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Review

Participatory Communication as an Approach for Good Governance and Development in Nigeria

[1]**Suleiman M. Yar'Adua and** [2]**Samira Galadima**

[1&2]Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano.
*Corresponding author's Email: smyaradua.mac@buk.edu.ng
[2]Giwo Science Academy, Bauchi

Communication scholars have observed that for good governance to be achieved there must be a nexus between the concept of capability, accountability, and responsiveness. As it relies heavily on the need for full participation of citizens and civil society actors in governances and is predicated on the effective flow of information and dialogue, between citizen, governments, and other actors. Within this context, this paper examined participatory communication as an approach for good governance in Nigeria. A content analysis of secondary data was done for the interpretation of the data. This allowed for the evaluation of existing knowledge for the purpose of relevance, consistency, replication and refutation. The paper argued that participatory communication is a major approach for good governance in Nigeria and the role of the media to foster participatory communication is fundamental for the overall success of good governance. The study concludes that in order to eliminate the dependency relationships between the rural areas and development planners, there is a need, for a bottom-up communication approach that actively involved community members in problem identification, message design, and in the identification of strategies that are capable of reaching and producing uniform comprehension and acceptance among rural audiences. The study recommends that all community groups (majority and minority) must be involved in the communication process and communities should identify their problems and proffer solutions to them.

Keywords: Communication, community, dependency, dialogue, good governance, and participatory

INTRODUCTION

In keeping the public informed, educated and entertained, the media set standards for pubic conduct thereby making possible the participation of citizens in governance. The role of the media in strengthening democratic ethos, especially in the direction of attaining good governance and sustainable development cannot be ignored. The media can inform people giving them the voice to be heard and heeded to. Democracy requires that people should have the right to know the activities of the government, especially the decision of the government that affects their life, liberty and property.

Information is important for people to make choices regarding their participation in the State, the market and the civil society. Media also fearlessly exposes issues that make people to be more inform than deform. Sufficient information helps people to decide rationally and take the right course of action beneficial to them. The media also helps people to know what is happening around the globe (Aondover, 2021).

Scholars like Imoh (2013) observed that for good governance to be achieved there is need, for a nexus between the concept of capability, accountability, and responsiveness. As it relies heavily on the need for full participation of citizens and civil society actors in

governance, and is predicated on the effective flow of information and dialogue, between citizens, governments, and other actors. Communication and dialogue are therefore at the core of every development that is sustainable and leads to good governance (Yar'Adua *et al.,* 2021). This paper explores the relationship between participatory communication and good governance in Nigeria.

Communication is a process of "convergence" in which participants create and share information in order to reach a mutual understanding (Kincaid, 1979). "Mutual" understanding builds the foundation for mutual agreement, which in turn makes collective action possible. Effective communication begins with the audience and continues over time as a process of mutual understanding and convergence (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022). The primary aim of communication is to promote social change and development through knowledge, beliefs, thoughts, and information sharing. Communication is essential in social interaction, responsible for peace-building, social change, national development, religious expression of beliefs and thoughts and economic growth. Participatory communication has been classified as 'radical media' or what Clemence Rodrigues refers to as 'citizen media', which is a form of communication that involves the collective participation of all stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Problem Statement

The debate on good governance is built around the ability of government to provide adequately for the governed. They focus on the need for a holistic approach to governance, where all aspects are touched and there is the full participation of citizens and civil society actors in governance. By situating communication, information dissemination and dialogue as key components of governance, in which a positive correlation between communications is assumed.

The people have been left out in development projects because they do not perceive themselves as having any choices. Following this diagnosis, Friere (1973) recommended a model that will restore self-confidence and release energy and motivation for self-development. Imoh (2013) states that an evaluation of many developments communication projects in Africa and other third world countries shows that there are more signs of the top-down than of the bottom-up approach to rural communication. These approaches often influenced by good intentions than by the structure and culture of implementation. Recipients of development programs in rural areas are often perceived by development planners as incapable of assessing the options open to them or choices among them (Imoh, 2013).

Imoh (2013) further observes that the failure of most development programs targeting rural population in Africa

can be linked to the flow of communication, the inherent knowledge, communication gaps between the socially, economically and politically disadvantaged, and the segment of the population with higher socio-economic and political status. Within this context, the study examines the role communication plays in promoting good governance through participation. The purpose is to move beyond paying lip-service, and to review existing literature so as to provide a reliable basis for policies and programs on participatory communication for good governance.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine participatory communication as an approach for good governance in Nigeria by assessing its function, efficiency and impacts. Based on the problem statement, the following specific objectives are set:

1. To examine the participatory communication approach within the context of Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the nexus between the participatory approach and good governance.
3. To discuss participatory communication as an alternative paradigm to good governance.

Scoping Literature on Participatory Communication and Development Communication

A "radio theory" was formulated by German author Bertolt Brecht in 1927, where he envisioned the new technology, the radio, as a dialogical instrument for change. In the gears that followed Brecht's early vision, the radio lost its dialogic potential as it developed into a mass-mediated broadcasting instrument. Today's rapid spread of communication radio, as well as the growth of digital radio and interactive radio program formats, revives the participatory potential of radio technology (Tufte & Metaphopolus, 2009). Brecht's work contains the two core visions, still evident in participatory communication: first, technologies possess the potential to improve the lives of many people by giving them a voice; second, his groundwork laid out the educational principles inherent in many of today's participating communication models-dialogical communication.

Brecht's educational principles have inspired many in innovative theatre, Tufte and Metaphopolus believe that August Boal's works in the 1970s of forum theatre were inspired by Brecht's work. Boal's theatre brought principles of participating theatre a step further and is still spreading around the world. In the 1960s and 1970s, Colombian sociologist Orlando FalsBorda developed Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodology involving stakeholders in the identification of the core issues in the development process. Later in the 1980s,

Robert Chambers, a research associate at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, UK, was instrumental in developing a successful methodology of community facilitation known as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA makes people express their knowledge and conduct their analysis, assessment, and action plan (Aondover, 2019).

It is now increasingly recognized that people's active participation is an essential component of sustainable development. According to Bessette in Jongsuksomsakul and Roebl (2022), any intervention with the intent of achieving a real and sustainable improvement in the living conditions of people is deemed to fail, unless the intended beneficiaries are actively involved in the process. There have been a lot of interventions that failed as a result of lack of consultation with relevant stakeholders. Unless people participate in all phases of an intervention, from problem identification to research and implementation of solutions, the likelihood that sustainable change will occur is slim.

Development communication comes at the heart of this challenge, it is a process whereby people take charge and become leading actors in their development. Communication enables people to go from being recipients of external development interventions to generators of their development. Nanang (2022) is of the view that although development communication is sometimes used to indicate the overall contribution of communication to the development of the society or sometimes to highlight the use of the media to deal with development themes (media products); it generally refers to the planned use of strategies and processes of communication aimed at achieving development.

The concept of development communication arose in the framework of the contribution that communication and the media made to development in the countries of the third world. In the 1950s and 1960s, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored numerous projects utilizing the media for communication, information, or educational purposes, to facilitate development.

Development communication is more of an approach than a discipline, with regards to definition; it usually consists of general statements. The term was first used in the Philippines in the 1970s by Professor Nora Quebral to designate the process of transmitting and communicating new knowledge to the rural environment (Scrampical, 2006). In an attempt to understand the term better, this paper agrees with Hamluddin et al (2022) that development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country.The mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfillment of the human potential. Development

communication strengthens the group communication model within people in a community.

Hamluddin et al (2022) observed that development communication has led researchers to examine communication in five general areas: Agricultural Communication, Health Communication, Population, Education, and Environmental Communication. Challenging the status quo in civil society promotes various kinds of participatory communication for the empowerment of local peoples. In this perspective, two trends developed: an approach that favored large-scale actions and relied on the mass media and an approach that promoted grassroots communication (also called community communication), promoting small-scale projects and relying especially on the light media (videos, posters, slide presentation, theatre, etc). The application of development communication system models derived essentially from dominant economic development theories of the west, which emphasized only two of the many social roles of communication, information, and persuasion (Grade, 2013).

This, therefore, means that such an approach has as its main goal, increases in production and consumption, high levels of capital investment, and trickle benefits. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, the mobilization of the grassroots by the media to involve in development is not satisfactory. Participatory communication should gear toward involving people to be part of any developmental initiatives. In this context, good governance can only strive when participatory development is infused in people through media platforms.

The Role of the Media in Strengthening Democracy and Enhancing Good Governance

As established by Auwal (2018) in a democratic society like Nigeria, the role of mass media is anchored on their famous status as 'Fourth Estates of the Realm.' To corroborate this, the 1999 Constitution, stipulates under section 22 that "the press, radio, television and other agencies of mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people." The Constitutional provision clearly explains the obligation of the media in a democratic society (Aondover, *et al.,* 2022).

In a democratic environment, according to Olusola (2008), the media's purpose extends beyond the basic functions of information, education and entertainment. The media also have the responsibility of sustaining and nourishing the ideals of democratic ethos and constantly assure and guarantee the protection of freedom of individuals and that of the media themselves, which is the heart of popular participation in liberal democracies. The press can promote democracy by educating voters, protecting human rights, promoting tolerance among

various social groups and ensuring that government is transparent and accountable, etc.

According to Akinwale (2010), the press helps to keep the public informed, it entertains, educates, sets standards, and establishes values for public conduct, and the popular reference to the media as the 'fourth estate' points to their capacity to perform the role of watchdogs. The media monitor those in authority, expose their limitations and provide checks and balances to the other three estates: the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary (Nwagbara, 2010). Through the aforementioned functions, the media set an agenda, organises public debates and discussions, and interprets issues to put them in proper perspective to make meaning to people just like the Presidential debates that were orgainsed by the media during the 2019 general election where Presidential aspirants were invited to talk to Nigerians (Sambe, 2008 &Harcup, 2009).   Whether electronic or print (Asemah, 2011), the media has responsibilities to society political, social educational, and religious. The media's duty to individuals, as well as to society at large is immeasurable. The media is an important asset to society and when utilised properly can serve as viable tools for socioeconomic and political development (Abagen, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

Dependency Theory serves as a theoretical lens for the study. The dependency theory is a body of social science theories that emerged as a reaction to the modernization and diffusion theories of the west (Imoh, 2013). The modernization theory was widely conceived as the western attempt to impose its ideas on development on the newly emerging economies of the post-colonial world. The modernization paradigm faced an onslaught of criticism from various theorists from third-world countries. According to the theorists, the underdevelopment faced by the emerging economies was not a result of pre-capitalist backwardness but a result of the capitalist development imposed upon these countries, which made them dependent on the new colonial economies. These theories are generally known as under-development theories and scholars like Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein and Magdoff and Paul Baran are behind the idea. The theory of 'underdevelopment' was pioneered by Paul Baran in his work the political economy of growth published in 1957.

According to the dependency theorists, the underdevelopment faced by developing countries is not a natural condition. It is an active process of impoverishment resulting from the social, political, and economic relations with the metropoles. They attribute the structural inequality on a global scale as the reason for the differentiation in development all over the world, which means that some parts of the world remain underdeveloped because of their relationship with the developed countries of the world.

According to Frank, the origin of the modern world-system begins in the 16th century. This world system is divided into a core of a few rich countries and a periphery inhabited by various poor countries and there is also a semi-peripheral society, such as Egypt, Mexico, India, and others with higher levels of resources.

During the 1970s and 1980s, various developing countries came together and advanced an international agenda demanding a new international economic order and restructuring of power relations. A major aspect of this demand was a change in the way in which communication and information flow over the world. The non-aligned movement formed by 77 developing countries was a key player in demanding a new international order in the flow of communication. They used UNESCO as a platform and were successful in bringing out a report titled "Many Voices, One World" in 1980, popularly called the MacBride commission report. The main focus of the report was on freedom of information and how communication technologies should be used for a balanced flow of information. There was a widespread complaint against the uneven flow of media programs and information coming from developed countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, etc. which was conceived as a form of cultural imperialism. The developing countries demanded regulations to address the uneven flow of information derived from this context. In other words, these demands were reflecting the ideas of the proponents of dependency theory who vigorously supported a rethinking of the global communication agenda and restructuring on the flow of communication at the international level.

Research Method

The paper written in 2023 is exploratory in nature, as it utilizes, the descriptive research method whereby relevant literature, documents, and records were consulted and analyzed based on the existing literature to interrogate participatory communication as an approach for good governance in Nigeria. The paper is predominantly based on information derived from the secondary sources, such as relevant texts, journals, official publications, historical documents, and the Internet, which served as tangible sources of insight into the analysis. The method was used to evaluate such findings with other existing literature on the subject matter. The method help findings in the works available, check the consistency of such findings, and evaluate such findings with other findings.

Findings and Discussion

Obj. 1: Understanding Participatory Communication Approach

Participatory development is a powerful tool to facilitate the process of development when it accompanies local development dynamics. Jongsuksomsakul and Roebl (2022) argue that encouraging community participation with development initiatives through strategic utilization of various communication strategies is what participating in communication entails. By "community participation", Jongsuksomsakul and Roebl (2022) are of the view that it facilitates the active involvement of different community groups, together with the other stakeholders involved and the many developments and research agents working with the communication and decision-makers. Participation by emphasizing the needs and the viewpoints of the individuals and groups becomes the key concept of development communication.

Participatory communication preferences to horizontal approaches that involve encouraging dialogue centered on problem analysis, as well as bottom-up approaches that tend to raise the awareness of decision-makers. These approaches are based on communication participation. By paving way for an all-inclusive process, participatory development communication becomes a tool for emancipating people and communities. Nanang (2022) stresses the interrelationship that exists in practice among the main lines of action. He calls the concept "CIME": *Communication* at the grassroots level, the exchange of *information*, *two-way media,* and *non-formal education*.

*Grassroots Communication: i*t is believed that the grassroots is the foundation of development. Nanang (2022) maintains that experience over the past 50 years has demonstrated that if communication is really to help involve people in identifying a problem, understanding its causes, proposing solutions, and organizing them to take appropriate action, it must start at the community level. It follows that media should be discouraged as it is difficult to get feedback through the media, but strategies for participatory grassroots communication.

Exchange of Information: Hamluddin et al (2022) remark that information is of no use by itself, without a community communication process that allows people to grasp it and make it their own. Information should flow from the community to the various levels in the decision-making process, or among groups and the community themselves.

Two-way Media: the use of various media such as interpersonal relationships, traditional means of communication as well as modern media should be used to promote the exchange of ideas. Hamluddin et al (2022) state that the systems must be linked to a process of communication, communication that will define the parameters under which they are designed or introduced,

the condition for setting them up, and they are evaluated.

Non-formal Education: it is widely believed that non-formal educational processes are closely linked to grassroots communication processes. People need to organize themselves in groups to make sense of information given to them, knowledge shared, and attitudes that flow through the communication process.

Obj. 2: The Nexus between Participatory Approach and Good Governance

Many communication efforts have focused on the dissemination of information and the adoption of technical packages. The transfer of messages from experts to farmers in a top-down approach did not yield the expected results. Rather, experience teaches that it is more effective to use appropriate communication strategies to build capability within local communities. Besettein Nanang (2022) identifies some approaches in the context of natural resource management thus:

a. To discuss natural management practices and problems;
b.
c. To identify, analyze and prioritize problems and needs;
d. To identify and implement concrete initiatives to respond to those problems;
e. To identify and acquire the knowledge required to implement such initiatives;
f. To monitor and evaluate their efforts and plan for future action.

This communication process brings together all stakeholders, which include experts, farmers, extension workers, NGOs, and technical services in a dialogue and exchange of ideas on development needs, objectives, and actions. It is a two-way horizontal process. Participation is not limited to the notion of "consultation" as many believe. In development, communities must be involved in identifying their development problems, seeking solutions, and in decisions about how to implement them. Participation does not equate to "mobilization" either, the concept goes beyond enlisting community support for a development project defined by authorities, NGOs, or, experts. This cannot lead to the expected results in a sustainable way because decisions were taken outside the community.

Nanang (2022) argues that to facilitate participation, research teams and development practitioners must consider the people they want to communicate with as partners in a development effort, and not merely as beneficiaries. He further states that participation involves the community. Some communities have different groups. It often happens that decisions taken in the name of the community reflect the interests of one group or another.

Here, it is important to identify all groups within the community that are affected by a common development problem and who are willing and able to deal with it and to ensure that each group has a voice in the process.

Participation is about responsibility, it is useful here to distinguish the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved and to work out the participant's material or financial contribution to the process. This contribution can take many forms, such as services, materials, funding, etc. Hamluddin et al (2002) observe that however small it may be, it will help participants feel a sense of ownership over the communication activity. Without ownership, the effort will always be seen as "someone else's" initiative.

Participation also entails making room for democracy and recognizing the right to express divergent opinions. Without democracy and respect for fundamental human rights, and freedom of expression, the ability to use communication to foster social change is severely limited.

Apparently, in international development, good governance is a way of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Thus, governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). In this context, the concept of governance centers on the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups in society.

Therefore, the concept of good governance is not just about government, but also about political parties, parliament, the judiciary, the media, and civil society. It is about how institutions relate to each other to make change happen. The World Bank sees governance similarly as the process and institutions, through which authority in a country is exercised as the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored, and replaced. The capacity of government to manage resources and provide services efficiently and to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations, and the respect for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

Okwechime (2015) itemized ways, in which relationships in governance can be analyzed, they include:

a) Between governments and citizens;
b) Between government and markets;
c) Between government and the private or voluntary sector;
d) Between elected officials;
e) Between local institutions and urban and rural dwellers;
f) Between legislature and executive branches;
g) Between nation-states and institutions;

Okwechime (2015) identified the major characteristics of good governance as:

i.   *It is participatory*: participation is a major characteristic of good governance. Participation should be informed and organized. This allows for freedom of association and expression.
ii. *It is consensus-oriented:* good governance requires all the voices of the community. Interests of all groups should be considered and a consensus reached. One group should not dominate or impose its ideas on others. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural, and social context of a community.
iii. *It is accountable:* civil society groups need to be accountable to the public, which they represent. Not only government and its agencies are on this boat.
iv. *It is transparent:* transparency means that decisions taken should be done according to laid down rules and regulations. Information should also be readily available to the public. Decisions taken and procedures used should be available to all.
v.   *It is responsive:* good governance requires that institutions and processes should serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.
vi. *It is effective and efficient:* processes and institutions should produce results that meet the needs of society while making the available resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency entails the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.
vii. *It is equitable and inclusive:* all groups should be a part of the process, particularly the most vulnerable. Opportunities should be shared equally.
viii. *It follows the rule of law:* to attain good governance, human rights must be respected and protected.

However, good governance is difficult to achieve in its totality. Okwechime (2015) observes that very few countries and societies have come close to achieving good governance in their idyllic form. Actions must be taken to work towards making it a reality to ensure sustainable human development.

Obj. 3: Discussion on Participatory Communication as an Alternative Paradigm to Good Governance

There has been a lot of discussion on the alternative to mainstream media in promoting good governance. Participatory communication lies at the heart of this discussion. It is necessary to map out a strategy that works all across the board to bring about sustainable development through good governance. It has been agreed that communication processes that provide feedback platforms help in giving people a voice and this makes them have a sense of belonging as they feel they

own the process. Let the paper takes a look at the Bangalore example to see how Nigeria can incorporate these strategies to strengthen governance:

The Case of Bangalore: Bangalore used citizen scorecards to bring about development. This means of communication had a three folds positive impacts on governance. World Bank identifies them thus:

1. The evolution of an innovative methodology for civil society engagements with service providers;
2. Improvements in service delivery;
3. The institutionalization of citizen feedback.

It has also promoted the more effective integration of the media in civil society and governance. Before the introduction of citizen scorecards in 1993, service delivery in Bangalore was inadequate and of low quality whilst the citizens were recognized to be in a state of inertia with no evidence of public activism or public protest about the level of service provision.

The first scorecards scheme was initiated by a small group of citizens led by Dr. Samuel Paul who believed the citizen feedback could be used to stimulate action by service providers and set in the nation a process of citizen engagement. They came together with trained investigators and designed a questionnaire to find out problems related to service delivery. They collected responses from general and slum dwellers. The results revealed the poor level of service delivery in Bangalore and were published in major newspapers. This survey sparked amongst citizens by highlighting the widespread discontent with the level of service delivery and demonstrating the power of collective action.

The second scorecard scheme was in 1999. By that time, civil society had changed considerably in Bangalore. The government had created a public affairs center with the specific task of interfacing directly with citizen groups, whilst the citizens formed resident associations specifically tasked with interacting with service providers. This more formalized system changed the status quo, which moved from information gathering and dissemination to a process of active partnership or communication between citizens and service providers. The results were evident in improved service delivery, such as roads and the construction of traditional public spaces.

The third scorecard scheme was in 2003. A Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) was established to respond to the demand from citizens and public interest groups to hold service providers to account. The findings of the third survey revealed an increased level of user satisfaction with levels of satisfaction exceeding 60 percent for all service users and a renewed drive for reform among service providers with many agencies launching pilot programs to improve service delivery. The third survey also indicated a reduction in corruption, and

a continued increase in civic activities and media attention with the media and civic groups challenging indifference and abuse on a variety of issues from potholes to the spending of the city government.

According to Imoh (2013, p. 22) in Nigeria, the majority of development messages get to the village level, where the people live, not via the mass media, but through interpersonal contacts made by CG officials, social groups, teachers, village health workers, extension workers, and other volunteers who reside in the village or district. This has still not led to the development needed because the communication network is still inadequate to transfer the technology from the center to the periphery.

CONCLUSION

To enhance good governance, therefore, educational materials should be pre-tested before use to ensure that the target audience understood the messages carried. However, because of the nature of rural societies, the communication strategy should integrate information in a variety of ways through town criers, animation, songs, radio, posters, charts, flyers, and extension workers. Such information should motivate the rural people with an inbuilt educational component that persuades them to demand services and learn how to use those services. Development workers should take into consideration that Nigeria is a multi-linguistic country, therefore messages should be designed in the local language, using the local media and local network to enhance comprehension of development messages, and generate interest and feelings of ownership of programs. Therefore, to eliminate the dependency relationships between the rural areas and development planners, there is a need for a bottom-up communication approach that actively involved realities in problem identification, message design, and the identification of strategies that are capable of reaching and producing uniform comprehension and acceptance among rural audiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature, the following recommendations are made:

a. All community groups (majority and minority) in Nigeria must be involved in the communication process.
b. Communities in Nigeria should identify their problems and proffer solutions to them.
c. Information should not trickle down but rather a horizontal approach should be encouraged in Nigeria.
d. For further studies, there is a need for research in rural communication. This type of research should bother on studying the audience, their media habits,

and decision making processes. The information gathered will serve as the basis for interventions in Nigeria.

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