

Instructional Development in Developing Countries

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Abstract. Instructional Development (ID), as a concept, a policy, and a technology takes place under rather distinct circumstances in developing countries. These include, but are not limited to traditional, political, and economic conditions. Such circumstances often influence and may sometimes dictate how instructional development is implemented in the countries. An understanding of these conditions is useful for analyzing existing instructional development efforts in developing countries and for planning new ones.

Introduction

Instructional development does not occur in a vacuum anywhere. But in developing countries where formal institutions and the economy are less diversified, instructional development as a concept, a policy, and a technology tends to be more directly affected by prevailing conditions. These conditions and their possible influences on instructional development processes are discussed in this article. An understanding of these conditions is useful for analyzing existing instructional development efforts in developing countries and for planning new ones.

The conditions included in this discussion are prevailing traditions, prevailing politics, and prevailing economies. These conditions combine to provide a context for the selection and implementation of instructional development as an approach to solving a country's educational problems. They may affect the form and substance of ID in the way it is practiced, and influence the speed with which projects reach their goals, stagnate, or disappear.

The definition of instructional development prepared by the Association of Educational Communication and Technology (Silber et al., 1979) is used for this discussion.

A systematic approach to design, production, evaluation, and utilization of complete systems of instruction, including all appropriate components and a management pattern for using them; instructional development is larger than instructional product development, which is concerned with only isolated products, and is larger than instructional design, which is only one phase of instructional development.

It is with this broad conceptualization of the field of instructional development in mind, that the prevailing conditions in developing countries are analyzed and their effects on the ID process are discussed. The conditions described here were originally observed in Eastern, and Middle Eastern countries and may differ in other developing countries.

Prevailing Traditions

Many developing countries are located in the ancient world, where Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism first recruited their early followers. Ancient civilizations consisted of a specific conduct of life in relation to the immediate environment and to the cosmos. This conduct of life embodied social and cultural forms that were evident in the education of youth, in the political and economic institutions, in the practice of art and science, and in the philosophy of life. The combination of these enduring elements constitutes a country's traditions (Nasr, 1981).

Many of the traditional civilizations of the ancient world went through a process of decline that began in the seventeenth century. After the passage of four hundred years of cultural stagnation, at least two types of traditions can be observed—an original tradition and a

decadent one. Original traditions have the following attributes:

- They are based on a sense of the sacred.
- They are based on ethical and aesthetic values.
- They have a holistic view of knowledge (subjective and objective).
- They recognize two approaches to the attainment of knowledge (intuitive and analytical).
- They perceive the knower and knowledge as indivisible.
- They partially manifest themselves in science, art, and technology.
- They are democratic and non-dogmatic.

These attributes contribute to the cultural development of society. The attributes of decadent tradition that have emerged during the decline of ancient civilizations are: superstition, prejudice, formalism, ignorance, demagoguery, religiosity, and dogmatism. These attributes hinder the cultural development of the society.

In many developing countries these two extreme forms of traditions and all the differential shades between them are evident. At times and in certain circumstances, original traditions may be in a process of ascendance (e.g., India, Algeria). As developing countries become more aware of their own heritage, as distinct from a colonial heritage or the heritage of modern civilizations, they look to their own original tradition to close the four hundred year cultural development gap (Hermassi, 1980). In a different setting, the decadent tradition may exert formal influence through bureaucratic procedures or informal influence through customs and habits. The presence of decadent traditions may be so pervasive as to totally obscure the potential of the other traditions, leading the uninitiated observer to equate all traditions with superstition, prejudice, formalism, ignorance, demagoguery, religiosity, and dogmatism. Formal attempts to reduce

decadent traditions or to promote original traditions are functionally a political act.

Prevailing Politics

The process of instructional development is also influenced by prevailing political conditions. As a country's actual or perceived independence permits, it is useful to categorize political conditions as internal or external.

Internal Political Conditions. The process of national formation in Europe was a function of gradual government institutionalization and a separation of those government institutions from the

tries strive to regain their particular sense of cultural identity, they engage in debates over issues of major social and political importance, such as the degree of secularization of the country, the degree of modernism (in its Western or Marxist forms), recreating original or perpetuating decadent traditions. On a different level, contending forces work to establish generic organizational structures, such as building new or renewing old social institutions, organizing bureaucracies, forming political parties, defining the meaning of freedom, shaping legislative and legal systems and procedures, determining centralization or decentralization of social and political

internal contending forces and an accommodation of the external forces. The desired outcome of the process of national formation is internal stability and external international balance. Attainment and maintenance of this stability and balance is not entirely a political matter. Economic conditions in the developing countries are critical factors in the process of national development and in turn for instructional development.

Prevailing Economics

Attainment of economic prosperity has been the elusive goal of developing countries for the past three decades. The people of developing countries, who constitute seventy-five percent of the world's population, live under stagnant economic conditions that allow them average per capita incomes of \$200 per year (The World Bank, 1982). The optimism engendered by the end of foreign occupation and the attainment of relative independence in the 1950's and the 1960's is dissipating in the 1980's. The economic disparity between poor and rich is increasing both among and within countries; it is greater in relative terms in the 1980's than in the 1950's. The existing conditions within the developing countries which perpetuate this inequality include the following:

- Lack of capital investment or the inability to absorb and use funds when capital for investment is available.
- Lack of trained and educated personnel.
- Lack of production and management efficiency and know-how.
- Uneven distribution of wealth and income.
- Lack of ability to fully utilize agricultural resources and establish industrial units.
- Lack of diversity in export earnings and reliance on one or two exportable commodities for earning.

In the past thirty years, many attempts have been made to alleviate the economic problems of developing countries. These efforts have generally failed to bring economic prosperity. Some progress in food production and reducing infant mortality and illiteracy have been made. But this progress occurred slowly, on a small scale, with little consideration for secondary consequences. In some areas in which economic development has been rapid, hidden consequences have retarded or eradicated desirable effects.

The meaning ascribed to the word "development" has changed in the past

Instructional development is a democratic idea which is difficult, if not impossible, under some political conditions.

Roman Catholic Church. In developing countries, national formation is a struggle to define and assert a unique and relatively independent cultural and political identity (Ergang 1971, Fanon 1963). In Europe, building national institutions for conducting public affairs in various domains of finance, legislative, judiciary, and military was an instrument of acquiring political power by central governments. This long and perilous process occurred over roughly four hundred years, during which political power was transferred from rural feudal chieftains and the church to the secular political figures of the central governments. In the developing countries, organizational development and formation of secular government systems often takes secondary importance to the clarification of cultural and political identity. Therefore, national formation is substantially different from that of Europe. Any attempt to use the European model of national development to explain or predict events taking place in a developing country will reveal superficial similarities that can be very misleading. For instance, in some of the developing countries secularization is perceived as the instrument of development; in others, religion is viewed as a means for cultural differentiation and crystallization of political identity.

As the people of the developing coun-

institutions and designating single or multiple official languages.

The process of national formation involving such issues is hardly a systematic process. Existing political systems quite often do not have the necessary resiliency to absorb the prevailing range of social and political diversity. Furthermore, they are not flexible enough to give adequate expression to divergent viewpoints espoused by diverse fractions. Hence, violence often ensues among contending forces.

External Political Conditions. Violence is not always internally generated. It is sometimes externally induced. The developing countries are considered fertile ground for ideological penetration. Contending ideologies in the international arena are constantly introduced into the political process. Violence ranging from sabotage and terrorism to outright invasion are often employed to accomplish ideological or territorial aims. Many developing countries are heavily dependent on other countries for economic growth. This dependency, which carries a political and cultural overtone, also creates conditions of resentment in countries already struggling to establish a national identity.

A successful political system in a developing country may eventually bring about an equilibrium among the

thirty years as efforts have intensified to improve the quality of life in developing countries. Until the 1970's, development generally implied economic development (Lehmann, 1979). Other aspects of a country's life were either totally neglected or were conceived as a subordinate function for economic development. Improving the economic conditions of the developing countries has been the supreme goal of many experts, policy makers, and administrators. Political, educational, cultural, ethical, and aesthetic developments either have been ignored or have been erroneously assumed to follow once economic prosperity materialized.

Within the field of economic development, the meaning assigned to "development" has further been conceptually reduced to certain economic indicators. In the 1950's and 1960's, growth in the gross national product (GNP) was taken as the most important criterion for economic improvement. As it became apparent that this extreme simplification of the economic reality, dictated by a certain model of economic evaluation, was not adequate to explain what is and what ought to be, development economists added other indicators to their measurement instruments. Per capita income, income distribution, urban-rural disparity, income diversity, and social equity were added. An index for gauging the physical quality of life was also developed (Morris, 1979). Nevertheless, the general approach of the field of development economics has remained a reductionist one based on quantifiable growth indicators in the physically observable economic process.

Implications

The prevailing traditions, politics, and economics as delineated affect the manner in which instructional development occurs in developing countries. For instance, a country with decadent traditions is highly unlikely to select instructional development as a strategy for dealing with educational and general economic development problems. The more a developing country is able to move towards a way of thinking attuned to the principles of its original traditions, the more likely that country will use instructional development. In fact, the concept of original tradition with its emphasis on the indivisibility of knowledge and knower requires a systematic human-oriented solution for problem-solving—such as instructional development. Original traditions relate the achievements of the past to the condi-

tions of the present and the needs of tomorrow. They are not intrinsically antithetical to the idea of progress. Decadent traditions, however, cannot accommodate development and progress. The distinction is an important one for those who are planning, implementing, or evaluating instructional development projects in developing countries.

Political ideologies and traditions translated into educational policies may alter the structure of instructional development and transform it to a semi-systematic effort. Instructional development is a democratic idea. Almost all ID models prescribe needs analysis as the first step of the process. Needs analysis and definition of priorities become more possible and functionally achievable when the country enjoys internal stability with a healthy degree of dissent in the political process. As the degree of dissent grows and moves the political process towards violence, consensus on real and perceived needs becomes very difficult. An internally stable country with a balanced foreign policy following the principles of original tradition is more conducive to keeping the structure of instructional development intact as a democratic idea based on needs analysis and a systematic approach to progress.

Under certain prevailing politics and traditions, development of instructional systems for some content areas becomes difficult, if not impossible. Unstable political systems tend to limit the depth and breadth of political education in content areas related to theory and history of political, economic, and social ideas. Physical sciences also become limited in their methods of inquiry. Independent laboratory investigation may be limited to dogmatic, a priori knowledge. Limitations can be imposed not only on the content of an instructional development project, but also on those who can participate in the project—such as women, certain social classes, and religious "minorities," etc.

Favorable political and economic support are necessary ingredients for the success of a development project, even in developed countries. In the developing countries, with contending political factions and scarce economic resources, political and financial support become even more important. Political support becomes an even more sensitive issue, since the overwhelming majority of the people of developing countries perceive "process technologies" as alien concepts. The probable success of an instructional development project is higher if the ID process itself helps the indigenous parti-

cipants in their effort to clarify and crystallize their sense of cultural identity.

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