

The International Conference on Communication and Media 2014 (i-COME'14), 18-20 October 2014, Langkawi, MALAYSIA

The Cogency of Melkote's 'Another Development' for Development Communication in the Third World

Ismaila Yunusa Ilu^{a*}, Fatai Olawale^a

^aNational Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, +234-58, Nigeria

Abstract

'Development' has continued to influence the world politics, economy and communication. It is an instrument of hegemony by Europe and the West against the rest of the world for stereotypical political and economic analysis. It has dressed communication in controversies regarding sustainable communication for development through the deployment of mass media and ICT in Africa. Scholars like Srinivas Melkote have submitted reasons for communication failure in this regard. He has hypothesized better communication strategies to salvage the Third World. By investigating Melkote, this paper established that to fix the distortions of the dominant paradigms communication policies, designs, plans and projects implementation in Africa, development communication must be indigenous.

© 2014 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of School of Multimedia Technology & Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Keywords: Dominant; paradigms; development communication underdevelopment; hegemony

1. Introduction

1.1 Using Critical Theory to understand societal problems

To understand the discourse of Melkote on Dominant Paradigms Communication Approach, it is important to explore the place of critical analysis as a trajectory for such academic endeavor. Critical analysis itself is premised on theories embedded as Critical Theory (CT). Critical theory is a school of thought that stresses the reflective

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +234-01-899443554

E-mail address: ogidiolu02@hotmail.com

assessment and critique of society and culture by applying knowledge from the social sciences and the humanities. Though critical theory has two meanings with origins in sociology and literary criticism; the theorist, Max Horkheimer, believed the theory is critical, insofar as it seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them (Horkheimer, 1982). This is a radical turn from traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining the world of man. Thus, the core concepts of critical theory are: (1) That society in its historical specificity and (2) That CT should improve understanding of society by integrating all the major social sciences. Apart from Horkheimer, Emmanuel Kant posited that "critique" means examining and establishing the limits of the validity of a faculty, type, or body of knowledge, especially through accounting for the limitations imposed by the fundamental, irreducible concepts in use in that knowledge system (Kant, 1781). Kant's notion of critique has been associated with the disestablishment of false, unprovable, or dogmatic philosophical, social, and political beliefs. However, critical theory has been able to build mutual impingement of these versions through their interrelated foci on language, symbolism, and communication and their focus on social construction. From the 1960s and 1970s onward, language, symbolism, text, and meaning came to be seen as the theoretical foundation for the humanities through the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and other thinkers in linguistic and analytic philosophy (see www.Wikipedia.com). Today, versions of critical theory have focused on the processes by which human communication, culture, and political consciousness are created. This includes:

- Whether it is through universal pragmatic principles that mutual understanding is achieved (Habermas).
- The semiotic rules by which objects obtain symbolic meanings (Barthes).
- The psychological processes by which the phenomena of everyday consciousness are generated (psychoanalytic thinkers).
- The episteme that underlies our cognitive formations (Foucault).

All these are here resumed to have extensive effects on the work of Melkote in his critical assessment of the Dominant Paradigms Communication Approach to development in the Third World countries.

2. Theoretical framework

This paper is explored in the purview of social critical theory - the version of critical theory that focuses language, symbolism, and communication in social construction. The work of Jürgen Habermas who redefined critical social theory as a theory of communication, i.e. communicative competence and communicative rationality on the one hand, distorted communication on the other has created a greater degree of overlap in the two versions of critical theory to help in the analysis of Melkote's work.

3. Objectives

- To explore the submissions of the dominant paradigms communication approach and Melkote's stand on them.
- To establish their relevance to development communication (in the Third World experience).
- To critique Melkote's alternative development communication approach for Third World countries.
- To take an academic position from the preceding objectives.

4. Scope

The scope of the paper is in the dictates of Dominant Paradigm Communication Approach to development in the Third World and Melkote's perspectives of what 'should be'.

5. Justification of study

The justification for the study is grounded in the facts that:

- Critical Analysis is an established academic exercise for elevating the minds of scholars or students for better judgment of theories, concepts, beliefs, processes, ideas and even principles surrounding the existence of man.
- Human existence is not stagnant and emerging issues demand analysis in order to fix them into future plans of human endeavors.

6. Methodology

The methodology applied here is mainly the review of relevant literature. Meanwhile, the research also employed the qualitative research that utilized the GTM Glaser and Strauss (1967), to generate descriptive and explanatory theories of development communication from historic and ideological perspectives. These research techniques are needed to capture holistic real-world answers to real world problems and provide a fresh slant on existing knowledge (Neuman, 1991). In Grounded Theory (GT), concepts are derived from empirical data, linked and, if necessary, modified through constant comparison with other literature. Grounded theory which is inductively derived from the phenomena represents must satisfy four central criteria: fit, understanding, generality and control (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This approach was adopted here for four reasons. i. There is a lack of a single theoretical foundation. ii. It presents a single, unified, systematic method of analysis. iii. It allows a degree of flexibility in both the selection of instances for inclusion in the sample and the analysis of the information. iv. Development Communication is a field that has successfully encapsulated different theories, concepts and principles for the diagnosis of social problems.

6.1. Analytical tools

Even though the paper does not work with numerical data, it is imperative to have a tool for analysis in order to balance the final view on established order. Thus, the comparative and contrastive tools of language analysis were employed. The two tools are relevant because they belong to the field of humanities and are some of the thrusts for the teaching of Second Language and the transfer of language structure.

6.2. The dominant paradigms: Why the disputes?

Among the most powerful paradigms that emerged after the World War II was Modernization (Melkote, 1991). It is based on the West concept of development through reasoning, rationality objectivity and other philosophical principles. This approach utilized the entrenchment of capitalism and its parameters to measure development. In this way, the world would or should develop by following the patterns and indicators of economic factors. Economists were in charge of development activities. International institutions were involved in this plan. Industrialization was assumed to be development. Hence, development or underdevelopment was measured with quantitative economic indicators. And as such, participatory or autonomous development by local communities was considered slow, inefficient and, more often than not, unlikely (Melkote, 1991, section 1). Interestingly, Melkote engaged himself in knowing how the mass media have aided underdevelopment in the Third World. With his land mark publication of *Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and Practice for Empowerment* in 1991(1st edition), he argued for a different notion of development communication for Third World. The book, with a follow up of a second edition in 2001 is an established core text for courses on development communication throughout the world (see vedamesbooks.com). His social development model recapitulated the traditional feudal Western Europe where:

- Mobile individual psychological orientation made it easier to accept rapid changes into their personal lives and that of the larger society.

- Omnipotent mass media that accelerated and reinforced societal and individual change by dissemination new ideas and attitude conducive for modernization.
- There were correlations between indices of urbanization, literacy, mass media exposure, economic and political participation to establish Western type of modernization.
- Scholars in this category explained psychological patterns in individual that are required to make him a 'mobile personality' with high capacity to identify new trends in his environment and internalize them as demands from the larger society.

But under the influence of the actual development in most Third World countries, which did not turn out to be so justified as the modernization theory predicted, the first *criticisms* began to be heard in the 1960s, particularly in *Latin America* (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008). Similarly, the Mexican sociologist, Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1966) argued that the division into a traditional, agrarian sector and a modern, urban sector was the result of the same development process; in other words, growth and modernization had brought with them greater inequality and underdevelopment. Next was the dependency paradigm which played an important role in the movement for a New World Information and Communication Order from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. At that time, the new states in Africa, Asia and the success of socialist and popular movements in Cuba, China, Chile and other countries provided the goals for political, economic and cultural self-determination within the international community of nations (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008). Because of this, McAnany (1983:4) said that 'dependency only addressed the causes of underdevelopment, but did not provide ways of addressing that underdevelopment. This view was also taken by Melkote (see "Mass Media in Support of Sustainable Development" in *Journalism and Mass Communication*, Volume II at <http://www.eolss.net>). In order to keep development communication away from the previous paradigms, the 'Multiplicity/Another Development' theory was born. It will not be illogical to say that Melkote's submissions for alternative development paradigms, grounded in the contextual needs of individual countries and regions are derived from the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation established baselines for another development.

The central idea, which is pointed out by almost everybody (including Melkote) who is searching for new approaches to development communication is that there is *no universal path to development*, that development must be conceived as an *integral, multidimensional, and dialectic process* which can differ from one society to another. Indeed, several authors have been trying to gather the core components for 'Another Development' to ensure that development are based on the following principles:

- *Basic needs*: (these in Melkote's view will include health care, nutrition, sanitation, human rights and shelter needs).
- *Endogenous*: (in Melkote's view- self-determination).
- *Self-reliance*: (in Melkote's view- self-reliance and cultural autonomy).
- *Ecology*: (in Melkote's view -ecological balance).
- *Participative democracy*: (in Melkote's view - a means to raise consciousness and community participation).
- *Structural changes*: (in Melkote's view a public relations and bottom-up development communication approach).

In practice, adopting some or all of the above principles, new forms of communication must be institutionalized. And so decentralized media systems and democratic communication institutions, emphasizing self-management by local communities are emerging. The Freirian argument works by a dual theoretical strategy that insists the subjugated peoples must be treated as fully human subjects in any political process (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008). These ideas are unpopular with elites, including elites in the Third World, but there is a widespread acceptance of Freire's notion of dialogic communication as a normative theory of participatory communication even though his theory of dialogical communication is based on group dialogue rather than amplifying media as radio, print and television.

6.3. *All in Melkote's view*

One strategic instrument for the discourse here (sub-topic) will be Melkote's book i.e. Communication for

Development in the Third World- Theory and Practice which offers a refreshingly different perspective from the standard Western recitation of material on the topic of communication and development. Melkote organizes his work around a historical review of development communication and a discussion of the theory and practice of Development Support Communication, drawing from the fields of rural sociology, social psychology, social work, communication, and political economy. Major strength of the book was on topics: A definition of the Third World and; the discussion of world's major non-Western religions. His arguments in resurrects Eastern religions and cultures from the Weberian view to counter the non-Western perspectives that has debilitated development in the Third World. This provides the reader with just enough background material to support the author's major contentions through extensive reference list. Melkote's work draws inspiration from the classics. The first text section provides a chronological order to demystify the readers' perception that Europe was always the font of civilization, an image it has hegemonically cultivated for centuries. His powerful revelation of the linear and deterministic mind-set of scholars such as Schramm, Lerner, Pool, Pye, and Rostow and their theories showed the hegemonic authority-based, top-down, expert-driven, non-negotiable, and well intentioned development options of the West. Melkote has improved on the position he took in the first edition. This must have been influenced by the emergence of new media and social order around the world.

7. Critique

Comparatively, Melkote would seem to have his: (i). Inspirations to dissect human social problems from the critical theory school. (ii). Work rooted in the water of history of man. (iii). Comments targeting the emancipation of the Third World even from religious attachments to Western and American ideology. (iv). Submissions improved on the dynamics of communication and social structure and (v). Propositions on how to improve development communication for Third World has also not been able put in affirmation about how this can be done but have only challenged other researchers and development communication practitioners to sought them out. Contrastively, Melkote's has practically brought a sensitive dimension to communication for development through his arguments in resurrecting Eastern religions and cultures from the Weberian view to counter the non-Western perspectives that has debilitated development in the Third World. Thus, if we agree with Schramm (1964) that the mass media intersect with national development in such areas as widening our horizons, directing attention to salient social issues, raising aspirations, creating a climate for change, broadening the policy dialog, and helping substantially in all types of education and training, then it is easy to see that this is not the so called preserve of the poor countries. There is as much need for development communication education in the United States today, as there is in China, Russia, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

8. Conclusion

It should be obvious by now that no all-embracing view on development communication is on offer. No theory has achieved and maintained explanatory dominance for the communication component of development. Each of the contended theoretical perspectives still find support among academics, policy makers, international organizations, and the general public. In general, adopted and updated versions of the ideas upon which the 'dominant paradigms are built—economic growth, centralized planning, and the belief that underdevelopment is rooted in mainly internal causes which can be solved by external technological) 'aid'—are still shared by many development agencies and governments. On the other side, while Melkote's multiplicity approach to development communication theory is firm in academic spheres, in practice it may be a sympathetic but idealistic side show. The overriding concern of development communication, which is a deep interest in the processes, interrelationships, and contradictions that we experience as members of social communities that employ communication to express our thoughts should be the dominant 'guide' as we engage the society for development. It is therefore established here that development communication for Africa must be indigenous based, irrespective of the media used. The best is to manipulate the mass media and the ICT to suit the cultural realities of the indigenous people for sustainable solutions.

References

- Freire, P. (1983). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seaburg Press.
 Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine Press.

- Horkheimer, M. (1982). *Critical Theory: Selected essays*. New York: Continuum Publication Corporation.
- Kant, I. (1781). *The critique of pure reason*. Modern History Sourcebook, Retrieved from University of Fordham website: <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/kant-cpr.asp>
- McAnny, E. (1983,May). From modernization and diffusion to dependency and beyond: theory and practice in communication for social change in the 1980s, development communications in the third world. *Proceedings of a Midwest Symposium*, Retrieved from UNESCO website :<http://www.unesco.kz/publications/ci/hq/.../CHP7.PDF>
- Melkote, S. (1991). *Communication for development in the third world*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Melkote, S. (2001). *Analysis of Melkote's 2001 Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and Practice for Empowerment*. Retrieved from Vedams book website: <http://www.vedamsbooks.com>
- Neuman, L. (1991). *Social Research Methods*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
Retrieved from the International Council on Human Rights Policy website: <http://www.ichrp.org/en/documents>
- Schramm, W. (1964). *The role of information in national development*. Stanford: Stanford University Press and UNESCO
- Servaes, J., & Malikhao, P. (2008). *Development communication approaches in an international perspective*. Brussels: Research Center, Communication for Social Change.
- Strauss, L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques*. United State of America: Sage Publications.
- Xavier Institute. (1980). *Development from below*. Xavier Institute for Social Service. Ranchi, India: Author. Bottom of Form