

Participatory Communication and Alternative Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Participatory communication has the potentials to promote traditional media as adaptable method of information and communication strategies in rural settings over the traditional paradigms of modernisation theories of mass communication which normally promotes top-down approaches to development issues. It encourages decentralization, endogenous and multisectoral approaches to planning and decision making. When the promises of the modernisation paradigm failed to materialise, and its methods came increasingly under fire, and the dependency theorists failed to provide a successful alternative model, a different approach focusing on people's participation began to emerge. This participatory model is less oriented to the political-economic dimension and more rooted in the cultural realities of development. The development focus has shifted from economic growth to include other social dimensions needed to ensure meaningful results in the long run as indicated by the consensus built in the definition of the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainability and people's participation became key elements of this new vision. Paradigms of development derived outside the classical theories of development have emerged as schools of thought that are largely seen as alternative theories of development. This paper adopts a content analysis of secondary sources on the concepts of development and some alternative theories associated with it, especially as it pertains to third world conditions. It also focuses on participatory communication and other alternative theories, namely: The basic needs approach; the intermediate technology approach; the integrated rural development approach; the 21st century socialist approach and the echo-economics approach. These approaches are overlapping in certain respects but by no means exhaustive. The paper recommends ideological and mass mobilization as participatory communication strategy for alternative sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Development, Alternative Development, Communication, Participatory Communication and Ideological and Social Mobilization

Introduction

The idea of ‘developing’ people in the last century is traced to President Harry Truman’s inaugural address of January 20, 1949 (McPhail:2009). That his motive for making that address is noble and arguable. Yet, he understood the wider picture. Thomas quoted him thus:

More than half of people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat to them and to more prosperous areas for the first time in history, humanity possess the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people

It is with this in mind that the dependency system of sending assistance and aid to the ‘Third World’ was initiated. The Third World here, according to Melkote and Steeves (2001) is seen by majority of the students in the United States as the economically poor, such as places like Africa, most of Latin America, Asia and the pacific. Little wonder, it is estimated by the John Templeton Foundation that aid to Africa alone shortly after the Truman’s speech exceeded \$600 billion (McPhail: 2009). To achieve the Point Four Agenda, the US Congress established a Technical Cooperation Administrative Unit to implement this new initiative, which McPhail (2009) further states, became integrated into the US Department of State. The ripple effect of the speech was carried further by the academics, social workers, clergy, non-governmental organizations, specialized agencies of the United Nation etc. Foreign aid from industrialized nations like Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan etc., was pumped to this project of developing the Third World.

However, despite the huge and unquantifiable resources invested in development work, according to World Bank report, in 2002, there were 1,200,000,000 (1.2 billion) people who live below its official poverty line that is, \$1 per day (World Bank 2002 quoted in Colin Spark). In a recent report jointly written by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, Global Monitoring Report 2014/2015, states that in 2011, over a billion people of the world remained in extreme poverty. This figure is about 14.5 percent of the world’s population (World Bank Report, 2015). As bogus as the figure may look, it is not far from the facts on the ground. BelaMordy (1991) had passionately put earlier that the shared aspiration of three and half billion people (two-third of the World’s population) who live in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and the Caribbean is to escape from poverty to a better life. Spark (2007) further noted that:

The vast majority of the poor, however live in poor countries. Many live in Asia and make up a good proportion of the huge population of India and China, many more live in Africa and further millions are to be found in Latin America.

It has been observed that the efforts to contain the ocean of human misery have not been fruitless. The World Bank annual report 2013 stated that, “the extent of the global poverty has declined rapidly. The percentage of people living in extreme poverty in 2013 is the half of what it was in 1990. This report however, recognizes the fact that more than one billion people World Wide are still destitute (World Bank Annual Report 2013). McPhail (2009) succinctly captures the chameleonic pace of transformation despite the efforts and hopes of the elites of the northern hemisphere thus:

Yet the lives of many in the southern hemisphere either remained unchanged, or in some cases, their situations, economic, health, housing, education, media access became worse. After more than six decades of modernization, the southern hemisphere is still facing economic, cultural, and social challenges.

According to Wilson as quoted in McPhail (2009), most countries and peoples are in many ways worse off today than they were at the end of the World War II; “more than eighty countries have a lower per capital income today than a decade ago.”

After decades of experimentation with the dominant paradigm, the required development failed to be achieved. Development, which is the total process of growth and improvement in economic, social, political and cultural sector of the society, remains a challenge in the Third World (Anaeto: 2010). In many quarters, it is defined as improvement of the living conditions of the society (Melkote and Steeves: 2001). Beltran notes as quoted in Spark, that despite systematic efforts, a good chunk of the world “did not appear to be reaching the take-off phase and the gap between the most developed and less developed worlds was widening” (Spark:2007). And Okigbo further laments the frustration in the African society in utilizing the mass media apparatus of the dominant approach:

After many decades of employing the modern mass media as tools for development, the records in many African countries show that very little has been achieved in such critical areas as political mobilization, national unity, civic education and diffusion of new

agricultural techniques and product (Okigbo quoted by Spark:2007).

A reason put forward for this failure is the fact that the proponents of the modernization theory did not factor in the culture of the people in the Third World. Western modernity, according to Spark (2007) was alien to the developing world and the foreign experts were distant from the realities and values of the mass of the population.

Mody (1991) equally attributed the failure of the dominant paradigm in the third world, among other things, to the “social status” (that is, religion, caste, race, tribes, clans) and political power whose matrix the West did not factor in. These continue to create low aspiration and apathy among the have-nots in the countries of southern hemisphere.

In trying to resolve the development quagmire faced by the dominant approach, Melkote and Steeves (1991) trace the problem to varied understanding of the concept of development. While development would be understood by many as the means of improving the living conditions of the society, three perspectives or ways of thinking were elaborated upon by the duo, which is summarized below:

- a. Development as modernization is based on the neo-classical economic theory which assumes that the western model of economic growth is applicable everywhere and the introduction of model technologies is important
- b. The second perspective challenges the economic and cultural expansion and imperialism of modernization. It rather sues for a political and economic restructuring of the Third World countries to produce a more even distribution of reward and resources of the society.
- c. The liberation perspective is largely attributed to the Brazilian educationist, Paolo Freire, who proposed development as liberation. This concept of development springs from Liberation Theology and emphasizes human freedom and self-reliance. The purpose of development is liberation from oppression of both the individuals and the communities. This perspective understands development as primarily spiritual not economic. However, material realities are not ignored. Liberation Theology acknowledges the link between material and non-material needs and how absence of material needs and economic exploitation affect spiritual growth (Melkote & Steeves: 2001).

In furtherance to the above, Soola (2003) writing about the concept of development is quoted by Anaeto (2010) that development must be of the people, by the people and for the people. It must permeate the entire spectrum and states of the society. It must touch the lives of the poorest of the poor, lifting them up, as it were, from the abyss of poverty, ignorance, disease, squalor, human rights abuses and similar deprivation. Spark (2007) captures it more precisely when emphasizing the edge the alternative approach has over the dominant thus:

Development change needed to take full and proper account of the traditional customs and beliefs, including the religious and superstitious beliefs of the population that was to experience change, otherwise the result would be the brutalization of the population and their rejection of the positive elements of reason and modernity that could otherwise have been incorporated into a new belief system that synthesized the best element of the old and new.

It is crystal clear that in order to salvage the development logjam, practitioners had to explore an alternative paradigm that factors in the culture of the people. This includes the belief-systems and religious values of the people that had been excessively accused as the inhibiting factors of development in the Third World (Melkote and Steeves: 1991). It should be noted that earlier development practitioners ignored the place of culture and religious values in the development process.

When the promises of the modernisation paradigm failed to materialise, and its methods came increasingly under fire, and the dependency theorists failed to provide a successful alternative model, a different approach focusing on people's participation began to emerge. This participatory model is less oriented to the political-economic dimension and more rooted in the cultural realities of development. The development focus has shifted from economic growth to include other social dimensions needed to ensure meaningful results in the long run as indicated by the consensus built in the definition of the Millennium Development Goals. Sustainability and people's participation became key elements of this new vision, as acknowledged also by the World Bank (1994): "Internationally, emphasis is being placed on the challenge of sustainable development, and participation is increasingly recognised as a necessary part of sustainable development strategies." Meaningful participation cannot occur without communication.

Participation paradigm is based on the assumption that the common people are intelligent and can be active agents of change. Development efforts should then be based on people's capacity to contribute and participate actively in the task of transforming their society. It emphasizes the endogenous nature of development as something that must evolve from the people as opposed to 'trickle-down' belief. It also emphasizes self-reliant growth, stressing that people have

the ability to face their problems with resources or ideas emanating from within without relying of external help themselves. Self-reliance thus has three components:

The development of the consciousness in people that they are in charge of their destiny; That people can think or reason and achieve any height by themselves; and- That people can acquire the attitude for solving problems that confront them by their own initiative and skills (Oso, 2002).

Research has also shown that involvement of social groups, age groups, clubs, Churches, Mosques, women groups, professional groups, non-governmental organizations and community based organizations has brought greater participation in the innovations to be adopted (Imoh, 2013). Communication and development are two sides of the same coin. Without communication, there is no development. Development itself is not feasible without human interaction, in industry, commerce, government and non-governmental social intercourse. Hence, development and communication re-enforce each other. Therefore, paradigms of development derived outside the classical theories of development have emerged as schools of thought that are largely seen as alternative theories of development (Moemeka, 2012).

These theories are themselves not universally acceptable. This is largely because they are works in progress, as each period in history tends to produce its own emerging alternative theories of human progress. Which is what development is all about. This paper interrogates the concepts of participatory communication, development and alternative theories associated with it, especially as it pertains to third world conditions. It focuses on the following types of alternative theories, namely: The basic needs approach; the intermediate technology approach; the integrated rural development approach; the 21st century socialist approach and the echo-economics approach. These approaches are overlapping in certain respects but by no means exhaustive.

Interrogating the Concept of Development

Development means the process by which social conditions are improved. In brief, development can be defined as a long process of qualitative and quantitative changes in society in political, economic, social, cultural and social terms, which leads to individual or collective well-being (Agena, 2015). To interrogate a concept is not simply to define it but to raise relevant questions that will bring out its true substance, in this way, the core elements of the concept will

emerge for further interrogation and understanding. This approach is necessary for the examination of a complex concept like development. Scholars are hardly agreed as to its precise meaning. But as Chambers (2005; No. 185) put it, “words are a starting point” in the interrogation of the concept of development. Hence development deals with both the quality of human life and the necessary changes that leads to such quality.

The World Bank itself issues yearly World Development Reports, so too does the UNDP, with its Human Development Reports, issued to capture indices of development in various countries of the world. This goes to show that, development is a concern not just for individuals but for nation – states and the international community as well. Moreover, development goes beyond the idea of “good change.” The reasons for this are summed by Thomas (2000: 24) as follows:

First, development generally implies an all encompassing change, not just an improvement in one aspect. Second, development is not just a question of a one-off process of change to something better, but implies a process of change to something better, a process which builds on itself, where change is continuous and where improvements build on previous improvements. Third, development is a matter of changes occurring at the level of social change and of the individual human being at one and the same time

Consequently, development encompasses economic growth and social change. It entails not just material considerations in human relationship but other variables like communication, values and relationships in the pursuit of human progress. However, progress itself implies sustained improvement in the search for higher and higher levels of improvement, yet, that in itself does not fully capture the idea of development which mimics living organisms and suggest “moving towards the fulfillment of a potential” (Thomas, 2000; 25). In the development dictionary, Wolfgang Sachs, argued that the meanings of development are so varied that the idea itself ends up being ‘obscure.’

Nevertheless, this paper defines development in terms of Goulet’s three core values of life sustenance, freedom from servitude and self esteem. This definition entails essential ingredients of basic human needs, like access to food, clothing, shelter, education, transport and communication, including questions of power relations, dignity and human freedom. These are central to understanding of the relationship between development and communication.

Alternative Development Paradigms

The idea of alternative development paradigms suggests that there are pre-existing paradigms that are considered as dominant. Such paradigms are subsumed

under what economists have tagged the Modernization school. The leading advocates of this school were influenced by the ideas of classical economists like, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, T. R. Malthus and J. S. Mill. John Maynard Keynes whose General Theory took Western Europe out of the Great Depression was a forerunner of this School. W.W. Rostow became one of its leading lights (Moemeka, 2012).

Their ideas were rooted in the industrial revolution and the European experience in development management in the post-war years (i.e. after 1945). Challenges that came in the form of the great depression and the two world wars (1914 – 1918; and 1939 – 1945) convinced economic historians like Rostow that underdeveloped countries can follow the same economic path as industrialized countries to achieve development. Therefore, “modernization theorists believe that, less developed countries will go through the same process of development - Industrialization - that western countries did. The economic differences between the North and the South will be reconciled as the less developed countries become affluent (Agena, 2015).

The goal of the modernization school is economic growth, while that of the alternative paradigm is egalitarianism. Yet there are various schools that represent alternative development thinking. Most of these schools drew inspiration from the Marxian tradition and the socialist world outlook. What became known as dependency theory argued that the third world countries do not have to imitate the development routes of the industrialized world; rather they should chart their own course to industrialization through self reliance. The works of Andrea Gunder Frank, Samir Amin and Paul A. Baran were very influential in this regard.

These theorists felt that human beings are naturally productive and cooperative and, as such, not just motivated by personal greed or profit. Hence looking inwards and in certain respects de-linking from the Western industrialized world will help emancipate poor countries economically. However, variants of the alternative development paradigms such as the Intermediate Technology School and the Basic Need Approach emerged in the seventies to advance less ideologically strident ideas that conceived of development in terms of employing appropriate technology and elimination of the worst aspects of poverty through addressing basic human needs.

The Intermediate Technology Approach was a reaction to the excesses of industrialization and the pursuit of economic growth in the Western world. Instead of massive industrialization and high technology, the intermediate technology school sought appropriate technology through local skills, renewable resources, local cultures and practices to satisfy domestic needs. Schumacher’s work *Small is Beautiful* (1973) became one of the most influential in this drive. It shifted attention from capital intensive industrialization to labour intensive, small scale rural enterprises.

On the other hand, the Basic Needs Approach focused on elimination of absolute poverty. MahbubUIHaq and HolisChenery of the World Bank were among the leading proponents of this idea. Hence, multilateral agencies like the World Bank and other specialized agencies of the UN, such as the ILO, United Nations Economic and Social Council, including the United States Congress, became proponents of the idea. The core of the approach is that addressing basic human needs in terms of providing food, clean water, shelter, security, education, transport, access to decision making and the dignity of the human person are fundamental to development. Thus earning a minimum wage, enjoying collective bargaining rights and identifying a national poverty benchmark, below which no citizen should live, are crucial ingredients of human welfare. Social questions were as essential to the Basic Needs Approach as were economic rights. Its micro analysis, emphasize the need to eradicate absolute poverty as due regard to the dignity of the individual.

Another variant of the alternative paradigm is the Integrated Rural Development Approach made popular by the World Bank, whose president, Robert Macnamara, in 1973, called for **New Directions in Development** to address the “stalemate in development approaches.” This approach attempts to link various obstacles to socio-economic development in an integrated way, so that, the will be addressed simultaneously. It encouraged, the use of planning mechanism in development relative and absolute poverty were distinguished in such a way that, absolute poverty was identified as denial of basic human needs, while relative poverty underline inequality in resource distribution and access to consumption of social goods. The solution, the Integrated Human Development approach was to shift policy focus from excessive emphasis on economic growth to equitable distribution of the fruits of economic growth i.e. to redistributive justice.

The 21st century socialist approach is best exemplified by the ideas of Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. It is more of a political reaction to the failure of neo liberal policies in bringing about prosperity in most of the Third World. It could also be seen as a post cold war attempt to revive socialism within the context of a multi party system of government. It amounts to bringing back the state through popular power into development management in order to correct the imperfections of the market, reverse privatization and engage in social provisioning to reduce inequality and improve the lives of the ordinary citizen. However, ideas centered on environmentalism, and the green economy, referred to as the echo-economy, have come to represent variants of an alternative economic paradigm. Although still emerging, echo-economy ideas are gaining grounds as a result of their emphasis on environmentally friendly technology.

The Concept of Communication

Communication is from a Latin word- *COMMUNIS*, which means *common* or *shared understanding*. Communication therefore is a purposeful effort to establish *commonness* between a source and receiver (Schramm 1965). Whatever is being shared could be associated with knowledge, experience, thought, ideas, suggestion, opinions, feelings etc. We will define communication here as the process of exchanging or sharing information, ideas and feeling between the sender and the receiver. It involves not only the spoken and written word but also body language, personal mannerisms, and style - anything that adds meaning to a message (Hybels & Weaver, 2001). Baran (2003) has defined communication as the process of creating shared meaning. This is because the participants in communication encounter are interested in obtaining messages that are understandable. That is why they have to be negotiable, seek clarification and ask for explanation to ensure that they have obtained the meaning intended in the message.

According to Mefalopulos (2008), mass communications, interpersonal communication, and health communication are just some of the specialties that can be found under the communication curricula of major academic institutions in countries around the world. Also included are international communication, speech communication, intercultural communication, communication education, applied communication, organizational communication, and political communication. This list could be expanded even further to include journalism, media production, information and communication technologies, public relations, corporate communication, and development communication, indicating the diversified and multifaceted nature of communication. Dictionaries, Web sites, and other sources confirm the richness, yet they can cause misconceptions about the term "communication". As noted by Mattelart (1996), this is not a recent development: in 1753 Denis Diderot was already writing in the Encyclopedia, "*Communication: a term with a great number of meanings.*" Rather than being taken as a sign of weakness or confusion, however, this diversity of conceptions and applications should be considered strength provided that the different areas are well understood and applied professionally according to their nature and characteristics. At the outset of this discussion, a point worth clarifying is the correct use of the terms "*communication*" and "*communications*," since the two have different connotations.

Usually the choice of a singular or plural form indicates merely a quantitative difference, but in this case the difference can be considered one of substance. References to "communications" typically emphasize products, such as audiovisual programs, posters, technologies, Web sites, and so forth. In this respect,

it is appropriate to talk of telecommunications or mass communications. The broader field of communication (spelled without an “s”) does not describe a single product, but a process and its related methods, techniques, and media. This is the case with development communication, as well as other fields such as research communication, intercultural communication, or political communication.

According to Age, Obinne & Demenongu (2012), every social system consists of animate creatures that interact among themselves in their quest to survive in their social environment. Every living creature communicates. As human beings, we communicate with the whole of our body. In fact, every part of human body communicates something to others. The whole of human environment is surrounded by messages, some of which are purveyed intentionally and are consciously received and acted upon. A lot of human messages get lost en route. Most of our human problems can be traced in part to poor communication of messages. Human communication is necessary for the survival and growth of any society.

Role of Communication in Alternative Development

A central thesis in alternative development strategies is that people matter; in other words, representation, popular participation and democratic freedoms, count. In short, human communication, which is an indispensable tool for social engagement, is the bedrock of alternative development paradigm. How people are mobilized, how they mobilize themselves, how they express their voice, how they interpret events, how they network, from village to local government, state and national levels, suggest a process of communicating ideas, emotions, body language and symbols reflecting aspirations, interest and voices of various peoples in the struggle for a better life (Moemeka, 2012).

Public policy is only public, it engages the people and people cannot be engaged to frame the development agenda if they are not communicated with, or if they do not communicate with the powers that be. Communication here is used in the sense in which Frank Dance employed the term to refer to “*the process that links discontinuous paths of the living world to one another*” That is to say, a general interaction is presupposed in our use of the term, and hence intentionality, judgment, transmission, agreement and feedback are all ingredients of the communication process. At the level of alternative development strategies borrowed concepts, theories, policies and patterns of behaviour from the industrialized world have to be deconstructed and not absorbed uncritically, into the developmental patterns of the third world. Secondly fashioning an alternative development paradigm requires an understanding of one’s own problems, needs,

resources, and articulation of one's own experiences to cope with existing and emerging challenges. This is not possible without communication.

Theories of human communication suggest, that, there in any exchange of ideas, there are two sides, the transmitter and the receiver. In between the two there is the message and the feedback. The interaction of all these elements is essential to convey development experience be it top down or bottom up or sideways. Therefore, alternative development paradigms rooted in the values, traditions, and voices of the people call forth a challenge, that makes development communication inevitable. Although new technologies have emerged, ownership of the development process demands that, dominant paradigms built on the “**say so**” of experts be supplanted by the demands of the people. In other words, where you have popular voice, culture cannot be ignored, hence, the re-emergence of culture in the alternative development debate.

The use of ICT has opened opportunities as well as created challengers for popular participation in the development process. As development experience has shown, progress in material well being could only be meaningful if it is human centered. Secondly, development is lopsided without popular participation in decision making. Thirdly, self reliance and cooperative are fundamental basis of development. Fourthly, given high priority to basic human needs instead of elite luxury improves general human welfare. Fifthly, high levels of consumption do not necessarily lead to improved quality of life of most people. Sixthly, the need for development is not peculiar to poor countries alone, rich countries too need to constantly improve. These basic facts indicate that, development is not just about physical assets alone; it is also about the human mind. Hence, it is both about how we communicate purposeful towards shared dreams and how we reproduce our materials lives in the pursuit of those dreams.

The Concept of Participatory Communication

Participatory communication is the opening of dialogue, source and receiver interacting continuously, thinking constructively about the situation, identify developmental needs and problems, deciding what is needed to improve the situation and acting upon it (Agena, (2015:421). Participatory communication has the potentials to promote traditional media as adaptable method of information and communication strategies in rural settings over the traditional paradigms of modernisation theories of mass communication which normally promotes top-down approaches to development issues. , It encourages decentralization, endogenous and multisectoral approaches to planning and decision making. As Yoon stated:

Its focus is on people, their liberation and self-reliance. Its goal is to improve the quality of life, conserve and enhance the people's values, beliefs and cultures, in order to ensure social justice, freedom and sustainable development. This model otherwise known as the multiplicity model, stresses that development has to be situation specific. Every society is distinct in its historical, socio-cultural and economic conditions and no universal model is applicable, a multiplicity of strategies will have to be used, based on each society's "initial conditions (Yoon, 2003: 6).

Critically, this study buys into the theoretical concept of Habermas which says: insofar, as we master the means of the construction of ideal speech situations, we can conceive the ideas of truth, freedom and justice, which interpenetrate each other (Habermas, in Jacobson & Servaes 1999:365). This means rural development has to be sensitive to the traditional media or culture of the rural communities in their areas of operations in order to buy-in the community members into the expected intervention programmes.

We therefore, say that development communication is a discipline that caters for a number of strategies which empower the vulnerable groups in rural communities whether in an advance society or in a given Third World country. However, the practice had not been adapted well in Africa because the traditional media that ought to have been tapped into in order to catalyze the so called 'peasant communities' toward improved living conditions had been played down for mass communication strategies, which had not delivered the expected social changes in Africa; this is what this thesis sets to theorize and strengthen.

Historically, Waisbord (1999) argues that the mainstream development paradigms have their origins in Post-World War II international aid programmes to countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa that were struggling with poverty, illiteracy, poor health and a lack of economic, political and social infrastructure. It is therefore argued that development communication commonly refers to the application of communication strategies and principles in the developing world. Because it is derived from theories of development and social change that identified the main problems of the post-war world in terms of a lack of development or progress equivalent to Western countries (Rockefeller 1999: 2).

So, information and communication theories that should capture these development agendas were premised in the dominant paradigms or 'modernization: with methods in conventional media radio, television and the print: diffusion of innovation theory- social marketing and health promotion and health education, and entertainment-education, media advocacy etc. which were

regarded as communication channels that would catalyze transformation “civilized” the backward traditional cultures and peoples of the Third World as it were.

However, the ideas as adopted for segmentation of this social change could not materialize as envisaged, because as Moemeka(2012: 4) puts it:

The majority of receivers or listeners to the programmes remain passive is the separation of the providing personnel from the receiving audience. There is very little contact between them. In fact, only very few of the channels have first-hand knowledge of the social, political, economic and cultural situations of the people for whom they produce programmes for. Most of the programmes or media materials, though seemingly relevant, are not always based on first-hand identification of urgent needs as indicated by the audience concern.

The communication methods which Moemeka seems to disagree with here, is in the case of *persuasive campaigns*, which is manipulative, and harmful to traditional communication processes. The import of this quarrel is that, development partners pay less attention to this healthy media and instead adapt the conventional strand which does not capture the larger cultural context in which the African peoples live and so, the basis or the disconnects. That is, while fixing them tight but without appreciating first, the African’s ways or interpreting their universe: doing things and paths to progress contradicts the practices of development engagements that ought to arouse the indigenous peoples’ awareness and their growth patterns in the locality, forms the basis for the mirage.

Thus, the theoretical framework of this paper buys into the democratic oral media of the target population to enhance community development activities in Nigeria. Besides, it is making case for facilitators to use oral media and adapt it as a workable communication strategy in researching with a given community since it promotes conscious and consensus building among the populace. Thus, it stabilizes awareness at its heights, where aspirations are rationally raised, and *willingness* to work in order to ‘progress’ becomes the rule rather than the exception (Moemeka, 2012).

In line with this thinking, Servaes (1992) advocates the use of indigenous resources and local social systems to bring about social change and development at the local level, to ensure that the basic needs, interests, preferences and values of the people are protected. The participatory communication approach encourages information generated within the community as opposed to that externally generated. As Servaes further explains, information is given less prominence than the processes used in sharing and using information. The role of the change agent in this model is facilitative and supportive; to enable the people consider, decide and act on development messages.

Certainly, participatory communication has not lacked critics. Even though vindicating some tenets of participatory theories, other positions argued that they were elaborated at a theoretical level and did not provide specific guidelines for interventions.

One problem in participatory models was that, it was not clear that communities needed to be involved for certain results to be achieved. In some cases such as epidemics and other public health crises, quick and top-down solutions could achieve positive results. Participation communication ignores that expediency may also positively contribute to development. Belaboring through grassroots decision-making process is slower than centralized decisions, and thus not advisable in cases that require prompt resolutions. Participation might be a good long-term strategy but has shortcomings when applied to short-term and urgent issues.

Another problem was that, participation in all stages does not have similar relevance. It was not clear what participation entailed. If decisions were made outside of the community and the latter was assigned the role of implementing and evaluating results, some positions argued, participation was limited to instances that depended on decisions previously made (McKee 1992). It was not true participation and, therefore, maintained power inequalities.

Another problem was that the focus on interpersonal relations underplayed the potential of the mass media in promoting development as participation and process. Little attention was paid to the uses of mass media in participatory settings, an issue that is particularly relevant considering that populations, even in remote areas, are constantly exposed to commercial media messages that stand in opposition to the goals set by programs. This lack was particularly evident in Freire's theory of dialogical communication that is based on group interactions and underplays the role of the mass media.

In this context, a thorough understanding of the audience perspectives by development planners is a necessary prerequisite for interventions targeting rural people. It has become known through research that by getting and giving information to potential users, programme planners are better equipped to design more salient messages because the audience has been involved in the message design and conceptualization (Imoh, 2013).

This new perspective is a deviation from our past dependence on formal survey research and information gathering designs to small behaviourally oriented studies, concept testing, focus group discussions, behavioural trials, intercept interviews, exit interviews and ethnographic studies. These tools can help the development communication to identify the hidden barriers the people may encounter in trying a new product or accepting a new idea (Imoh, 2013).

By unveiling the less visible incentives, which might inhibit or promote adoption, programme planners and message designers are better able to select vocabulary which the people will understand. That way they are able to integrate the innovation into the individual's own view of problems and needs. It also allows planners to detect the weaknesses, in the campaign objectives, strategies and messages.

Recognizing that radio, television and newspapers are largely for the exclusive benefit of the urban dwellers, participatory communication places emphasis on a multichannel system which is a blend of the interpersonal setting with the use of modern communication and informal traditional/group media which include theatre, public address system, mobile cinema outreach activities etc. These channels are culturally appropriate, cheap time, saving and group anchored (Eyoh 1986).

Research has also shown that involvement of social groups, age groups, clubs, churches, mosques, women groups, professional groups, nongovernmental organizations and community based organizations has brought greater participation in the innovations to be adopted Ascroft&Melkote (1981). Participatory communication which requires more interactive/functional connotation aims at facilitating participation and empowerment. A new horizontal model of communication upon up, this is thus shifting the focus from persuasion to participation. The paradigm also makes advocacy of folkloric or community media which is in line with rural development. It equally agrees for subversion of the conversational media. The paradigm argues for the location of communication in the entire process of development- the planning, implementation and evaluation of development initiated should mainstream participatory communication system. Nigerian government in general and Benue state in particular have been making so much resource available for rural development interventions to succeed but the efforts seem to wasteful and that shows lack of proper participatory communication strategies.

When the promises of the modernisation paradigm failed to materialise, and its methods came increasingly under fire, and the dependency theorists failed to provide a successful alternative model, a different approach focusing on people's participation began to emerge. This participatory model is less oriented to the political-economic dimension and more rooted in the cultural realities of development. The development focus has shifted from economic growth to include other social dimensions needed to ensure meaningful results in the long run as indicated by the consensus built in the definition of the Millennium Development Goals. Sustainability and people's participation became key elements of this new vision, as acknowledged also by the World Bank (1994): "*Internationally,*

emphasis is being placed on the challenge of sustainable development, and participation is increasingly recognised as a necessary part of sustainable development strategies.” Meaningful participation cannot occur without communication.

Participation paradigm is based on the assumption that the common people are intelligent and can be active agents of change. Development efforts should then be based on people’s capacity to contribute and participate actively in the task of transforming their society. It emphasizes the endogenous nature of development as something that must evolve from the people as opposed to ‘trickle-down’ belief. It also emphasizes self-reliant growth, stressing that people have the ability to face their problems with resources or ideas emanating from within without relying of external help themselves. Self-reliance thus has three components:

- The development of the consciousness in people that they are in charge of their destiny;
- That people can think or reason and achieve any height by themselves; and
- That people can acquire the attitude for solving problems that confront them by their own initiative and skills (Oso, 2002). This approach will better equip the Benue rural communities toward having a sustainable development.

Research has also shown that involvement of social groups, age groups, clubs, churches, mosques, women groups, professional groups, non-governmental organizations and community based organizations has brought greater participation in the innovations to be adopted (Imoh, 2013).

Recommendations

This paper recommends Ideological and Mass Mobilization Strategy. Members of each community should be made to realize the importance of communication in the process of community development. In realization of this, community members should be made to see the importance of choosing the right words for use in the right context so that ideas and opinions on community development, as expressed by each community member would be understood and eventually lead to collaborative effort. There needs to be more coherence in the overall goals and operations of development programs and organisations in order to enable empowerment and people-centred outcomes. In addition to the first recommendation above, in order for a development project to be fully participatory, policy and decision makers should ensure that development interventions are initiated, designed, implemented and evaluated by the primary stakeholders, or at least they would need to be involved in those activities in a significant way. This approach is not likely to result in radical changes, but it can assist in pushing for gradual improvements towards greater people-based involvement and control.

Conclusion

Alternative development paradigms indicate that, the dominant paradigms have not answered the problems of two thirds of human kind; therefore, alternative approaches that accommodate the needs, aspirations, and voice of the people have to be explored. These approaches are many and varied. Yet, they indicate the desire of people to develop at their own pace, own their own terms, using their own resources and based on their own values. Hence development means freedom to communicate progress on our own terms on a sustainable basis. That in short is “good change.”

Even though there is a worldwide realization of the importance of communication to the success of any development effort, most development interventions still see communication as a support to development instead of it being central to development effort. As a result of the limited application of appropriate communication to development efforts, the results of development interventions have been far from satisfactory. The reality is that communication is often thought of after the planning stage of intervention. Even where this is not the case, most communication strategies developed for projects are not only top-down, but also non-participatory. The consequence is that it fails to deliver effective results and sustainable development. It is therefore imperative to adopt appropriate strategies of participatory communication for alternative development in Nigeria.

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