

Abstract

The three-year research project “ Synthesizing the Body of Knowledge on the Use and Empowerment of Communication for Community Development” (July 2006-July 2009) aims to (1) synthesize a new paradigm of development communication; (2) produce potential researchers with new theoretical and practical knowledge; (3) put theoretical knowledge into practice; and (4) generate intellectual networks and platforms for researchers who are interested in this new academic paradigm.

With these aims, the research project adopts methodological approaches on four bases: (1) an initiation of various research projects; (2) a use of study groups for knowledge sharing; (3) knowledge distribution to public; and (4) a use of training programs of development communication.

This research project brings about significant outputs as follows:

A. The outputs about new knowledge and paradigms (cf. the two publications “การจัดการความรู้เบื้องต้นเรื่องการสื่อสารชุมชน” [in Thai,2008] and “สื่อเล็กๆ ที่น่าใช้ในงานพัฒนา” [in Thai,2009])

1. Theoretically, this research project introduces a “double-knit approach”, or an approach that uses communication as a tool for development as well as develops communication mechanisms in return. To achieve this approach, development communication activities need three significant theoretical frameworks, namely, media functionalism with a dynamic approach, a concept of communication and cultural reproduction, and a theory of communication process.

2. In regard to a use of communication tools, the research project suggests that differences between communication media are not of much concern. Rather, development communication campaigns should draw upon an articulation between these differences. To overcome a limitation of a “substitution” or “addition” framework, such campaigns need to elaborate further from a “mixed media” to a “communication media integration/hybridization” strategy.

3. The research project reveals that “small media” (e.g., folk media, personal media, a youth camp, a community theatre, etc.) is beneficial for community

development. This small media does not only belong to people in various communities, but also allows them to manage community empowerment.

4. With a field experiment technique, the research project proved that in terms of a new paradigm of development communication, a theoretical model of “participatory communication” can be practically used. This participatory model is empirically effective and efficient.

5. Finally, the research project found that with a “double-knit approach”, a corporation between community people and external supporters is “essential” and “possible” in order to strengthen the use and development of communication for community empowerment. In this respect, these two stakeholders need to rely on a principle of “cultural rights of communication and community people”.

B. The outputs about methodological approaches

6. The research project discovered that a useful method for development communication is an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge synthesis which adopts an “after-action reflection with a theoretical inquiry” along with a documentary analysis method.

7. With regard to a field study, the research project makes visible that after a stage of data analysis and knowledge synthesis, a technique of presenting research results to the parties concerned for collective reflection is required with different goals and various technical designs.

C. The empirical output from the research project

The empirical output from the research project consists of approximately 70 potential researchers who are capable of conducting research activities with new intellectual paradigms. Also, within three years, the research project initiates 45 publications and training programs.

Keywords: functionalist theory of communication, theory of communication and cultural reproduction, a use and an empowerment of communication, participatory communication, an integration/hybridization of communication, small media, a technique

of technique of presenting research results to the parties concerned for collective reflection