to be inclusive, it must include three 'Es': enabling, empowering and entitling.

2. Inclusive innovation and governance

Inclusion and governance are buzzwords in developmental research (Fressoli et al., 2014: 276). However, there must be caution in usage, especially with regards to what connotes 'inclusion' and 'governance'; striving to make these terms more open to incorporate excluded people and groups within their ambit. It is important to understand inclusion not merely as presence but as active participation of maximum members of marginalized communities, classes and groups; they should be able to autonomously speak and opine for themselves without pressure from any agency or state.

The European Commission formed Innovation for growth (i4g)group in 2011 to offer economic advice on research and development. The i4g in its policy paper no. 15 stated that, "inclusive innovation (ININ) was developed in the developing countries suffering from poverty and exclusion of large population from satisfaction of basic needs and benefitting from technological advancements" (Mohnen and Stare, 2013: 2). The Global Research Alliance Network (GRAN), an international network of nine applied to form a research organisation to create **'A Global Knowledge Pool for Global Good'.** The focus of GRAN is to apply science, technology and innovation in the pursuit of solving some of world's gravest challenges (GRAN). "Inclusive innovation' as elucidated by GRAN stands for knowledge creation, acquisition, absorption and distribution efforts targeted directly at meeting the needs of the low-income or the base-of-the-pyramid (BoP) population" (GRAN Inclusive Innovation).

ININ is also called 'frugal innovation' and 'pro poor' innovations as they aspire 'to reduce gaps between the richest and the poorest groups in society. They have been categorised as grass-root innovations i.e. innovations by low income groups incorporating a bottom-up approach and Internet-based Communication Technology (ICT) based applications facilitating inclusive innovations (OECD, 2013). Inclusive innovation explicitly conceives development in terms of active inclusion of those who are excluded from the mainstream of development (Foster and Heeks, 2013: 335).

As stated above, international, supra national and academics have defined ININ in a variety of ways; the common tone is the inherent presumption that citizens belonging to lower income groups must benefit from innovations. However, these definitions do not directly stress on participation of these marginalized groups in governance and policymaking that impact these groups directly. These definitions recognize the people of lower income groups as 'actors' and the international, national organizations as 'agents' for ININ. Though they do mention that at some stage, the marginalized groups also become partners in innovations although this is not spelt out comprehensively. Moreover, the presumption ININ works on is that the lower income groups or marginalized will be included in ININ, is dependent on the nature of state, i.e. a democratic state. This is not to say that non-democratic states are anti-poor but they do not necessarily involve all groups in decision-making. Hence, ININ gets limited to the kind of government a State possesses, as there is a reciprocal relation between human development and democracy (Human Development Report, 2015).

Caution needs to be exercised while using the term 'inclusion' because it does not necessarily connote being included with equal dignity and respect. Also 'inclusion' is limited to 'one person one vote' guaranteed by universal franchise, which is essentially 'benign' and not 'authentic' (Dryzek, 1996: 475). Inclusion should also not be confused with representatives of marginalized groups being included in policy making (quota system), because there is no assurance that they will speak for the group (Phillip, 1993, 96–99 as quoted in Dryzek, 1996: 476).

Rather than just using the term 'inclusion', I argue that 'governance' must be used alongside inclusion to effectively elevate the position of people at the lowest rungs of the social-economic and political ladder. Moreover, they should be considered as participants and not spectators. Such a task may be difficult but not impossible. Participation imbibes the feeling of confidence and equality among people at the margins, giving them a sense of belonging and voice. From this perspective, participation not only helps make good citizens but also bridges the gap between citizenry and the state, which is critical for welfare policies to be successful. Governance focuses on "complex processes and interactions that constitute patterns of rule, concentrating more on the activities that blurs the boundary of state and society" (Bevir, 2010: 2).

The difference between using the terms 'inclusion' and 'governance' is critical. Inclusion means 'to be included' as a group in the policy sphere of the state wherein state becomes the decisive agency for including or not-including any group. However, governance recognizes plurality of stakeholders and networks, thereby challenging the "reified concept of the state" (Bevir, 2010: 4). The last few decades have seen the rise of studies that claim that state as a political institution is no more useful and a school of academics are emphasizing that globalization is leading to a diminishing role of states (Cable, 1995; Strange, 1997, 1999; Held and McGrew, 1998).

Even as the state as the sole authority with sovereign power has undergone a change, the question to be asked is, has the state as political institution lost its significance? The answer is no, in developed and developing countries alike; the State very much, remains at the core of all-important decision-making. Ethnic and social movements demand new autonomous territories called the state for specific groups; numerous cessation struggles for independence continue to be a regular feature of contemporary world.