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<th>Title</th>
<th>Approaches to communication planning</th>
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</thead>
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Approaches To Communication Planning

By

Chamnong Koomalayawisai
Officials in developing countries are concerned with the efficient allocation of communication resources, since communications are the forces behind development. However, a competing set of values seems to have influence on the day to day practices.

One argument says public or government planning which imposes value judgments on the freely functioning society reduces efficiencies and restricts freedom without reason. It is obvious that national planning would result in greater governmental control over allocation of resources and that the growth in various sectors of communication structure would be influenced by political objectives.

The opposing approach maintains that today, when uncertainty and complexity have multiplied beyond comprehension as ever, the case for proper planning is far more compelling than it was years before.

Logic argues that planning has come to be an important managerial tool among public affairs. Few, if any, the growth oriented activities can properly function without good planning.

Complex society finds planning beneficial in establishing its future course of action. Planning provides order and structure.

The recent Asian experiences with simultaneous unacceptable levels of confusions and satisfactions have convinced many that the government should play a more active roles in managing the communication activities toward achieving socially and politically desirable goals through national planning.

The best approach to good planning starts, as reasoning suggested, with conceptualization of the process and understand more fully the process of planning as a fundamental decision making process.

The process is complex phenomena. It proceeds over time. It involves a large number or decision points and decision makers, e.g. state enterprises, the decision of several governmental agencies, the decision of a subcommittee chairman, the decision of cabinet members,
and prime minister or presidential compromise.

The planning is complicated by the presence of these large number of participants where a characteristic of the participants becomes a variable of interest. As it often does, variation among participants with regard to a characteristic causes planning proposal, or "out put," or "out come" as difficult and complex decision.

The early conceptual models of planning process have relied on single factor explanation of the decision making process. The models tended to over simplify the real complexity of the formulation.

More systematic consideration leads us to adopt an approach of many potential important factors such as levels of structural settings, information flows, the politics and economy, cross cultural diffusion, country-specific traits, and even local and regional variations.

There are more nations which can improve planning results: the planning premise and administrative workloads. Planning failure is psychological perception and reflection more often than organizational.

Typical planning proposals call for accumulation and dissemination of communications information and assurance of long-term "balanced" growth of communications service system for a community or nation. Any planning proposal often took on at least two separate and salient aspects: services and financing. It is likely to spring from a complex chain of causes and relationships and to have a set of interrelated consequences for the general social network.

The multi-aspect nature of planning would need the utility of systematic communication planning for solving the problem of multiplicity in the complex chain of relationship. By systematic, means the approach through mathematical effort to choose a course of action from a number of alternative courses on the basis of objectives to be attained, the constraints upon behavior, and a set of relationships between variables relevant to the communication policy areas in question.
The contention is that mathematical approach to make choices, e.g., linear programming, can be a useful decision aid.

Effective mathematical planning goes through several phases: stock-taking, conceptualizing, fact finding, weighting of alternatives, objective decision making, feedback, and review.

The improvement would flow from mechanism that force planners to make explicit rather than unconscious choices, to exercise judgment rather than engage in automatic perception, and to enhance their awareness of their own preconceptions.

This new sophisticated coordination mechanism leads to the demand in systematic information service scientific quality. The cost of information is a critical variable in determining decision process and decision outcomes. Roles of scientific information offer perspectives, cognitive rehabilitation and improve the analysis of strategic assumption.

For the phase of effective implementation, participation in communication planning is required and vital to both the consumers and to the social service delivery itself.

Participation would overcome apathy and facilitate the cooperation of community resources through which consumers of services can influence directly the social service delivery system, their own goals and negotiate on their own behalf. Participation provides an opportunity to effect changes in programmes so that those problems will more completely meet consumers' needs; and it invites views or new perspectives on social needs and services preferences.

This writing concludes that the approach to good communications planning appears to begin with the attempt to conceptualize a paradigm of planning, to identify the complexity of variables relationships.

The argument proposes the incorporation of important mechanism where scientific information can flow and the initiation of public participation in the process of planning formulation in order to attain effective competitive cooperation. The theme is pluralism because it recognizes process of competitive and cooperative interacting among groups and specifically, the approach focus its belief on development
or growth, how to achieve good communications planning, and how to control the process. It suggests ways to overcome the so-called bureaucratic incrementalism approach, adopted in many places of this region.