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<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Syed A. Rahim</td>
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National Communication Planning: A Conceptual Framework

By

Syed A Rahim
OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION AT COMMUNICATION PLANNING SEMINAR
SLO, INDONESIA, NOVEMBER 4-7, 1979

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION PLANNING: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
SYED A. RAHIM
EAST-WEST COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION AS A PROBLEM AREA FOR PLANNING ENCOMPASSES MANY FORMS AND STRUCTURES OF COMMUNICATION

1. POSTAL SERVICES
2. TELECOMMUNICATION - TELEPHONE, TELEGRAM, TELEX, ETC.
3. NEWS AGENCIES AND NEWSPAPERS
4. BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS
5. RADIO
6. TELEVISION
7. COMMUNICATION SATELLITE
8. AUDIOVISUAL SERVICES
9. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
10. ADVERTISING
11. FILM
12. CULTURAL COMMUNICATION - LIBRARIES, MUSEUM, ETC.
13. DEVELOPMENT EXTENSION SERVICES
14. EXTERNAL BROADCASTING AND INFORMATION SERVICES
15. TOURISM AND TRADE INFORMATION SERVICES
2. THE PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION PLANNING FALL UNDER FOUR GENERAL CATEGORIES, AS SHOWN IN CHART I.

CHART I
CATEGORIES OF COMMUNICATION PLANNING PROBLEMS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP

COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

(A) PHYSICAL
(B) TECHNOLOGICAL
(C) SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL
(D) HUMAN
(E) CULTURAL

COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

(A) MOBILIZATION OF EXISTING RESOURCES
(B) DEVELOPMENT OF NEW RESOURCES
(C) DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

APPLICATION OF COMMUNICATION;
COMMUNICATION SUPPORT FOR:

(A) AGRICULTURE
(B) INDUSTRY
(C) TRADE
(D) EDUCATION
(E) HEALTH ETC., ETC.

COMMUNICATION NEEDS

(A) RECOGNITION
(B) EXPRESSION
(C) PERSUASION
3. THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION NEEDS IS CENTRAL TO THE FRAMEWORK SHOWN IN CHART I.

THERE ARE THREE CONCEPTUAL CATEGORIES OF COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF SOCIAL ENTITIES.

(a) RECOGNITION--THE NEED TO KNOW, UNDERSTAND; WHICH REQUIRES MULTIPLE COMMUNICATION EXPOSURE.

(b) EXPRESSION--THE NEED TO EXPRESS IDEAS, FEELINGS, INTENTIONS: WHICH REQUIRES EXPRESSION BY SIGNS AND SYMBOLS.

(c) PERSUATION--THE NEED TO INFLUENCE OTHERS BY PERSUATION; WHICH AGAIN REQUIRES COMMUNICATION LINKAGES.
4. The concept of communication resources is crucial in understanding the problems faced in planning communication. An illustrative list of communication resources by their nature and source is presented in Chart II.

Broadly speaking, anything that is directly required and used in the process of communication, whether existing in the nature or developed and contrived by man is a communication resource.

Depending on their nature, source and uses the communication resources are:

1. Physical
2. Technical
3. Human—physiological and psychological
4. Social and organizational
5. Cultural
CHART II
COMMUNICATION RESOURCES BY NATURE, SOURCE AND USES

I. PHYSICAL/NATURAL

ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM: RADIO WAVES USED AS CARRIERS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SIGNALS, LIGHT WAVES USED AS CARRIERS OF SIGNALS IN NEWLY DEVELOPED OPTIC-FIBER TECHNOLOGY.

GEOSTATIONARY SATELLITE ORBIT: A NARROW BAND OF SPACE HIGH ABOVE THE EQUATOR WHERE COMMUNICATION SATELLITES ARE PLACED IN ORBIT. THE SATELLITE REMAINS 'STATIONARY' RELATIVE TO THE EARTH'S ROTATION, WHICH ENABLES THE SATELLITE TO COVER A LARGE AREA OF EARTH'S SURFACE.

II. TECHNOLOGICAL: KNOWLEDGE, PRODUCTS, SYSTEMS

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE ON ENCODING, DECODING, TRANSMISSION AND RECEPTION OF SIGNALS, SOCIAL SCIENCE KNOWLEDGE ON THE PROCESS AND EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION.

MACHINES AND EQUIPMENTS DESIGNED TO EXTEND THE SCOPE AND CAPACITY OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION.

TECHNICAL SYSTEMS, SUCH AS, TELEPHONE NETWORK, DESIGNED FOR EFFICIENT USE OF MACHINES.

III. HUMAN: PHYSIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

LEARNED AND CULTIVATED COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN USING THE BODY-ORGANS OF COMMUNICATION. SUCH SKILLS ARE USED IN RECEIVING AND SENDING MESSAGES.

THE ACCUMULATED STORES OF MEANING OF SIGNS AND SYMBOLS, AND VICARIOUS IMAGES IN HUMAN BRAIN/MIND; WHICH IS USED IN THE ENCODING AND DECODING OF MESSAGES.

IV. SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL

LEARNED AND CULTIVATED SOCIAL ROLES AND RELATIONS THAT FACILITATES COMMUNICATION. SUCH ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS PROVIDE SOCIALLY SANCTIONED ACCESS TO AND SOURCE OF COMMUNICATION.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ROLES AND RELATIONS MENTIONED ABOVE, AND MANAGING COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS.

V. CULTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

FORMAL SYSTEMS OF SIGNS AND SYMBOLS (LANGUAGES)—THE FOUNDATION OF ALL HUMAN COMMUNICATION.

STORED COMMUNICATION IN VARIOUS CULTURAL PRODUCTS (BOOK, PAINTING, FILM, ETC.) AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS (ARCHIVES, LIBRARY, MUSEUM, ETC.) DEALING WITH SUCH PRODUCTS; MAINTAINING AND TRANSMITTING SOCIETY'S CULTURAL HERITAGE.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY ACTS RELATING TO COMMUNICATION, AND THE INSTITUTIONS DEALING WITH THEM.
5. THE ELEMENTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS SHOWN IN CHART I SUGGEST A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS FOR COMMUNICATION POLICY MAKING AND PLANNING. THESE CAN BE COMBINED IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

WHAT COMMUNICATION NEEDS?
OF WHICH SOCIAL ENTITIES?
TO BE MET BY WHAT COMMUNICATION RESOURCES?
MOBILIZED IN WHICH COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS?
APPLIED IN WHICH DEVELOPMENT CONTEXTS?
6. THE CHARTS I AND II SHOW THAT THE SCOPE OF COMMUNICATION PLANNING IS BROADER THAN USUALLY CONSIDERED IN NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES. THE DATA-BASE DEVELOPED FOR NATIONAL PLANNING IN THE SO-CALLED DEVELOPMENT SECTORS IS NOT ADEQUATE FOR COMMUNICATION PLANNING. THE ORGANIZATIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ARE FRAGMENTED, AND BASED ON NARROWLY DEFINED SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITY. SPECIALIZED PLANNING IS A PRACTICAL NECESSITY. BUT, IN THE ABSENCE OF A POLICY AND COORDINATION UMBRELLA FOR PLANNING SUCH SPECIALIZATION OFTEN LEADS TO SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF UNBALANCED DEVELOPMENT AND WASTE OR RESOURCES.

A TRULY EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION PLANNING REQUIRES MUCH CLOSER UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION BETWEEN PEOPLE DEALING WITH DIFFERENT KINDS OF COMMUNICATION RESOURCES, AND BETWEEN PEOPLE WORKING FOR COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION.