O R I G I N A L A R T I C L E

Development Communication Process and Theories: An Overview

Mayen-Julia Paul Inyang[1] | **Johnson Chinasa Alegu[2]** | **Babatunde Stephen Maku[3]**

[1] General Studies Department, Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
mudotai@yahoo.com

[2] General Studies Department, Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
johnsonalegu@gmail.com

General Studies Department, Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
babatundemaku@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This work examines the process involved in development communication and reviews some related theories as propounded by various scholars. The quest for effective means of implementing development programmes and the need to address the challenges of avoidance and rejection by the target recipients prompted the adoption of some communication strategies to create awareness and elicit acceptance to facilitate the development process to attain appreciable success. This approach was successfully applied by some countries before it was adopted by the United Nations Organisation (UNO) after World War II in 1945 to address the devastating effects in the war-ravaged areas and also carry out development programmes across the globe. Though known by various related names, the concept of development communication became more popular in the 1950s and eventually gained recognition as an academic discipline leading to the postulation of various theories with the Participatory theory regarded as the most preferred by developing countries. The proponents of the concept argue that target audience participation in the process of development can be better enhanced by employing effective communication techniques and appropriate channels including mass media broadcasts.

Keywords development, communication, Development communication, dependency theory, modernization theory.

INTRODUCTION

Development communication emerged in the 1940s and progressively became one of the essential components needed to drive socio-economic development. The concept is an amalgam of two distinct but correlative terms namely 'development' and 'communication'. It has to do with the harmonization and application of different kinds of communication techniques towards driving development programmes for appreciable success. This concept has evolved over the years leading to the emergence of different schools of thought. Scholars in the field have also propounded theories which are seen as paradigms or models for sustainable development. These paradigms of development communication are clearly defined based on the perspectives of their advocates. The various definitions of this concept, the processes involved and some of the major theories in this field of study are the focus of this work.

DEFINING DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Development, as a term, can be seen from different perspectives but the emphasis in this context is on socio-economic improvement. Inyang, Alegu, Iorlaha, Adelaja & Maku (2019, p.2) explain that development is "a process of positive change, transformation or improvement of the overall wellbeing of an individual, a people, nation or society at large". According to Israel (2018), development is "a process that creates growth, progress, positive change, or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components". It could be seen as "a change for the better in both the human, cultural, socio-economic and political conditions of the individual and consequently of the society", (Moemeka 1989, p.4). Also, Todaro & Smith (2015, p.18) stipulates that development is "a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of poverty".

Just as there are various definitions of development by different scholars, communication on its part has also been subjected to diverse viewpoints. Inyang et al (2019, p.38) submit that communication is a very important tool in every human interaction which helps in the attainment of expected outcomes and could be seen as "a vehicle which drives human, societal and by extension, global connections". In his definition, Akpan (1987, p.101) posits that "communication is the sharing of meaning between the source and the receiver". Similarly, Unoh (1987, pp.35-36) defines communication as "the process of mutual sharing of information, ideas thought and emotions between a source and a receiver for mutual understanding, the reduction of uncertainties or for appropriate action". Also in line with the above submissions, Okunna & Omenugha (2012, p.6) opine that "communication basically means to share ideas, information, opinions or experiences between people". Drawing from the various viewpoints, it could be deduced that communication involves:
- ❖ a two-way process.
- ❖ the interaction between the sender and the receiver (with a message).
- ❖ the use of channel to transmit the message.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

There is an inseparable inter-connectivity between development and communication as they play complementary roles to bring about meaningful development in society. According to UNICEF (2015), "Communication lies at the heart of sustainable development". Anaeto & Solo-Anaeto (2010, p.36) reason that communication helps in understanding the "needs and realities of the people and mobilize them towards development goals".

To properly understand this relationship between the two correlative concepts, it is important to contextually highlight the role of communication in the process of development. Communication plays the following roles:

❖ Instigates action by serving as the means to enlighten the target audience with the message of development.

❖ Helps target audience or community to appreciate and accept the developmental plans, programmes and policies of the government or non-governmental organizations (Enor *et al*., 2019).

❖ Aids in meeting the needs and aspirations of the people by addressing the peculiarities of their self-worth, cultural values, beliefs, identified challenges and priorities thus bringing about personal or societal wellbeing (McCormack *et al*, 2018).

❖ It enables the target recipients to acquire and equip themselves with knowledge, values and skills that would encourage effective action/participation in the proposed project(s).

It is important to note that the knowledge of what the people need and their values help to shape the message to be communicated for development.

THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Development communication can invariably be viewed from the perspectives of the definitions of the two-component terms. Drawing from their definitions, development communication can be seen as the process of sharing the message of improvement or transformation with the target audience to enhance their living standard. There is a consensus among scholars that the name "development communication" was coined by Nora C. Quebral in 1972. In her subsequent work in 2001, Quebral defines the concept as "the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equality and the larger unfolding of individual potentials". There is, however, a contention that there were notable Western scholars like Daniel Lerner, Lucian Pye and Wilbur Schramm who had earlier used the term "development communication" in their various works before it was espoused by Nora C. Quebral.

Shahzad & Bokahari (2014) note that in the early 1960s, a professional information officer, Erskine Childers who was an employee of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conceived the idea of Development Support Communication (DSC). Childers had suggested that for development programmes to be successfully carried out, the services of people who are knowledgeable in the art of communication should be employed to complement the roles played by the planners and project developers in the

area of mobilization to motivate the people towards successful development and change. He proposed a receiver-oriented approach to development that would make communication to be a support mechanism rather than a constraint to development. This proposal attracted widespread recognition in the United Nations (UN) and other multilateral development agencies.

The concept has evolved and gained global acceptance not only as an academic field of study but also as a workable paradigm adopted by national governments, international organizations and development agents, though identified by different nomenclatures such as: *Communication for Development; Development Communication; Development Support Communication; Participatory Communication; Communication for Social Change; and Behavior Change Communication (BCC).*

According to Mefalopulos (2008), development communication is "an interdisciplinary field based on empirical research that helps build consensus while it facilitates the sharing of knowledge to achieve a positive change in the development initiative". Similarly, Largerwey (1990) argues that development communication is "the science which uses communication to change and motivate people through education and inspiration towards development". The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), states that Development Support Communication is "the systematic utilization of appropriate communication channels and techniques to increase people's participation in development and to inform, motivate and train rural population mainly at the grassroots level" (as cited in Coldevin, 1999). Also, UNICEF (2015) describes development communication as 'a two-way process for sharing ideas and knowledge using a range of communication tools and approaches that empower individuals and communities to take actions to improve their lives'.

Anaeto & Solo-Anaeto (2010, p.36) assert that "development communication is concerned with the dissemination of relevant information that increases people's stock of knowledge and changes their attitudes and values to enable them to undertake and participate in their development process". According to them, the concept seeks to mobilize the rural people for participation in development actions by ensuring a flow of information to all players in the development programme. Although the concept is identified by different nomenclatures, nevertheless the process and goals are the same. And drawing from the various definitions, it could be deciphered that development communication centres on society and its primary goal is to enhance the living standard. It involves the mobilization and motivation of people, creation of awareness and knowledge about development projects as well as winning the acceptance of the people.

ATTRIBUTES OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION APPROACH

Scholars have identified some attributes which necessitate a successful application of development communication in the development process. These elements, according to Anaeto & Solo-Anaeto (2010, pp.36-37) include:

❖ **Responsiveness:** This entails the concerted effort geared towards eliciting a positive reaction from the target beneficiary. The predisposition of the target group towards positive change is one of the major determinants of success in

development projects. Where that is obtainable, the development communicator finds it easier to assist the beneficiaries in identifying their areas of needs as against what may be imposed on them and this helps to generate a positive attitude towards the implementation of the remedial project(s). In this regard, development communication becomes the mechanism that aids in the planning and implementation of the life-changing programme(s).

❖ **Democratic participation:** Development communication promotes greater participation by involving the beneficiaries as active players in the process. The people take part in discussions, decisions and implementation stages of the proposed projects (Irek 2016).

❖ **Common ground:** Through development communication, the target audience or communities are better sensitized to work in synergy with the development agents and communicators to find common solutions to identified problems.

❖ **Education:** The use of awareness and sensitization campaigns helps to enlighten the people and enable them to make informed decisions to actively participate in programmes that would bring about positive change.

❖ **Simple and relevant language:** Information is packaged in a common and simple language (sometimes in local languages) for easy comprehension of the development message to elicit acceptance, appreciation and participation.

Process of Development Communication

Executing any development programme requires the development communicator to be well acquainted with the target audience or community, their developmental needs, values, beliefs, language, culture, religion, level of education and occupation (Ristic *et al*, 2012). Such information could only be obtained through research or a baseline survey. The baseline survey helps in establishing the initial position and the expected outcome and this invariably helps in the choice of appropriate media or channels of communication and the type of message(s) that would address the needs, values and beliefs of the target audience. For instance, it is common for the government at any level and non-governmental organizations to first gather adequate information about the target beneficiary and then pass through the parliamentary representatives or liaise directly with the community leaders using the town hall meeting or any other relevant media to enlighten members of the communities on the proposed project and also seek their cooperation and possible collaboration, where applicable. This approach has proven to be effective in mobilizing the people to participate in development projects aimed at ameliorating their plight or enhancing wellbeing.

Development process from the inception to implementation stages of any project involves a set of communication activities. These activities as acknowledged by various scholars include: problem identification, research, message structure and dissemination, choice of media or channels of communication, awareness campaign, advocacy, the involvement of recipients, project execution, and evaluation, (Okunna, 2002; Inyang *et al*, 2019). These are discussed below:

- ❖ **Problem identification**: The existence of a problem such as an epidemic or collapsed bridge could be observed by the change agents or reported by the affected persons. The magnitude of the problem is weighed and the nature of intervention that would be appropriately considered along with the remedial options. This is very crucial in planning.
- ❖ **Research:** This involves gathering information about the potential target group to ascertain who they are (their ethnicity, religion, interest, culture, language, occupation, educational level, and literacy rate), their needs and preferences, what they have and how that can be built on. The research findings would determine the relevant message, choice of appropriate media of communication, and the best method of presenting the information. Research is therefore the foundation in which other communication activities draw their strength and can help to determine the probable outcome(s) in terms of success or challenges.
- ❖ **Message Structure and Dissemination:** The acceptance or rejection of any development project depends largely on the message structure and dissemination. The change agent is expected to organize and send out relevant information in line with the self-determined needs, aspirations and perceptions of the target audience based on the survey outcomes. It is equally important that the message is packaged in the language that is well understood by the target audience, devoid of ambiguity, to enhance comprehension and mass participation. The message, whether oral or written, should highlight the core benefits of the development project in question.
- ❖ **Awareness Campaign/Sensitization:** The mobilization of the target audience for active participation is a herculean task because it involves the use of concerted efforts towards eliciting attitudinal changes. For this reason, relevant information aimed at creating awareness must be disseminated to them. Since the aim is to galvanize audience participation in the process, the onus lies on the development agency or organization to provide adequate and relevant information to sensitize and educate the target audience about the project in view. Being knowledgeable about the project and its benefits will certainly motivate the people to be actively involved.
- ❖ **Communication Channels or Media Selection:** The choice of appropriate channels or media of communication is very vital to the success of any change programme (Carr 2017). For instance, it would be futile to use metropolitan-based newspaper to disseminate information aimed at enlightening predominantly illiterate rural farmers on the use of fertilizer for increased farm yield, as most of them might not be aware of the paper or have access to it, and besides they may not be able to read and understand the contents due to their low literacy level. Whereas, the application of inter-personal channels using local language, and community-based radio broadcast - which is easily accessible to rural dwellers, would likely be more effective.

Development communicators must have ample knowledge of various channels, their strengths, weaknesses and accessibility to the target audience (Oltarzhevskyi 2019). The choice of the channel(s) to employ ranges from personal to impersonal,

depending on the research findings. Personal or interpersonal channels could be in a formal or informal setting and these include person-to-person relations (that is personal contact through spoken words), training sessions, speeches, and demonstrations. Impersonal channels (broadcast and print) involve radio, television, newspapers and other printed materials like pamphlets, posters and leaflets. Others include internet (social media platforms), small group media (video, tape-slides, sound film-strips, audio-cassette, overhead projectors and flip chart) as well as traditional folk media – town crier and live theatre.

❖ **Advocacy:** By definition, UNICEF (2015) refers to advocacy as 'the deliberate process, based on demonstrated evidence, to, directly and indirectly, influence decision-makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement action...' Advocacy entails aggressive and pragmatic campaign in support of the intended project. It goes beyond rhetoric to the application of a systematic strategy to identify and minimize barriers as well as choose the appropriate media to promote the benefits, In this regard, the social marketing strategy, which seeks to change attitude for societal interest, has proven to be effective. In advocacy, the project is marketed to the stakeholders or through prominent members of the target audience who can influence the attitude of the entire group for positive action. The nub of advocacy is to seek the support of decision-makers in a target community or enclave with the expectation that if they are adequately enlightened and motivated, they will respond positively to the change project, and in turn, influence the entire target audience for acceptance and active participation in the project.

❖ **Involvement of recipients:** This simply means bringing the target audience on board. The success of any development programme initiated by any change agent depends largely on the participation of the target audience in the process. Ascroft & Masilela (as cited in Wikipedia) opine that "participation translates into individuals being active in development programme and process, contribute ideas, take initiative and articulate their needs and their problems…" It is, therefore, necessary to involve the target audience from the planning to the implementation stages of the change programme. This ensures the consideration and accommodation of their perceptions, identification of their needs and preferences, hence collectively contributing to the success of the transformation objective. Coercing or manipulating the people to accept any development programme in which they are not involved could lead to resistance and consequent failure.

❖ **Project execution:** This is the climax of the whole process and it involves the mobilization of all resources towards the implementation and actualisation of the project's goal(s) and objective(s). At this stage, goods/services are rendered, facilities/physical structures (where applicable) are put on ground, enforcement and compliance as well as utilization ensured, while progress is monitored to completion.

❖ **Evaluation:** This could also be referred to as project appraisal. It measures the progress of the project from its inception to execution and reviews the level of acceptance or rejection of project, compliance and participation as well as the

overall outcome. The essence is to ascertain whether the objective or goal of the project had been achieved or defeated. It helps in making vital decisions concerning the sustainability of the project, whether the status quo should be maintained where there is an appreciable success or reviewed based on observable lapses. The evaluation stage is the key to improvement on the future project(s) and it is a continuous process made possible through the feedback mechanism.

THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

With the global acceptance of development communication, scholarship on the concept has led to the postulation of different theories to explain the phases of its evolution. Scholars in the field are somewhat polarized based on their theoretical approaches and schools of thought. The major schools, which have differing characteristics, can be grouped into six namely: the Bretton Woods School; Latin American School; Indian School; Los Banos School; African School; and the Participatory Development Communication School. They are classified based on the peculiarities of the development strategies adopted by some countries and development organizations. However, there are three established paradigms of development that have evolved over time, and these are identified as: the modernization theory (dominant paradigm), dependency and participatory theories (alternative paradigms). Proponents of these development theories were either informed by history, experiences, orientations or other related factors. The major highlights of these theories are discussed below.

MODERNIZATION THEORY

The modernization theory, also known as the dominant paradigm of development, came to prominence after the Second World War. Mefalopolus (2008) opines that the theory was called the 'dominant paradigm' because of its "pervasive impact on most aspects of development". The theory considers development as an increase in Gross National Product (GNP) - the total monetary value of goods and services produced by a country in a year; and higher per capita income. It further views the development pattern of the Western world (European and North American countries) as the model for every other country. Ojebode (2008, p.136) argues that under this perspective, development is seen from the angle of being like Europe and North America, while cultural and traditional practices are viewed as antithetical to the process of development. Similarly, Mefalopulos (2008, p.6) contends that:

> the central idea of this old paradigm was to solve development problems by "modernizing" underdeveloped countries—advising them on how to be effective in following in the footsteps of richer, more developed countries. Development was equated with economic growth, and communication was associated with the dissemination of information and messages aimed at modernizing "backward" countries and their people.

Servae's work (as cited in Singhal & Sthapitanonda, 1996) submits that the experiences of Europe after World War II informed the proponents of this theory to categorize societies into traditional and modern societies, wherein traditional societies represented underdeveloped and poor societies while modern societies represented materialistic, democratic and industrialized societies. In her study, Okunna (2016) observes that communication under this paradigm tends to be top-down just as mass media were presented as being capable of causing instantaneous development owing to the influence of the magic bullet theory.

Some established factors gave rise to the dominant paradigm. These factors, according to Singhal & Sthapitanonda (1996) include:

- ❖ the industrialization and economic growth in the Western nations;
- ❖ the success of the Marshall Plan in Europe after World War II;
- ❖ the emergence of the newly-independent nations;
- ❖ the spread of communist political ideology;
- ❖ the liberal/capitalistic thinking in the West; and
- ❖ the outgrowth of quantifiable research in social sciences.

The modernization theory is directly linked to the Bretton Woods School of thought. Although the main aim of the Bretton Woods School paradigm was geared towards reconstruction and rehabilitating of the World War II ravaged Western countries, as well as targeting the development of the underdeveloped countries, development was however seen from the perspective of the Western model without considering the peculiarities of the developing societies and their cultures. This Western approach to development was criticized by many scholars including Latin American researchers such as Luis Ramiro Beltan and Alfonso Gumcio Dagron because it only identifies the challenges in the underdeveloped nations instead of the imbalanced relationship with developed countries. It is equally criticized for its assumptions that the Western models of industrial capitalism are appropriate for all parts of the world and that the presumed lack of modernization in the underdeveloped countries is based on subjective development strategy. It is further argued that the application of ineffective communication and governance methods failed to consider other regional, cultural and socio-economic diversities.

Manyozo (2006) notes that the failure of many development projects from the 1960s despite increasing donor aid compelled the School to re-evaluate its top-down methods. However, this dominant perspective of development continued to hold sway until the 1970s when its proponents declared it as "passing'' when it became evident that the assumptions of the theory were misguided (Ojebode, 2008; Okunna, 2016). Consequently, some scholars criticized the theory for its ethnocentric nature, placing internal blame for underdevelopment, the negative consequences of modernity and inattention to message content (Singal & Sthapitanonda, 1996).

DEPENDENCY THEORY

The dependency theory, which emerged as an alternative paradigm, was a reaction against the modernization perspective of development. It evolved from developing countries, particularly Latin American countries, and became prominent in the 1960s. Scholars are of the view that the Latin American School of thought predates the Bretton

Woods School (modernization paradigm) dating back to the 1940s. Luis (2004) in his work submits that Latin American countries started to practice development communication before any theory was propounded. Dependency theorists view the modernization perspective of development as a situation where the developing nations rely on the Western nations for their development. Servaes (as cited in Singhal & Sthapitanonda, 1996) observes that the development process under modernization theory is the continuation of colonialism and therefore calls on the developing nations to design their homegrown process with economic development as a priority.

The term "dependency" is only used to describe the asymmetrical relationship between developing and developed countries, and not a propositional model put forward by the theorists. The premise or underlying principle of this theory is tacitly averse to self-induced imbalance but rather advocates pragmatic approach, self-sufficiency and equality. In their study, Singhal & Sthapitanonda (1996) note that advocates of this paradigm perceive dependency as an exogenously-induced condition that inhibits the national development aspirations of the developing nations, and this is occasioned by the flow of economic surplus from the developing nations to developed countries of the West. They argue that developing nations depend so much on the Western nations for their development; and therefore suggest that for them to develop at their own pace they should extricate themselves from the dictates of Western values and concept of development.

This development paradigm is criticized for overlooking the internal factors that caused underdevelopment to focus on the external factors impeding development in developing nations. Some critics observe that the theory failed to address the problems of development such as social inequality, corruption and the failure of projects initiated and executed by governments of developing nations. It is further faulted for concerning itself with economic development as a top priority and the adoption of a quantitative approach in analyzing development and underdevelopment like the modernization paradigm (Servaes in Singhal & Sthapitanonda, 1996).

Under this theory, communication is seen as an instrument of Western domination due to the great imbalance in global information flow (Alegu, Abugu & Idi, 2016). This imbalance in information flow precipitated the call for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which necessitated the UNESCO to set up the MacBride Commission in 1977 to study communication problems around the world vis-à-vis the agitations of third world countries and proffer workable solutions. The Commission, which was chaired by Sean MacBride from Ireland with representatives from 15 other countries, recommended the democratization of communication and strengthening of national media to avoid dependency on external sources.

PARTICIPATORY THEORY

This theory, which is also one of the alternative paradigms, assumes that meaningful development can only be achieved when the target group is involved from the inception to the post-implementation stage of the development process. The participatory school of thought encourages the use of the mass media, interpersonal communication and traditional media to mobilise and sensitize the people and communities to play an active role in identifying their problems, prioritizing their needs, conceptualizing remedial

projects and applying the change or development options as stakeholders in the development process. Participatory theorists, according to Waisbord (2001), consider development communication as "the systematic utilization of communication channels and techniques to increase people's participation in development and to inform, motivate, and train rural populations mainly at the grassroots".

The involvement of beneficiaries at the different stages helps to better prepare them to take up ownership of the projects. Rather than see the projects as government-owned, the people will see it as theirs and volitionally ensure that they are safeguarded and sustained. This theory prefers two-way communication to the top-down process. Instead of "**talking at or talking to the people**", the theory encourages "**talking with the people**". This means that dialogue and purposeful participation are crucial elements in the successful implementation of social programmes. In her study, Okunna (2002, p.300) argues that the participation of beneficiaries in the development process should not only involve sending feedback about the project but should equally involve taking part in discussions and decision-making. That is to say, meetings between change agents and the beneficiaries should not be an avenue to inform them of decisions already taken but an interactive forum to enable them to air their views and jointly take decisions on the proposed projects. Mefalopulos (2008) also notes that no matter how technically advanced the media may be, the messages skillfully packaged, and the information very relevant, they are not enough to bring about meaningful and sustainable results except the stakeholders are part of the process.

TYPES OF PARTICIPATION
There are four different types of participation identified in the development communication process, and these are passive, consultation, collaboration and empowerment, (as cited in Wikipedia).
- ❖ **Passive participation:** At this level, stakeholders remain docile and only receive and assimilate information regarding the process. In this case, development is carried out with minimal participation of the primary stakeholders and there is little or no feedback, while assessment of participation is done by the census.
- ❖ **Participation by consultation:** Professionals carry out opinion survey, analyze inputs and take a decision which may not necessarily reflect the preferences of the stakeholders.
- ❖ **Participation by collaboration:** Stakeholders are grouped for syndicate discussions with predetermined objectives. Outcomes of discussions are analyzed and common grounds are used in final decision-making.
- ❖ **Empowerment participation:** The target recipients who are primary stakeholders indicate a willingness to partner with the change agent(s) in the development process. The final decision is the prerogative of the recipients because ownership and control of the process are vested on them. The exchange of ideas helps in the attainment of the overall objectives.

The participatory theory has over the years gained popular acceptance cutting across the various schools of thought including the Indian School, African School and also adopted by emerging economies. However, despite its merits, some critics fault its insistence that

only the involvement of beneficiaries in the process would bring about appreciable results arguing that it may be unwise to adopt the usually slow grassroots decision-making process in exigency cases like epidemics, war and other crises which require prompt and top-down solutions. Some scholars also argue that focusing on interpersonal relations underestimates the potential of mass media in promoting development in view of the large number of people that often cleave to mass media messages. It is further argued that the theory does not consider people in non-democratic societies who may either be denied an opportunity or feel intimidated to participate in decision-making. Furthermore, Singhal & Sthapitanonda (1996) submit that the theory is seen as Western-styled ideas of democracy and participation which do not fit into other cultures and civilizations.

DEVELOPMENT MEDIA THEORY

This theory is credited to Dennis McQuail's work in 1987 which, among other things, advocates media support of government's effort to bring about socio-economic development. The theory believes in the regulation of the freedom of the media in the interest of national development. This, according to Okunna & Omenugha (2012, p.209) can be likened to the authoritarian theory in terms of government expectations and control of the press to achieve its development agenda. They assume that this theory came "to fill a void which became increasingly noticeable as the gap between the developed and developing countries widened" and also contend that none of the classical theories favourably appealed to the developing nations, hence the search for a theory that could explain "the media situation of developing countries". They further argue that the fundamental purpose of the theory is "to use the press to serve general good of a nation by making the mass media function as government instruments" used in actualizing "economic growth, political stability, national sovereignty, cultural development, etc".

Ukonu & Wogu (2006, p.191) observe that the theory believes that "media should be at the vanguard of development" and that the media should not only serve as "instruments of development" but should "drive and determine development". Similarly, Ebeze (2002, p.277) notes that it "accepts economic development and nation-building as over-riding objectives"; and that collective ends rather than individual ends or freedoms are stressed. Also, Okunna (1999) in Ebeze (2002, p.277) maintains that the theory "stands for the positive use of the media in national development, for the autonomy and cultural identity of individual nationals".

McQuail, in his postulation, (as cited in Okunna & Omenugha, 2012, p.211) summarizes the fundamental principles of the theory as follows:

❖ Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy;

❖ Freedom of the media should be open to restriction according to (a) economic priorities and (b) development needs of the society;

❖ Media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries which are close geographically, culturally or politically;

❖ In the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict, media operations and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified;

❖ Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedoms in their information-gathering and dissemination tasks.

CONCLUSION

The concept of development communication has been variedly applied at a global level as a means of bridging the gap between the change agents and beneficiaries of projects. This academic concept has helped to design a process that has been adopted by countries, world bodies and multinational organisations to drive their development agenda. Unlike other forms of communication that inform on any issue or create room for interaction at small groups, national and transnational levels, development communication does not only create awareness but also facilitates the implementation of developmental projects geared towards enhancing the overall wellbeing of the target audience. Scholars tend to see the concept along with two major development paradigms (the dominant and alternative paradigms) which seem to pitch the western style of development at variance with the perception of the developing countries.

In as much as the pioneer theories (the modernization and dependency paradigms) were seen as dictating development based on Western values and therefore not in tandem with the social and economic realities of the developing nations, the participatory theory, however, emerged as a more appealing paradigm because of its people-oriented approach which encourages grassroots involvement. Nevertheless, change agents still grapple with the challenge of rejection or avoidance due to either suspicion or ignorance which invariably impedes the objectives of many development projects hence the need for more robust and pragmatic communication strategies to elicit acceptance and enhance goal attainment. Accordingly, the participatory paradigm presents a better option but efforts must be geared towards addressing development based on the peculiarities of the beneficiaries of proposed programmes. Countries should, therefore, endeavour to design their unique domestic models in line with their priorities and capabilities taking cognizance of their natural resources, technical know-how and socio-economic potentials.

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