

The role of information and communication technology (ICT) in national development

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ABSTRACT

A great deal of the SITE research was of this kind, concentrating on superficial and short – term increments in information or shifts in attitude following exposure to the television communications – the music, drama, and news that most people with access to media attend to most of the time – has received little research attention, since this is not thought to have much relevance to development. Information provided by the ICT is most likely to reach higher status and better educated members of a community and spread from them, We found that a proportion of literate people read newspapers and pass on ideas and information from them to others. People listen to the radio mainly for entertainment, but some make a point of listening to programmers, such as those for farmers and women, that are designed to encourage change. ICT exposure emerged in the survey analysis as a significant factor influencing the adoption of better agricultural and health practices and in promoting more positive attitudes towards women and greater awareness of social problems affecting respondents. Communications is usually a more important source of information and influence. The direct influence of the mass communication is greatest among those sections of the population who are most exposed to the media – the young, the better educated and the better off. Modern communication can be influential in a developing culture. To see how it contributes to economic and social development, we shall have to look briefly at the development process itself. Economic development leads to an increase in the flow of information through the greater purchasing capacity of the people, reflected in subscriptions to newspapers, magazines, and specialized journals as well as the ownership of radio sets and travel, it is also true that increased information in turn further economic development. It is futile to attempt in turn furthers economic development. It is futile to attempt to treat this interaction between communication and economic development

Key words : Information and communication technology

Social change may be of various kinds and not all changes, even if they represent ‘development’, are necessarily beneficial to those they affect. Changes that benefit one section of the community may leave others untouched or even damage their interests. Improved agricultural technology, for instance, may benefit landholders but weaken the position of landless labourers. So, we should beware of regarding all progressive change as unproblematic.

Some of the changes evident at village level can only be understood in a much wider context. Industrialization, for example, can have repercussions on the lives of rural people remote from the factories themselves.

The dominance of this kind of model has consequences also for the way that the effects or effectiveness of communication is evaluated (on those comparatively rare occasions when it is evaluated). In

the first place, as any perusal of the literature on communication and development will show, by far the largest amount of research has been devoted to assessing audience response to deliberately persuasive ‘messages’ of the campaign type. In this the rule of thumb is the KAP formula knowledge, attitude, practice – which is deemed to be the sequence in which effects occur. A great deal of the SITE research was of this kind, concentrating on superficial and short – term increments in information or shifts in attitude the following exposure to the television communications – the music, drama, and news that most people with access to media attend to most of the time – has received little research attention, since this is not thought to have much relevance to development. There are a number of reasons for this state of affairs, including the fact that so much of the research is done on behalf of official development agencies that are interested in demonstrating short- term, easily quantified’ of their campaigns, and are inhibited politically from asking searching or critical questions about the functions of the communications system in the society as a whole. But a more general reason is that questions about the social significance of forms of mass communications,

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