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The Concept of Power in the Context of Development and Communication in Third World Societies: The Programme Administrator's View - a Brief Positional Statement

By

P Subramaniyam
THE CONCEPT OF POWER IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION IN THIRD WORLD SOCIETIES

The Programme Administrator's View - A Brief Positional Statement

by

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Seminar on "Development & Communication in the 1990s: What Needs to Be Done?"

Singapore, 2 - 6 April, 1990
ADMINISTRATOR'S VIEW:

1. The views presented by me here are based on my experience in the Administration, in charge of implementing development projects in India.

EXECUTIVE POWER AND DEVELOPMENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

2. With the advent of planning for socio-economic development in India, the responsibilities of the administrator with regard to the implementation of development programmes have increased tremendously. If one looks at the responsibilities of an administrator at the district or taluk level, the development administration work load is far in excess of the work load relating to certain conventional areas like maintenance of law and order. The role and responsibilities of the administrator and his or her power and authority are derived from the executive powers of the Government which again are vested in them under the Constitution.

GAPS IN PERCEPTIONS:

3. When it comes to the question of implementing development programmes, the administrator's executive powers are a great help in making the system work. However, there has got to be a matching sensitivity to the perceptions of the people in order to ensure people's involvement and participation in planning and implementation of development projects. But

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usually one finds a gap between the perceptions and priorities of the plan implementer and the perceptions and priorities of the target beneficiaries who are mostly the poorer groups of society most of whom again are illiterate.

DIFFERENTIAL APPROACH:

4. There is need to undertake multi-disciplinary studies of micro-level areas to understand and appreciate the perceptions of the people. The whole planning process needs a better focus on the adoption of the Differential Approach with more serious efforts at micro-level planning. Socio-anthropological and communication studies at the micro-level are warranted.

DEVELOPMENTAL ORIENTATION TO ADMINISTRATIVE TRAINING:

5. The administrative training system has to further consolidate its efforts with increasing inputs from development field experience of different sorts. This is likely to bring about the much-needed development orientation to the trainees even in their training situation. Communication training should form an integral part of the training curriculum.

NEED TO DEVELOP SUITABLE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:

6. The need for developing a suitable and workable Communication Strategy for each and every development programme should be stressed in all plan programmes. And,
the development of such strategies should be based upon the results of comprehensive Communication Needs Assessment (CNA) studies. Such studies should necessarily look into the best mix of media to reach the maximum number of the target population and doing this the role and potential of traditional media should be properly assessed.

NEED FOR EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

7. The implementation of the communication programme should be properly and systematically monitored and evaluated. The feedback mechanism should be such that it provides the necessary inputs for possible mid-course corrections in the strategies.

ALL FUNCTIONARIES SHOULD BE TRAINED IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS:

8. All functionaries in the system which is responsible for implementing a particular development project should be trained in the basic techniques of communication such that they get properly motivated to act as responsible communicators.

INNOVATION IN COMMUNICATION:

9. Innovative techniques in communication could be encouraged with a view to bringing about more and more of interaction between those who have access to information and technology and those who do not have this access. Similar techniques could be encouraged with a view to bringing about behaviour changes in the target audiences.

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COMMUNICATION TO FOCUS ON QUALITATIVE ASPECTS:

10. There is need to bring about a shift in emphasis in communication in favour of the achievement of certain qualitative aspects of programmes, rather than merely to help the achievement of quantitative aspects, like, achievement of certain pre-determined targets.