

Eliciting Information - The Approach is Everything

"Last evening ~~the~~ many people came to me asking if I was sure you were not ~~frauding~~" says the secretary of the Rabul Chamber of Commerce. ~~After a pause~~ ~~after a~~ ~~brief pause~~ - a slightly ^{the} 26 yr. old oil seller that I fortunately got to introduce me to that ~~a~~ towns' matters. ind. entrepreneurs. They said now that you know everything about their "kaar o baar" how much they spend, how much they earn, what they own etc you ~~are not going to~~ ^{may} turn it over to the govt. and next we know the tax collector will be around, ~~soon~~ ~~next time they sell bricks~~ or ~~next time~~ the govt. will set their selling price, now knowing how much the brick costs to produce... I assured them you were not with the govt. & you were an attractive sincere foreigner ~~not~~ ~~not~~ "Talib-i-ilm" doing his Ph.D. & would take this information back to America & not a ~~frauder~~ - "Then after a pause... you're not are you?"

A slightly worried look crossed his face.*

I assure him of the fact. show him my passport, my M.I.T. papers etc. etc. Later he says. "Oh, I will tell them - now - I have seen all your "kaagerzaath" & indeed you are a foreign Talib i ilm not a govt. agent."

Such concerns were almost universal with all those I interviewed. Even in the technology study - questioning people about their h.o. construction - some inquired worryingly

* They said, they are going to get me & I ~~of course~~ am going to collar Chaudhry Sahib" - (the LGPD Proj. manager who introduced me to him.)

The local ~~respondents~~ friends notably introduced me to ~~these~~ ^{respondents} ~~these~~ ^{causing} ~~these~~ ^{leaving} but also tipped me off when occasion a respondent was not telling the whole truth. (e.g. Cabula - salimi, bld. mafers. seller) their personal observations were also invaluable.

if the house was to be taxed or bought up etc.

As I formulated the questionnaires for the mafers. ind. ~ I realised this problem - reluctance to divulge info, which would show how much the entrepreneur owned & earned & ^{sensitive issues such as} in the case of the kiln owners, how they ~~understand~~, their ~~workers~~ etc. The sensitive ~~issue~~ of 'Paishgi kaats' - advances & salary wts that kept their brick moulders in bonded labour to them - would be most acute. ~~so~~

~~For each area to overcome:~~

1. Befriended a well known & liked local person with no links to govt. & some knowledge of the bldng. industry. This was done thru earlier field visits: ~~These~~ These persons w'd accompany me - ~~Chak Bedi~~ introduce me to respondents & translate whenever necessary. - Floor-Rice

1) ~~Chak Bedi~~ Chak Bedi; Mohd Yusuf - saw Mill owner who used to be a bldn.

2) Malika Hans: Mohd. Ali - a Mistree; ~~is~~ generally accepted as the best mason in the area - now letting his sons/nephews do actual construction under his contracts supervision. Much respected as a private local citizen.

3) ~~Mian Ijaz~~ Mian Ijaz Cabula - Mian Ijaz Hussain - ~~26 yr old able diesel oil sell~~ local entrepreneur - diesel oil, wheat seller, "commission agent" - also secretary of the fledgling Cabula Chamber of Commerce.

2. Made most of being a ~~not~~ foreigner ~~then~~ doing the ~~part~~ study for a foreign, far away country with ~~with~~ no link to Pakistan & the Pak. govt. ~~And~~ so that information given was ~~at~~ not going to be spread locally on the

other hand I played up my personal affinity with the locals - my speaking Urdu, occasional Punjabi sentence, fellow citizen of a poor 3rd world country muslim brother to muslim brother.

"Bhai, hum sab musolmaan eether bathay hein, ya sirha bola ^{ya} ya ~~not bathay~~ kuch kuch bolo." In 2 cases I had to show my passport.

To get them to speak of irreg. levies, bribes etc. "well that is the govt. rate for bricks/^{cement} what do you sell it for or what can you get for it in the open market partic. during shortages. For example in my country - Iran - we can get 15% more than the govt. rate.. or "in my country we have to pay off the tax man to get a reasonably low assessment. How do you do that here -?" And so, somewhat mollified that in my eyes & experience well is the common practice, the respondent is more prone to admit, that he has to do the same - sell above ~~not~~ govt. rates, pay off the tax man - electricity telephone man etc.

"After 2 mths. frustrating to get our phone fixed we finally got a call thro from the phone people asking for 2 char-pois to be delivered

* Tell me would the tax dept. send ^{hrs. extra} ^{someone} who can't even speak Urdu properly.

"Muriky, Kanada!"

to them if ~~the~~ we wanted our phone fixed." "The electricity inspector fiddles him self with our meter, shows it to us turning backwards ~~#~~ & demands Rs 500/- not to report us." "During shortages we can make 5-10 Rs above the fixed price on cement/bag. (My next question = in the last 2 months, there were shortages for how many of them?)")

3. Made most of the study being an academic exercise - "at least at this stage" - thus "aap ka na ^{kurly} faideh ko gu, na kuch niksaan ~ sirf aik musalmaan, deene musalmaan seh - sahee jawab deejeh". "Na maineh aya kuch apseh khareedna, na kuch apko bejna" etc. In 2 cases I had to show my US college papers.

4. Tried to minimize the effect of inevitable inaccuracies either ~~from~~ ^{of} memory or cover-up, reluctant to reveal by saying also at the outset. Now there may be some questions ^{whose answers} that you do not ~~have a clue~~ either know, recollect, or even quite legitimately want to respond to. Please - Allah de vaastha ~~do~~ don't make up an answer - just say you do not know, can't recollect, do not have an estimate. It is better that I put a question mark than an ~~err~~ in correct answer. With an incorrect answer, my teachers will notice & may fail my exam (playing up the poor student bit.)

And when noticed a reluctance or pause in reply to a question - I hastened to say - "it's o.k. if you don't recall or do not have an estimate... lets go on" And if he persisted by then giving a reply for eg: "last mth. I sold 20,000 bricks" I asked "are you sure? It would be alright if you ~~some~~ sold 100 more or less but if it ~~is~~ may have been 500, then please let me know. In some cases I then got a withdrawal - well yes it may have been 15000, in most cases the persisted reply given under ^{my} encouragement of not replying was a fairly considered & accurate assessment ~~to~~ whose accuracy the respondent then hastened to ~~the~~ assume was correct.

There was plenty of cross checking in the design of the study:

- 1) The questionnaires for each study stage - technology & water ind. study had overlaps as did ⁽²⁾ questions within each questionnaire. This in both the techn. study ^{& the water ind study} the sale price of water was asked. first from the buyer & then from the seller.
- 2) ~~for each~~ For each ~~the~~ techn. or water industry type, as far as possible, at least 2 people were asked the same set of questions. Thus 2 bldrs. were asked about timber & tile roof construction, 2 usually 3 kiln owners about their kilns etc. ~~again to pick up~~ in each area ^{of 3-5 studied} Thus there were 16 case examples ^{usually at least} of each type 2 in each area

to pick up contradictory responses that could not be explained by ~~diff~~ locational - spatial differences.

6. When I was not sure of a reply I asked the question again - at times risking being considered deaf or a dimwit - at times picking up nuances that the local translator had missed but which were critical.

eg. a bldr. was presented to me for ~~first~~ interviewing. My local facilitator assured me he was very much up. w/ all types of technologies. "So you know how to construct in mud-brick, fired brick do r.c.c. etc" he asks the bldr.

"O yes, the bldr. replies - and then he ~~adds~~ mumbles something about 'mesjid construction'." "Well go ahead ~~my~~ interview him my facilitator tells me." I start by asking him "What project are you working on now", "a mesjid roof repair." he replies. "What project did you do before that -" "A mesjid." "When ~~to~~ where was the last house you constructed". "OOO - he has to think - parse - "Noor Ellahi's house I think." "BUT Ellahi constructed his house 15 years ago" my facilitator exclaims - you haven't done any house construction after that. "No - the sheepish response - I ~~have~~ began to socialise in mosque ~~repa~~ construction." End of interview.

Another bldr. says he had "quite recently" constructed a timber tile roof house. I decline my

facilitator's invitation to therefore begin my interview by first asking whether that house was constructed before the Union Council office or after. He says he constructed it before. Which dates ~~the~~ 'this recent' house he constructed to 'before '63 which was during Ayub Khan's Basic Democracies period when all these offices were constructed for the B. Demosrats.

7. For later ease of analysis the interview schedules had the name & address of the respondent as one of the first questions. However this question was asked at the end of the interview or sometimes asked also of my accompanier before meeting with the respondent. ~~The~~ The respondent was much more cautious about answers & less forthright when I asked his name & address at the outset.

