

The Place of Libraries in Development Communication

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Abstract

The paper looks at the concept of development vis-avis development communication. The objectives of development communication was also discussed. The roles the libraries can play to promote development communication in a developing economy such as Nigeria were highlighted.

Introduction

Scholars have continued to describe in varying ways what they consider development to be. The concept means different things to different people and profession. To some, a society is considered developed if it is modernized along the lines of western civilization while to others it embraces the productive change from a state largely considered undesirable and unacceptable to a more desirable and acceptable one. According to Wilson (2008), different parameters have also been used to measure the trends of development from country to country.

According to Soola (2003), development in general is a process of economic and social development which enables people to realize their potentials, build self-confidence and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment. According to him, it is a process aimed at freeing people from the evils of want, ignorance, social, injustice and economic exploitation. For Wilson (2005), development is a widely participating process of Social change in a society intended to bring about social and material advancement for the majority of the people through gaining greater control over their environment.

The universal nature of the concepts of communication has also led to countless axiomatic definitions of the term which by all implication touch every sphere of human activity. Eyre (1983) defines communication as not only giving information but the giving of understandable information and receiving and understanding the message. Ugboajah (1985) opined that it is a process that involves all acts of transferring messages through channels which link people to the languages and symbolic code which are used to convey feelings, the means by which messages are received and stored.

For globalization according to Tejumaiye (1998), it is the process of intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries. Put in another way, it is an evolution which is systematically restructuring interactive phases among nations by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce communication and several other fields of endeavour (Oluabunwa, 1999).

Development Communication

Development communication is characterized by the form of communication which is geared towards the development of man and his society. Moemeka (1991) defines development communication as the application of the process of communication to the development process. Put in another way, it is the use of the principles and practice of exchange of ideas to fulfill development objectives. Soola (2003) defines it as the systematic, effective and efficient use of communication structures for development purposes. According to Quebral (1973), the purpose of development communication is to advance development.

From the above, one can infer that the goal of development communication is humanitarian, and people centred. In concise term, according to Salawu (2008) the purpose of development communication is to understand the needs and social realities of the people and to mobilize them towards the development goals. Development communication is therefore a social conscience having the people as its focus.

Objectives of Development Communication

At an international conference on Communication Policies for Rapidly Developing Societies held in Mashhad in Iran in 1975 the following identified specific activities that development communication must strive to accomplish include:

- i) Determination of the needs of the people and the provision of sufficient citizen access to the communication system to serve as effective feedback to the government.
- ii) Provision of horizontal and vertical (interactive) communication linkage at all levels of society and communication channels through which people have the capability to communicate with one another in order to accomplish co-ordination necessary for human and material development.
- iii) Provision of local community support for cultural preservation, provision of local media to serve as effective channels.
- iv) Provision of relevant information v) Support for specific development projects and social services and raising people awareness

development projects and opportunities and helping to foster attitudes and motivations that contribute to development (Moemeka 1991).

The Place of Library in Development Communication

In countries all over the world, libraries generally perform many tasks of providing access to infrastructure. Thus the concern of the librarians and other information professionals is not only with the survival of the libraries and information services but with their development within a clear and coherent framework of policy. According to Quadri (2008) it would be incorrect to use the word library to describe a collection of books. Today's libraries according to him differ greatly from the libraries of the past not only in contents, kinds and services but also in physical layout.

In order for libraries to help in promoting development communication for globalization, and also help promote satisfaction of a number of the human needs. Howkins and Valentin (1997) proposed their focus on:

- i) Healthy and secured quality life of citizens which determine their physiological and mental capacity to function regularly in socio- economic activities in which they are interested.
- ii) Literacy, education and skills development of citizens thereby increasing their capacity for informal evaluation of personal and social choices for gainful and sustained employment and for effective participation in governance
- iii) Steadily improving the income and economic welfare of citizens which determines not only their living standards but also their capacity for independent choice while participating in economic and political activities.
- iv) Choice and participation in socio-economic affairs by citizens which presupposes economic rewards, availability of reasonable choice and participation in democratic process and
- v) Efficient and evolving knowledge systems and technology of the community of citizens as catalyst for sustained innovations and global cooperation or competitive activities.

However, Aina and Tiamiyu (2008) also opined that for libraries to enhance development communication for globalization the following and other variables must be taken care of:

- i) Current and visionary human needs of communities, organizations or countries. According to them, among such needs are solutions to endemic and devastating survival, environmental, political and socio-economic problems such as food shortage, disasters and civil strife that often prevent attention to other current and visionary future human needs.
- ii) Social management processes through policies and programmes in public and private sector organizations for meeting current and visionary needs.
- iii) Information and knowledge that must be created, shared and used in social management processes towards defining needs, solving problems and attaining long term visions. Such information according to them could include socio-political, economic or technological, scientific or humanistic, formal or informal
- iv) Information and knowledge management processes that must be undertaken to ensure that the required information and knowledge is created, maintained, shared and used for development
- v) Information and knowledge technologies needed to support development.
- vi) Information technology management processes to support the development and use of appropriate information and communication technologies needed for development communication and
- vii) Global digital society development for development communication and globalization.

The foregoing presuppose that the roles of libraries are fundamental to development communication. Libraries enable people to learn and get information about issues. What is therefore required for the libraries is to embrace communication technologies for easy access to the whole world with just a little access time. Libraries, irrespective of type, should make use of information and communication technologies to improve their various services that can enhance development communication and globalization.

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