

46

Colecc. LR Beltrán
PP-AI-015

Beltrán S., Luis Ramiro (1970) **Communication and modernization: The case of Latin America; summary.** In: Society for International Development. International Development 1969: challenges to prevalent ideas on development. Proceedings of the Eleventh World Conference of the Society for International Development, New Delhi, India, November 14-17, 1969. New York, Oceana Publications, Inc. pp. 288-291.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT 1969

K. B. MADHAVA
Editor
Proceedings
of the Eleventh
World Conference
Society for International
Development

D.2.2: COMMUNICATION AND MODERNIZATION THE CASE OF LATIN AMERICA

The extent to which social communication has advanced in Latin America is the subject matter of a comprehensive paper (itself a summary of a larger report by the same author) by M. Luis Tamiro Beltran S, a Bolivian journalist and communication specialist working with IAIAS-OASC (the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences of the Organisation of American States). Copies of these reports can be had from the author. A Bibliography also is added at the end of this Note: (Ed.)

The main functions performed by the Regino's public communication institutions are: production and distribution of materials; training of personnel in communication principles and methods; research in communication problems; and promotion of communication as a discipline by means of professional exchange, coordination and publication.

The main beneficiaries of all these efforts have been the government organs in charge of agriculture, education and health. The three main lines of communication activity are Audio-Visual (A.V) Aids; Radio Schools and Agricultural Information Services.

Although considerable progress has been registered in several countries of South America by their own national efforts and through the assistance of United Nations Organisations, there have been several shortcomings and hindrances to further progress. Some of these (as listed by the author himself) are noted below:

1. A marked lack of awareness on the part of policy-makers and development strategists of the significance and functions of communication in modernization.
2. An assignment of very low priority to communication work in government plans and, thus, an inadequate allotment of funds for it in national budgets.

3. A virtually complete inarticulation between general development strategies and specific communication strategies for that development.

4. An insufficient availability of government-owned mass media needed to establish and maintain an efficient two way communication system between the public officers and the broad population as well as among the different sectors of that population.

5. An exaggerated preference, on the part of government agencies, for one kind of content, institutional publicity (i.e., political propaganda), as well as for one kind of channel, the printed word (which is easiest and perhaps cheapest to use but reaches only a minimum of people).

6. An unduly pronounced concentration on the part of government agencies, on an unplanned production of messages, at the expense of tasks such as proper distribution, research, evaluation, training and promotion, which are at least as important as production.

7. A prevalence of deficiencies in physical infrastructure—such as lack of roads, lack of electricity, and lack of modern communication equipment—which makes the existence of a truly national network of social communication extremely difficult.

8. A high level of illiteracy which, coupled with the poverty of the majority of the people and aggravated in some cases by the existence of languages other than Spanish or Portuguese, imposes heavy restrictions on the use of the printed media.

9. An absence of motivation on the part of the mass media institutions—most of which are privately owned—to actually reach the broad masses and, particularly, the rural masses: they remain content with reaching the elite and the upper middle classes in the cities.

10. An insufficient growth of national and regional associations of professional communicators, such as journalists, audio-visual specialists, agricultural editors, and the like.

11. A lack of effective and independent national information agencies and, especially, of some agency Latin American in scope. This permits a virtual monopoly of the international news flow by extra-regional news services which neither inform the region

objectively about world events nor report fairly about events in the region.

12. A weakness of the national private advertising firms that allows extra-regional consortiums to control much of the internal advertising market of the countries.

The problems listed above are not exclusive to Latin America. They are common to very many other countries with differences only in intensity. M. Beltran puts to himself the question "What is behind these shortcomings?", and suggests four major general factors: one, the human behaviour continues to be the neglected dimension; two, organised persuasion remains as the forgotten condition; three, policy makers have tended to take social forces as granted, either thinking that communication is not indispensable for modernization or believing that modernization will somehow occur automatically. The fourth general factor, (and this is a dominant factor hindering progress) is the region's social structure whose "central characteristic is a degree of concentration of power based on the monopoly of land and wealth—which ranks among the most pronounced on earth...Minute minorities preside—overtly or not—over the destiny of the majority of the 260 million inhabitants of Latin America.. What interest can these minorities have in seeing change occur?... Genuine national development involves a radical change of the structure from which the oligarchies benefit. It implies a democratic redistribution of power and wealth...". (ED.)

References

Beltran S., L. Ramiro, *Communication an Modernization: Significance, Roles, and Strategies*. M.A. Thesis, Michigan State University, 1968.

Berlo, David K., ed., *Mass Communication and the Development of Nations*, International Communication Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing. Mich., 1968.

Lerner, Daniel and Wilbur Schramm, eds., *Communication and Change in the Developing Countries*, Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967.

Pye, Lucien W., *Communication and Political Development* Princeton. Princeton University Press, 1963.

Rogers, Everett M. and Lynne, Svenning. *Modernization Among Peasants: The Impact of Communication*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968.

Schramm, Wilbur, *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in Developing Countries*, Stanford University Press, and Paris: UNESCO, 1964.

Schramm Wilbur, et al., *The New Media: Memo to Educational Planners*, Paris UNESCO, 1967. ★

D. 2.3 : RURAL TELEVISION IN INDIA : PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Dr. (Mrs.) S. Mulay (1) and T.K. Chakravarty (2)

The fundamental superiority of TV as a medium for disseminating agricultural information has been established in repeated research in India and abroad. There has also been evidence of acceptance by Indian villagers of TV into their social system as one of the important media available to them. However, in spite of the inherent value of TV, its actual contribution in rural development depends upon several factors. We must analyse these factors now, and find answers to the questions therein, if we wish to learn without committing costly blunders.

(1) Reader in the Department of Adult Education, National Council of Educational Research and Training.

(2) Ph. D. student in Agricultural Extension and Evaluation Officer in the Continuous Evaluation Project on Agricultural Television.

The views presented in this note are the personal views of the authors.