

Basic Communication Requirements for National Development in the Arab World.

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Communication and Development Communication:

The term communication applies to all of the processes through which meanings are shared among human beings. Communication is at the root of all human activities. Human beings share knowledge, information and experience, and thus understand, convert or control their fellows through communication. As stressed rightly by Everett Kleinjans, chancellor of the East-West Center - Honolulu, "Communication is such a potential part of living, like breathing, that we are usually unconscious that we are communicating or unaware of what we are in fact communicating.

However, the basic tenets of communication are:

- a) Communication is a process of transmission of ideas, thoughts, feelings, and behavior from one person to another.
- b) Communication is persuasive and seeks to obtain desirable response to what is being transmitted.
- c) Communication is a two - way process both vertically and horizontally in a spirit of "give and take" or "send and receive".

The concept of development communication has gained prominence during the last decade. However, its genesis can be traced to the introduction and application of Agricultural Extension, termed Extension Education during the latter half of 1940's and early 1950's in most of the developing countries. The need for bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, between the haves and the have-nots called for a new philosophy and approach in the efforts aimed at achieving the objectives. This necessitated rational decisions on the part of people, which in other words, implied a desirable change both in their thinking and doing.

Nora Quebral, chairman of Development Communication Department at Los Banos University in the Philippines defined development communication as follows:

"It is the art and science of human communication applied to the

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speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfillment of human potential."

Development communication is basically an approach or a point of view comprising the elements of a method, a program, and a process. In contrast to such terms / concept as advertising, public relations, propaganda, agricultural extension, etc... which owe their geneses to advanced countries, development communication is an "innovation" of the developing countries.

Extending the discussion a little further, mass communication and or communication differ to some extent from development communication. Mass communication refers to communication with masses through media such as print and broadcasting and communication stands for the process of transmitting information, ideas or messages from sender to receiver. They may or may not be purposive, but development communication is always purposive as it seeks to advance development.

Development communication can use any channel or combination of channels to achieve the objectives of development or conversely, each communication channel or medium can play the role of development communicator.

Depending on the situations and socio-economic and cultural setting the channel might be radio, TV, newspapers and other print media or even extension agency and interpersonal sources. For example,, research conducted in many developing countries has shown that the mass media, mainly Radio and TV, are the best communication sources for creating awareness and interest among the audience regarding a new idea or a message. When it comes to the adoption process, interpersonal sources such as extension agents, friends, neighbours, local leaders, and others are the most effective communication sources. As all these sources are engaged in accomplishing the goals of development, they fall within the ambit of development communication.

The role of various communication media in furthering the cause of development and desirable change can be seen in the Massagana 99 programs launched in the Philippines in 1971 to boost agricultural production; various campaigns organized in Singapore with respect to socio-economic, cultural and educational aspects, and campaigns on family planning, agricultural production, sanitation, slum clearance crime prevention etc, being mounted from time to time in the developing countries.

Planning and Operating a Development Communication System:

This is an attempt to find out if it might be possible to organize a communication system and what would make education population and development programmes activities more responsive to the nation's needs, and simultaneously, function more efficiently than the present programmes in most of the Arab States. This general problem can only be addressed by answering a large number of corollary questions as

How can a communication system be designed to give maximum support to national objectives of integration and development ?

Is it possible to forecast technological development in the communication field so as to optimise national investments in production and transmission systems ?

How can the mass media and the extension services of agriculture, health and other ministries, work together to promote rural development ?

Is it feasible to develop radio or television to satisfy local needs without jeopardising national integration ?

Can private enterprise media be organized in support of development ?

Is the rural press a viable alternative or complement to radio and / or television ?

Can the information required for technological development be collected and organized into a national information system linked with world systems for exchange of scientific data ?

Satisfactory answers to such questions as these can only be found as countries move towards the formulation of communication policies and the integrated planning of their communication systems. At the present time, in very few places have communication systems and media achieved their potential or contributed fully to social or development objectives. But it is equally true that they have rarely enjoyed that degree of rational planning which has become an accepted practice in

other economic sectors. Just as science policies and planning attempt to rationalise the research and development needs of the economy, and educational planning becomes cross-sectoral once the concept of life-long education is introduced, so too communication policies and planning become an essential part of any modern approach to development.

Development Communication as a Sector in National Development

Plan:

Although the importance of a communication infrastructure is recognized by most governments in developing countries, communication is rarely treated as a coherent sector, subject to a common task analysis. Where a ministry or department of communication exists it is usually confined to telecommunications while media industries, broadcasting organizations, information systems, distribution networks and the like are independently programmed.

No society exists without an adequate communication system to hold it together and in many newly developing countries a primary role of the media is to foster national integration. Thus communication itself is virtually a development objective. Communication planning does not necessarily fit into inherited sectoral planning structures, but can be seen as one of those horizontal planning areas which cut across sectoral boundaries, and by so doing assist in the establishment of a more effective development strategy.

To sum up, development communication has to be practised in a planned and systematic manner. A balanced growth and desirable change in the behavior complex of the people could result only from systematic cooperation in development communication. The following stages would constitute the process of effective programs for development and population education.

- a) Analysis of situation - (Data collection).
- b) Definition of objectives and fixing priorities.
- c) Consideration of resources.
- d) Preparing a plan of action.
- e) Action.
- f) Feedback and Evaluation.

Objectives and Problems

Objectives are really the heart of a development communication programme. They determine such other elements of the programme as the clientele, the content, the institutional context, the media, the methods and so on. But above all they are important because they indicate a definition of the problems and needs of the population in question, and what solution to these problems and needs is proposed.

Therefore, in looking at objectives we should ask such questions as:

What development problems are the proposed objectives designed to attack ?

What criteria were used to select the objectives ?

Why these problems and not others ?

Are the objectives precise, clearly stated, realizable ?

What persons and groups participated in establishing objectives ?

Do they all share the same goals ? To what degree are they committed to the same goals ? To what degree are they committed to the implementation of these goals ?

Often the objectives of development communication programmes refer to two sets of goals : one having to do with the effect on the programme's specific clientele, and the other with the effect on an aspects of the development of the society as a whole.

The trend in development communication now is definitely towards the use of communication as a tool for building community self-awareness and determining what action the community itself wants to take. In projects making this use of communication it is difficult to state exactly when precise objectives need to be formulated. Sometimes it is crucial to distinguish between the stated objectives of a programme and the real objectives, those that command the actual behavior of its agents and clientele. These are often quite different.

Major Problems in the Arab Countries :

- 1) The population will continue to grow rapidly, all estimates show that the population will grow fast because of the number of young

people. Therefore youth presents both an immediate problem to be taken into account in social and economic policies and a future problem, since today's children will constitute the active labour force of 1980 and beyond. And, as has been pointed out, the concern should not only be for youth in 1970 but also for their double in 1990.

- 2) The Arab countries will gain ground in the technological field, and that means also in the field of mass communication.
- 3) The structure of society in the Arab countries is expected to undergo substantial changes.
- 4) The growth of a broad middle class will probably have the greatest effect.
- 5) The level of education will rise, literacy will expand further, whereby it must in turn be considered that with the general growth of the world population, the number of illiterates and the number of those people who come under the term "Literate" will also rise.

Facing these problems, mass media will help to set new motivations, and will shape, differentiate and influence the opinions, attitudes and values.

Many values still stand in the way of the modernization process in the Arab countries, e.g., the widespread fatalism, the view that hard work is demanding, the custom to go into heavy debt for marriages, person instead of achievement - centrism. Here the mass media will promote attitudes more in conformity with modernization, widen the horizons for innovations and innovators and foster approaches to a kind of "scientific attitude" to people's own lives and social processes. Lerner points out, for example, that the mass media are contributing on a broad front to allocating new roles to women in transitional societies. In close connection with this the media will help to set new motivations, offer objectives and lifestyles worth aspiring after and awaken the will to achievement. This is an extremely important function in attaining the development objectives especially in this stage, the 1980's.

Resources:

Any country planning a new development communication system based on the new media must make sure of adequate resources. Yet

many applications of development communication systems have failed to do so, with wasteful results. For convenience, resources can perhaps best be studied under four headings which are not mutually exclusive;

- a) money .
- b) manpower
- c) equipment and organization
- d) research and evaluation.

All are constraints on the selection of development objectives in the right amounts of the right quality for the right period of time early enough for the new system to succeed.

Money :

Money is the basic requirement, strongly affecting decisions about manpower, equipment / buildings, and programs.

Some developing countries have enough resources to initiate reforms on their own. But most Arab countries need financial help from external sources, at least for start - up costs.

A development communication budget in some countries comes from external sources, from the United Nations, from private organizations, and from rich countries. One of the features of external financial assistance is that it usually takes the form not of money, but of scholarships, technical specialists, or capital equipment.

A country's communication or information authorities should carefully scrutinize methods of financial allocation and control. Present methods of financial control are primarily fiduciary in nature : their primary purpose, i.e., is to assure the public of proper accounting for each dollar received and proper authorization for each dollar spent.

Traditional budgets divide the spent by line items - heating, TV sets, producers, salaries, and do not show the purpose of the expenditures, reducing adult illiteracy, for instance. A new type of budgeting is required if cost comparisons are to be possible between alternative objectives and between alternative ways of meeting given objectives the heart of system planning.

Manpower :

There are three general types of manpower required by a new system making use of development communication : managers, producers and technicians.

Training schemes, both pre - service and in - service, must be given top priority in any manpower decisions. In systems making use of broadcasting, the broadcasting channels might be used to speed up training programmes and distribute training to distant locations.

Many of the skills required in the three areas of management, production, and technical aspects may be unavailable or insufficient inside a developing country. The integration of foreign advisors, experts from outside, often causes difficulties.

Outsiders sometimes do not know the native language (s) and are not sensitive enough to cultural and national differences. Training schemes are important. If from the start a country knows that local people are being trained to replace the foreigners as they return home at the end of contracts, there will be much less chance of conflict.

Nevertheless, training activities should be aimed at the following publics:

- 1) The training of trainers.
- 2) The training of producers / directors (in view of the role they are called to play in producing materials and making programmes).
- 3) The training of administrators and decision - makers to whom there is an urgent need to impart detailed information on new materials, methods, and techniques.
- 4) The training of technicians to Maintain and deal with the new equipment.
- 5) The training of information officers who act as a feedback link between the ministries and the production centers.

However, the quality of training offered is actually of much more consequence in determining the programmes effect. The training system must be flexible : it must be capable of adapting to any requests received apart from and outside the planned programmes of the projects and it must be able to incorporate the materials that may be used in various conditions and make room for locally produced materials.

Equipment and organization.

The cost of equipment and building is so high that they must be used to capacity. Utilization rate becomes, therefore an important part of resource planning.

The ministries of information or communication seldom if ever cost their equipment and space in terms of rate and use.

The result is wasted money, and equipment either not used at all or not used to capacity. It has been estimated that the computers already installed in developing countries by government and industry are not used to more than 10 percent of capacity.

Broadcasting systems already in operation for the purposes of entertainment and news are often not on the air during the daytime. Such unused capacity could be devoted to education and development, with the prospect of significant savings.

Worldwide experience with the use of new media for education and development underscores the need for strong organization from the top down. Clear - cut lines of authority and effective coordination of administrative agencies concerned are essential. In some countries the broadcasting facilities are run by the ministry of culture or information, which will want to retain control and not share it with other ministries. In some cases it is important to ensure the participation of non - government groups, such as industries concerned with vocational or technical training.

There are other problems of organization, equally critical but quite imponderable. One is the effect of shifts in political power, another, closely related and even less predictable, is the influence of personality on the ultimate fate of a given project. This factor cuts both ways, of course. Personality clashes among key ministers can impede the project.

The production of programmes has obvious implications for organization structure. Teamwork of a high order is required among people not normally used to it. Tension can result, and without well-planned organization and good managers the production of materials and programmes can quickly run into trouble.

Research and Evaluation :

In general, we can say that research is a process that helps in setting up and running a development programme - in identifying problems,

suggesting approaches to meet these problems, choosing clientele and change agents, etc. A programme can conduct its own research, in addition, it can and should where possible, rely on the results of research already available on previous related programmes and on the area in which it intends to operate.

Evaluation aims at determining to what extent the objectives set for a programme have been met and the reasons for its success or failure. Some programmes-pilot efforts, for example-are established mainly to provide evaluation results, to test the feasibility of a given approach.

The line between research and evaluation and between evaluation and feed back is not always clear - a programme can, for example, conduct an evaluation study after a first phase of operations and on the basis of these results modify subsequent operations.

"Feed back" a word borrowed from electronics, is used by communication theorists to denote an essential part of communicating: informing the communicator of the effectiveness of his message so that the message can, if necessary, be modified. Feedback is the essence of a continually improving communication system.

Media research, primarily audience research for television has for years been the object of intermittent expert criticism. The enormous initial effort in the field of media research and evaluation usually leaves little time. And the high costs of media production and training leave little money available for costly feedback systems. Thus very few media projects have provided adequately for feedback and evaluation. However, there are many types which can be used by themselves, or in combination with each other, to suit budgetary and other conditions:

1- Pre-testing programmes

Pre-testing is research, and trained researchers should plan and conduct it. Ideally, all new materials, publications and programmes should be tested on a representative sample of the intended audience before dissemination to the entire school system. Otherwise, no preparer of new materials, however expert can be completely confident that his materials will accomplish everything they are expected to.

2- Regular comments from information or utilization officers.

This is a feedback device commonly used in media projects. Once a week or once a month - in a few TV projects, after every programme

which is directed for community groups or audience - clubs., the officer asked to fill out a questionnaire. Usually the information officer can answer most questions by quickly checking a statement rather than by writing a comment. These responses however, are necessarily subjective, and it is sometimes difficult to discern trends clearly enough to be useful.

Research and evaluation can be either formal or informal. In the informal type, data are collected through meetings with agents and clientele or by simple observation : these data are of course somewhat subjective, but none the less they can be useful. In formal research and evaluation, specialized personnel and instruments are used to collect data through precise sampling schemes and to analyse and interpret the data using rigorous scientific methods. And observations and reactions also can be analyzed by administering attitude scales.

Looking Ahead: Communication Satellites :

With regard to space activities generally, one of the main principles set out in various resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and included in Article I of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty prescribes that exploration and use of outer space "shall be carried out for benefit and in the interest of all countries irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development.

Communication by way of satellites has been the subject of specific recommendations by the UN, Unesco and ITU. In this context it is of particular relevance to note the wording of UN resolution 2733 (XXV) of 16 December 1970 in which the General Assembly unanimously recognizes "that the use of satellite television for educational and training purposes, particularly in developing countries, can in many instances contribute towards national programmes of integration and community development and economic, social and cultural development in such areas as formal and adult education, agriculture, health and family planning".

The Unesco General Conference at its sixteenth session in 1970, reaffirmed its conviction "that space communication offers great possibilities for contributing to education and national development through educational television and radio broadcasts via satellite". The Arab countries and Arab States Broadcasting Union recognized the importance of using space communication for education and national development and accordingly, a Unesco mission was sent to visit some Arab countries during the period 2 - 22 December 1970. The mandate

of the mission was to carry out a preliminary study on the potentialities of space communication in the Arab region. The mission was convinced that in order to attain the objectives stated or implied in their development plan, the Arab countries require the use of advanced method and technology, particularly with regard to the systems of communication, education, information and culture, as an integral part of the development process.

The proposed Arab experiment, is scheduled to begin around 1982. But before using space communication several steps should be made by the Arab countries and the Arab States Broadcasting Union aiming co-ordinated planning for the use of television in all relevant areas of activity as an integrated part of development plans adopted in each Arab country and following the principles accepted on the regional level.

Furthermore consideration should be given to the demands for interconnection of the Arab television networks which can't be achieved through terrestrial means in the near future. Establishing production centers in some Arab countries and coordination in various fields including education, science and culture, are very important steps before using space communication in 1982.

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المتطلبات الأساسية للاتصال التنموي في البلاد العربية

أنور العابد

يعالج هذا الموضوع مفهوم وسائل الاتصال بصورة عامة، و يبين الفرق بينه وبين مفهوم الاتصال التنموي أو وسائل الاتصال لأغراض التنمية أو ما يطلق عليه البعض اسم الاعلام التنموي . فالأصل التنموي هو : «فن وعلم الاتصالات الانسانية الذي يطبق من أجل أحداث التحول السريع في المجتمع والانتقال به من حالة الفقر والتخلف الى مجتمع متحرك في نموه الاقتصادي و يحقق مزيدا من المساواة أو العدالة الاجتماعية بين أفراد».

فالاتصال التنموي في ضوء هذا المفهوم هو منهج جديد أو نظرية تجمع ثلاثة عناصر أساسية هي : الطريقة، البرنامج، والعملية . كما أن رسالة الاتصال التنموي هي رسالة هادفة دوما وتعمل على تنمية أفضل للانسان.

ومن أجل تخطيط وتنفيذ برنامج للاتصال التنموي لابد أن يؤخذ بعين الاعتبار جانبان هاما أولهما أن البرنامج ينبغي أن يكون جزءا لا يتجزأ من خطة التنمية الشاملة للدولة . وثانيا أن من الهام الأساسية التي تقوم بها وسائل الاتصال تحقيق مفهوم التكامل الوطني.

ثم يحاول الكاتب أن يعرض عناصر منهج نظامي للاتصال التنموي وهذه العناصر تتكون من تحليل الوضع القائم (جمع المعلومات)، تحديد الأهداف والأولويات تحديد المصادر، اعداد خطة التنفيذ، تنفيذ البرنامج، وأخيرا التغذية الراجعة والتقويم.

و يؤكد الكاتب بأن هذه العناصر جميعها تتكامل مع بعضها وتتداخل وتربطها ببعض علاقات متبادلة تعمل جميعها من أجل تحقيق الهدف المنشود لبرنامج الاتصال التنموي.