

The critical theory of Habermas' tech-ideology and its influence for organisational commitment in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT: This article presents a study that utilises Habermas' tech-ideology concept to critique the organisational commitment of high-tech companies. The article first reviews Habermas' notion of tech-ideology and its classification, then examines restrictions and crises about knowledge itself, and the tech-ideology result to an adequate of tech virtual culture hegemony. Finally, the essential elements of organisational communication rationality are discussed. The relationship between communication rationality and organisational commitment is also explored in the article. The study's findings indicate that people must relight rationality and personal ideology under the influence of tech instruments, then develop their competence so as not to be dominated by tech instruments. If too much emphasis is placed by business on performance with rational tools, employers may risk distancing the employer and employee in a non-humanistic manner, while too much accent on rationality could also risk losing sight of organisational objectives, or serve to disintegrate an organisation's performance potential.

INTRODUCTION

Taiwanese high-tech companies are perilously besieged by a global economic downturn. The organisational commitment and loyalty so emphasised by the Taiwanese high-tech sector may come off as an overstatement given that their latest diversification and employee retrenchment plans have come under attack as employers make decisive moves that seem to be dictated by their whims and willpower. This only leaves employees hanging on for employers; none of the legal provisions seem enough to avert the employees' disadvantageous footing.

No longer is the workforce an indispensable capital but has become instead something that can be discarded in an economic downturn or at the sudden notion of the CEO. Employees seem belittled and helpless, particularly with regard to management's conceptualisation that backs the company's harsh decision in retrenching so-called ill-adjusted employees from its workforce, despite the employees' dismay.

In such a fast-changing society, where a high-tech orientation takes rein over social progress, particularly in a seemingly diverging and chaotic global evolvement, conventional human values have been deprived of a core cultural concept and cultural identity. Particularly when coming into contact with high-tech dominance, the core cultural concept and identity succumbs to the values and identity of mainstream society. Postman proposed that the close-knit correlation between high-tech and social strength and the integration of the magnitude of technological dynamism has compelled people to reorganise and re-examine their awareness towards the world. In turn, this has led to the emergence of an unprecedented awareness that poses to replace people's faith, inclination, paradigms and traditions [1].

At a time when information technology has emerged to dictate all human experiences, it is not without risk that a person's very own identity would soon be replaced by information. Individual freedom and subjectivity are currently undergoing enormous challenges [2].

Yet during the process of humankind's discovery-convergence-acceptance process towards science, subjective and cognitive awareness often serves to hinder the process; for instance, Feyerabend stated that what scientific dominance has achieved today has not been as a natural result of scientific validation and study but rather the product of politics, cultural evolution, military pressure and economic development, while the development of a powerful information technology that impacts on the conventional knowledge base has taken shape by artificial manipulations [3].

A prime example can be found in the realm of the World Wide Web (WWW) and the Internet, which was a super cyberspace, yet it has since evolved to alter the role of subjectivity and objectivity in becoming an entity of a theorem. It implies that high-tech contains superior quality [4]. As a result, humankind has begun to utilise it as a tool to improve work efficiency, in which we rationally attempt to complete certain missions and tasks in a process that manifests instrumental reasoning. This means that rational thinking is applied into high-tech processing in a move to improve work efficiency but without addressing its legitimacy, adequacy or necessity to warrant further pondering. In other words, overdependence on high tech has resulted in high-tech dominance domineering human thought processes. This has engendered thought processes that can only be broached from an instrumental rationale rather than from a reflective perspective.

The more dizzying the present adaptation of high-tech achievements becomes, the more high-tech has become a

universal means of measuring knowledge. This is an overflow of the instrument rationale that has emerged to be constituted as tech awareness [5].

The German Frankfurt School has developed in-depth criticism against such high-tech awareness. In particular, J. Habermas has attempted to present rationale communications with which to offset the high-tech dominance and help create a subjective-based society where people can be free to reflect on some of the issues associated with organisational commitment and communications.

FORMATION AND CRITICISM OF TECH IDEOLOGY

Habermas suggested that the fundamental elements in human living include labour, language and power. These constitute different means of thinking, thus forming different types of knowledge [5]. This is elaborated on below:

- In the field of labour, emphasis is focused on the minimum input for maximum output. Efforts are focused on increasing efficiency and taking control in social events through the acquisition of unified regularity. Therefore, technical interest is formed and this interest becomes an *experience-analysis* science.
- In the area of language symbols, emphasis is placed on the comprehension and response to symbols presented by others to form a level of interpersonal communication and action. Because communication and interaction between people is based on the actual action within the living context, a practical interest is therefore formed. This interest becomes a *history-interpretation* science, which exclusively explores what *comprehension* is.
- In the domain of power, because of the dominance of the wielder of higher power, a distorted channel of communication is formed. This results in a governance of ideology and impedes the acquisition of real knowledge. Therefore, this poor type of communication must be removed. The power of removal comes from the self-consciousness and self-determination. Therefore, an emancipator interest is emphasised to construct a criticism-oriented science [6].

Habermas analysed ideology from the power relation and considered that ideology is formed because of no symmetrical power relation with regard to social interaction. This resulted in a systematic distortion of communication. Especially when applied to social power, ideology becomes a tool of social governance, which not only facilitates the legalisation of political power, but also results in governance over individual thought, turning into a non-conscious behavioural model. The boom in tech ideology has resulted in an overall crisis of capitalism in later phases.

In summary, humans seek work efficiency for their labour and continue to develop a knowledge system of the tool of rationality. Especially within capitalist society, technology has become the tool on which economic development depends and further governs the development of social culture. While combining technology and politics, the decision-making need and endorsement of tech experts is to have the policy legalised. Therefore, tech has become an ideology within capitalist society and further governs all social members at all levels. Should there be some desire to remove such tech ideology,

such as the governance on public policy, a means of action through communication must be adopted and consensus reached after debates to build public policy.

THE CRISIS AND DILEMMA OF KNOWLEDGE ITSELF

The loss and deficit caused by critical theory of tech ideology, such as the crisis of knowledge itself, have following phenomena:

- Virtual culture becomes hegemony: In information tech, virtual culture has become hegemony, and tech is increasing and promoting this hegemony. If fact, whether the practice of science and the application of tech are of identical or different natures, there are different views. There also exist significant differences with regard to the copying, broadcasting or reproducing of culture because of different lines of thoughts [7].
- The conflict of private right and public interest: Presently, the military network and the broadcast network are developing at a surprisingly fast speed. However, what is the value in this public domain? And what are their boundaries? In particular, the development of today's network may also conflict with public rights because it contains phenomena of de-intermediation and de-realisation, while society does not follow these changes. Due to the involvement of the previous governance of social power in the public domain, the symbol interaction has also evolved into symbol governance.
- The trap in knowledge transmission: An analysis as to whether the computer leads to over-standardisation and identity of education, which would result in the loss of its diversification, indicated that an enterprise may utilise computers to make operational procedures diversified. However, while the computer does not necessarily become a hegemony governance at the virtual level, it may still have some effect depending on the different levels of lines [8].
- Loss between function and meaning: Non-physical information will restrict people's thinking and negate the possibility for freedom to choose. The more that tech is used to control the world, the more people are controlled by the world. In other words, tech is a restriction by acting as a frame for, and offering disclosure of, the existing condition of humans; yet it may also be a freedom. Real recognition should be found in the potentially different models of recognition, so as to avoid falling in a trap of either model. Only by doing so can people relieve themselves from their *alter ego*, as specified by Haidinger [9].

THE NEED FOR COMMUNICATION RATIONALITY

The critical phenomenon of the dissimilation of human rationality not only restricts the rational development of the living world, but also inhibits and distorts the humanity of various members of social organisations. This results in a crisis in the loss of living meaning and a loss of ethical morals.

Habermas advocated the argument of *communication rationality*. Besides seeking to surpass the scope of rationality types, as cited by Weber, he tried to resolve the development dilemma of tool rationality (formal rationality) and value rationality (physical rationality). He also sought to relieve the

contradiction that exists between the bureaucratic system and expertise autonomy. In order to gain insight into the rational quandary of modern industry civilisation, Habermas' communication rationality must be extended to a broader view of rationality. This helps facilitate greater understanding of the reasons for the rationality dilemma and the sickness of society [10].

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND ENTERPRISE ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

The existing governance character of tech has significantly impacted on an enterprise's organisational commitment in the following aspects:

- Constructing the basic model: Enterprise organisational commitment must be taken from a partnership relationship that is based on human resource management so as to improve organisational culture, inspire creativity within the organisation, enable employees and supervisors to develop their abilities and to persevere under such a cultural environment. Different commitment types should be recognised, and include the following:
 - It is most important to foster *continuous commitment* in employees, which means that the employee will not desire to work at another company.
 - It is also important to engender *normal commitment* in employees; this refers to the commitment derived from the pressure of the target management of the company.
 - Another vital element to be instilled is the level of *emotional commitment*, which results from the emotional desire to stay with the organisation.
- New supervisor-subordinate relations: Tech has taken supervisor-subordinate relations into a new direction. The supervisor has become an assistant and a leader. The supervisor must understand the modern language of the employee so as to express the underlying normality of language, rather than be a forceful indoctrinator as would normally be the case. Further, the employee may not be fired casually. Although rise of the hegemony of tech virtual levels may decrease the authority of the supervisor, it may also increase the range of an employee's thought processes.
- The changeability of an enterprise's organisational commitment: An enterprise's employers hope that their employees commit to the enterprises, ie loyalty to the boss. Especially in high tech time, a private connection with a competitor would be judged as reasonable grounds to discharge an employee. Therefore, the employee may not exchange messages through e-mail, and the employee has to express his/her loyalty to his/her supervisor at any time [11].

CONCLUSION

The new changes in human life, such as the move from an industrial society to a tech society, have forced tech to become

high tech and high reaction. Therefore, the development of information tech is a factor that humans/society must confront. In facing the impacts of tech, an awareness of the rationality and self-consciousness should be re-established.

The ability to utilise communication rationality should also be cultivated. This not only helps people to be relieved from the destiny of the governance of tools, but essentially assists employees face the application of tech and its influence on human life. In this way, people can develop their potential for creativity, enabling them to enjoy the rich fruits brought by tech rather than be governed by tech.

On the contrary, overemphasising using rational tools by business employers may instead risk distancing the employer from the employee in a non-humanistic manner. On the other hand, blindly prioritising rationality could also risk losing sight of organisational objectives, or even serve to disintegrate an organisation's performance potential.

The firm that has excelled in Habermas' dictum of a communication-led rationale respects the independence of each employee and emphasises overall organisational objectives. Generating rational communication developed upon a collective consensus not only helps to improve organisational member interaction but is also instrumental in ensuring that employees attain rational realisation of personal dignity and achievement in the workplace.

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