

38 A FEW BASIC PROPOSITIONS ON COMMUNICATION AND MODERNIZATION

Colecc. LR Beltrán
PP-AI-007

Luis Ramiro Beltrán S.

E 25/Lansing, Mich., MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, 1968

BIBLIOTECA CENTRAL
UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA BOLIVIANA SAN PABLO

(IN EDICIÓN)

1. There are clear correlations between communication and national development. In general, the higher the level of communication development of a country, the higher its level of general development or overall modernization. Inversely, then, the less developed a country is in general, the less developed its communication system, in particular, is. Thus, communication is both an antecedent and a consequence of modernization.
2. Communication performs many roles in modernization. Several of them are positive functions. Some can be negative. Both should be studied.
3. Some of the roles communication performs in development are universal: they are performed in all cultures. Other roles are particular: they vary from culture to culture under the influence of given factors. Research on the universal roles is a long-term proposition leading, eventually, to strong principles of wide applicability. Research on the particular roles is a short-term proposition leading to limited stipulations applicable to specific circumstances. Both types of research are required in order to build a much needed theory of developmental communication.
4. No matter how tentatively, such theory must be built as soon as possible if communication is to have a full impact on modernization. One approach to the problems is to combine convergent propositions on communication's roles on development and to refine them for empirical verification. Another possibility is to relate those propositions to overall models of social change and national development. A third alternative is to elaborate and expand the few existing preliminary models of developmental communication.
5. The roles of communication in development are determined by a host of interrelated influences, among which ideological, teleological, and methodological ones are paramount. Some of these key determining factors are: political philosophy; economic doctrine; goal-direction; level of development; and origin, process, "mechanics", and time-organization of change.
6. Those factors, furthermore, contribute to determining the overall policy of national development itself. Thus, communication strategy is a crucial component of the broader general strategy of overall modernization of a country. Neither strategy is meaningful, then, without the other.
7. Most developing countries are unaware of both the problems and the potentialities of communication in development. They seem to expect to develop without assigning adequate priority and resources to communication, the vital tool for achieving that development.

8. Historical experience indicates that, where such priority and resources are assigned to communication, modernization can occur faster. (i.e, Red China).
9. A short-term but very intensive effort to develop a country's communication system can stimulate and accelerate considerably the development -- the overall modernization process -- of that country. In turn, increased overall development will account for a sustained increment in developmental communication. These cycles of mutual positive influence should repeat themselves until a point of parallel of the processes is reached. The less developed countries, then, have much to gain from establishing communication development as the launcher of heightened national development.

NOTES

- A. Following Berlo's model, communication is understood here as the process by which a person --performing as a source(of experience) -- "transmits" a message, via some code(a given set of symbols or signals) carried through some channel, to another persons or persons -- who performs as receiver of the message -- with the intent of attaining some effect on the thoughts, feelings, and overt behaviors of that receiver.
- B. Communication will also be perceived here as the system (a defined set of mutually influential elements) of social institutions existing for the specific purpose of promoting and facilitating human interaction through the exchange of informative and persuasive attempts at influencing people's behavior. These institutions (i.e, interest groups, government agencies, private associations, schools, labor unions, etc.)count often on physical facilities to help them accomplish their goals; i.e, printing presses, radio-transmitters, etc. Such facilities form, thus, part of the system. Newspapers, Tv stations, etc. are therefore considered media institutions.
- C. By communications(in plural) it is understood here the communication acts or instances or the content of them: the messages.
- D. National development is understood here as an induced process of generalized change in a large social system(characterized as a "country") by which the structure, functions, and relationships of that system are altered with the purpose of achieving given levels of economic improvement, social justice, massive political participation, and overall cultural betterment.