DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH METHODS

Week 1, Lesson 1: Reflections on Development Studies & Development Research

Development Research Methods
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What we will cover in today's lecture

1. What are the characteristic features of Development Studies (DS)? What is the scope of DS?

2. How do we distinguish between Practitioners and Academics? A brief idea about Development Practice

3. Doing Development Research

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A brief history of *Development Studies*

- Relatively young field of academic study.
- The term ‘development studies’ did not come into use until after World War II, and many DS journals date from the early 1950s to the 1970s.
- Scholars argue DS was born out of the decolonization process in the 1950s and 1960s, as newly independent states sought policy prescriptions to ‘catch up’ economically with industrialized nations.

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Contextual factors shaping DS

- Dominance of economic thinking in the ‘early years’ of DS
- Influence of Marshall Plan, and the 1949 Truman Declaration of a ‘bold new program’ that aimed at making benefits of industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of under-developed areas.
- Post colonization also a time that saw the emergence of *Development Economics* as a new branch within Economics which was not exactly free of conflicting ideas with respect to what we knew as *mainstream Economics*.
- The genealogy of DS has been also linked to the way *Anthropology* was studied way back to the 18th century.
- The relationship between Economics and DS remains controversial. (*Economics and its ‘imperialist’ tendencies*)
- Some of the fundamental changes over the last three decades that have shaped the evolution of DS into multi-disciplinary and away from purely economic approaches have been led by Development economists such as Amartya Sen, Paul Streeten, Ravi Kanbur, and Ingrid Robeyns etc.

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What are the distinctive features of DS?

- DS has a normative point of departure from other social sciences – and this is to *improve peoples lives* – and thus a shared commitment to the practical and policy relevance of teaching and research.

- Growing interest among DS teachers, researchers and thinkers in addressing *local, and global inequality – particularly gender inequality*.

- The above is one of the reasons why feminist economists, anthropologists, geographers, political scientists, and so on have been drawn to DS.

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Heterogeneity in the subject matter of DS

- Shared interest in *less developed countries*, or *developing countries*, or the *South*, or *post-colonial societies*, formerly known as the *Third World*, and *comparative analysis* therein.

- Teaching and research in DS increasingly emphasizes on heterogeneity and diversity in what was perceived as homogenous (eg. economic behaviour of developing countries). If one compares disparate countries of the Global South in the 1950s and today there has been a clear divergence in their development paths to be put together as a homogenous category.

- Increasingly DS is recognizing context specific matters and moving away from universal laws.

- The connecting theme is, in general, post colonial countries, or the Global South, and standards of living within them. Sometimes transition countries of eastern Europe, former Soviet Union and OECD countries are also taken up as subjects of inquiry.

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Multi-disciplinarity of DS

- Teaching and research since the late 1970s, and in particular since the 1990 launch of annual UNDP *Human Development Report*, has emphasized the wide range of disciplinary perspectives to approaching development issues, theories, and epistemologies across economics, sociology, politics, geography and so on.

- Increasingly DS is being seen as moving from 'additive' inter-or multi-disciplinarity to 'integrative' trans-disciplinarity (*resulting in increasing inter-disciplinarity?*)

- Area studies is an important discipline that shares some common characteristics with DS.

- However the distinguishing characteristic of DS is its *comparative focus* as DS is not related to specific global regions or areas.

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The critiques of DS

Delivery critique

DS is irrelevant since much of the 'Third World' is no better off than in 1950s or before

Neo-liberal critique that DS is predicated on 'bad economics'

Neo-colonial or post-development critique

DS is a neo-colonial discourse which frames, shapes, and controls the 'Third World'

Foucault's notions of knowledge and power in the context of post-development. DS is *in itself* the problem.

Depoliticisation critique

DS is apolitical, vehicle for depoliticisation, politically neutral technocratic application

Foucault's political technologies: political problems rephrased in politically neutral and technocratic language.

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Development practice & Development Studies

- Academics vis-à-vis Practitioners

The traditional province of a practitioner lies in *action, a tradition of relevance*:

i) In changing or facilitating change in the world

ii) Continuous contact with people and situations

iii) A framework (project, programme, organisation) within which findings can be operationalised

iv) A basic orientation which sees people as subjects of their own development, not as objects for research by outsiders

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The traditional province of the Development Studies academic lies in *understanding, a tradition of rigour*:

i) Uncovering the patterns of cause and effect which frame, facilitate, or constrain the changes which we may all wish to see

ii) Independence from institutional agendas and biases (*this is changing as more research funding is obtained from official funders for consultancies and other contracted research*)

iii) Access to and knowledge of the wider literature

iv) More time and space for reading and reflection

v) Analytical and formal research skills

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A stylized depiction of the development community

Academic/research-based group	Practice/policy-based group
Researchers in universities, institutes and think tanks in the South and North	Operational staff of CSOs in the North and South such as trade Unions, NGOs, voluntary bodies, religious groups, other pressure groups, campaigning bodies and private sector including international business
Research staff of CSOs in the North and South such as trade Unions, NGOs, voluntary bodies, religious groups, other pressure groups, campaigning bodies and private sector including international business	Those working in the Media – in the South and the North
Researchers in govts and other public bodies in the South and North at various levels including bi-lateral donor agencies such as Dfid, USAID etc.	Politicians and bureaucrats in govts and other public bodies in the South and North
Research staff of supra-national agencies such as IMF, UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, WTO, FAO etc.	Operational staff of supra-national agencies such as IMF, UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, WTO, FAO etc.

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Doing Development Research

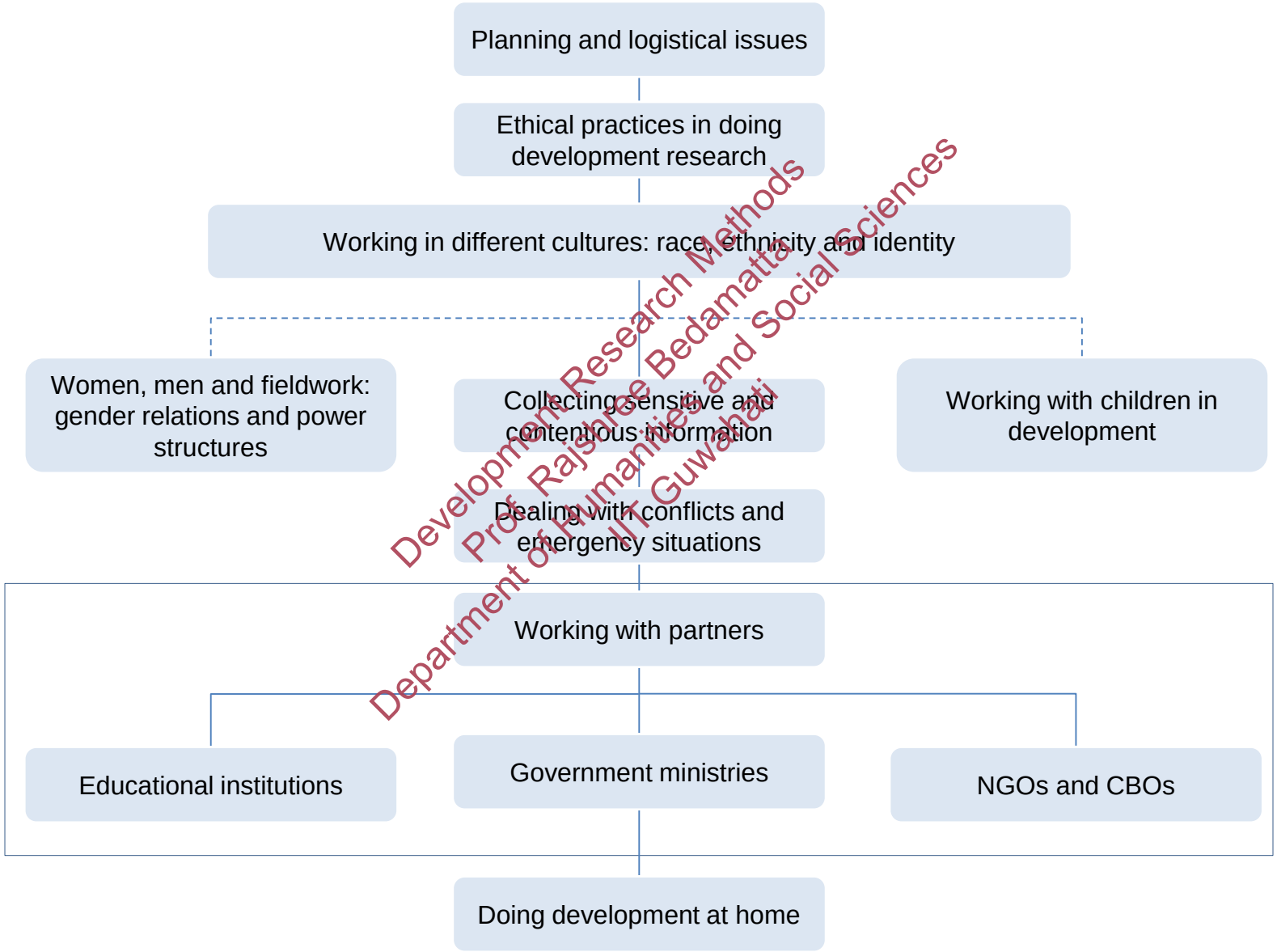
- **Doing development research**
- Research in action
- ‘Actioning’ research

To be covered in subsequent lectures

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Steps involved:

1. Doing Development research and paradigms of development
2. Strategic issues involved in planning and executing sound research
3. Main ways in which information and data can be collected in carrying out development-oriented research



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List of journals

- World Development
- Canadian Journal of Development Studies
- European Journal of Development Research
- Economic Development and Cultural Change
- Development
- Journal of Development Studies
- Development and Change
- Development in Practice
- Journal of International Development
- A Radical History of Development Studies

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References used for this lecture

- Andrew Sumner, “What is Development Studies?”, *Development in Practice*, Vol. 16, No. 6, 2006.
- Michael Edwards, “Development Practice and Development Studies: Working Together”, *Development in Practice*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1996.
- Andrew Sumner and Michael Tribe, International Development Studies: Theories and Methods in Research and Practice, 2008, Sage Publications.
- Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, *Doing Development Research*, 2006, Sage Publications.

For a comprehensive literature on the topics covered in this lecture it is also suggested that students go through the reference list of the above cited papers.

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