



# **An Evaluation of Development Communication in Mass Communication Curriculum of Nigeria Universities**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Development communication emerged into the theories of the Press in the 1980s as a result of the failure, unable or inapplicable of the four classical theories of the Press to solve or address the problem of developing nations. The concept of development communication has no uniform idea. The worst is that the scholars have different views, ideas and perceptions about development communication. In carrying out the study, the researcher adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprises 48 lecturers from department of mass communication, University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University. The sampling technique used is the purposive sampling technique with a sample size of twenty four (24) lecturers. The instrument was a questionnaire. Frequencies and weighted mean was used for the data analysis. The results revealed that scholars in field of Mass Communication have no central or general perception about development communication. It also indicates that in Mass Communication Curriculum in Nigerian universities, development communication is not having a central idea or concept. Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that in Mass Communication Curriculum, there should be general or central meaning of the concept of development communication. Development communication should serve as rational discourse, centre for dialogue and deliberation of issues or problems affecting the nation's development. And development communication should not be like authoritarian system of the Press where ideas and words of Kings, Queens, Stakeholders, Politicians and nobles beyond question are only allowed or have the liberty to expressing ideas openly.

**Keywords:** Development, Communication, Curriculum, Perception, Scholars, Universities.

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to Omega & Ochonogor (2013), development communication emerged in the 1980s, largely because the four classical theories of the press were unable or inapplicable to solve or address the matters that have to do with the Third-World countries. They further revealed that these classical theories did not cover, in particular, the peculiar development needs and problems of developing nations such as poverty, religious/ethnic violence, illiteracy, etc. In collaboration of this view is the work of Nwachukwu, Asak & Asadu (2013) that it has become apparent that none of the classical theories of the press was strictly applicable to developing countries, even though the mass media in these countries were operating according to some of the principles of the classical theories.

According to McQuail (2009) development communication is people oriented communication and it is a communication that is participatory. He further explained that it is the uses of communication and the media as important tool to support development. It is also an integral part of communication for the growth of the individuals and for the advancement of the society.

McQuail (2009) submitted that because of the great variety of economic and political conditions and the changing nature of situations in developing countries, a general statement or prescription appropriate to

their media situation is not easy to make. According to Nwachukwu, Asak & Asadu (2013) the conditions that limit the application of other theories include:

- The absence of some of the conditions necessary for a developed mass communication system i.e. communication infrastructure, professional skills, production and cultural resources and audience.
- Dependence on the developed countries for needs in terms of technology, skills and cultural products.
- The devotion given to economic, political and social development in the society vary.
- Developing countries have become increasingly aware of their similar interest in international politics and are pursuing them.

### **The Problem**

Curriculum is a set of courses or coursework and their content offered at a school, college or university. According to Agi (2010) this set of coursework or programmes must be in uniform all over the state or nation. But our problem today in development communication is that the curriculum is not in uniform all over the universities in Nigeria. It is regrettable that scholars in field of mass communication have different views and perception about development communication which is affecting uniformity of the universities' curriculum. Based on this perception, there is no universally accepted definition of development communication. However, the study sought to evaluate the development communication in the mass communication curriculum of Nigerian universities.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this paper is to evaluate development communication in the mass communication curriculum of Nigerian universities. However, the specific objectives of the paper are:

1. To examine if scholars have the same view of the concept of development communication.
2. To evaluate the orthodox view of development communication in universities curriculum.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher poised or formulated the following research questions to guide the study:

1. What are the views of the scholars on the concept of development communication?
2. To what extent does the orthodox view of development communication applicable in Nigerian universities curriculum?

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research hinged on Democratic Participation Media Theory: This theory was developed in recognition of new media developments and of increasing criticism of the dominance of the main mass media monopolies. This theory supports the right to relevant local information, the right to answer back and the right to use the new means of communication for interaction and social action in small scale setting of a community, interest groups or subculture. The theory challenged the necessity for and desirability of uniform, centralized, high-cost, commercialized, professionalized or state-controlled media. In their place should be encouraged multiple, small-scale, local and non-institutional, committed media which link senders to receivers and also favour horizontal patterns of interaction.

McQuail (2005) states that access to the space is free and freedoms of assembly, association and expression are guaranteed. He further revealed that unlike the mass media that manipulate the people rather than help them form opinions in a rational way. Based on this, there is a need for changes in communicative structures that would serve as a corrective for structural enablers of inequity, in hopes that changes for more holistic and fair decisions would be increased. Such changes should result in the emergence of media structure where the public will be encouraged to voice their views, positions, and opinions or political matters and have direct interaction with the people in politics.

Ezeh (2016) notes that democratic participation involves two mutually recursive components; the political structure or culture that can enable or constrain participation and the individuals who possess the ability and responsibility to ensure that their political voice is included in political areas. This theory will

therefore help this study evaluate if the development communication in the mass communication curriculum of Nigeria universities is uniform.

### **Evaluation of Development Communication in Nigeria Universities' Curriculum**

Development communication was integrated into the curriculum of mass communication since 1980s but with a conflicting view. According to Deutsch (1996) as cited by Tobeckukwu, Maribo & Akanbi (2012) revealed that since the adoption of mass communication as a means of promoting views on communication development and on the applications and contributions of the mass media in the process of social development, there has been conflicting views and ideas. In view of these conflicting debates, McNelly (1998) conceived four ways to describe the inclinations of scholarly works and opinions on the subject (development communication) considering the conflicting definitions, meanings, goals and views regarding or relating to development communication and its roles on national development. Based on this ideology, we have different views and perception of development communication from different scholars. And there is no universally accepted definition of development communication in university curriculum. Curriculum is a set of courses, coursework and their content offered at a school/university (Amerizi, 2010). The general and common view of development communication is that of Omega & Nwachukwu (2013). They opine that development communication is built on the perception and view of the press as a powerful instrument that can be used to achieve positive development in every nook and cranny of the developing country. This means that the media have the capacity of being used to develop the society by sensitizing the government of the day by exposing the areas that need development.

Also in the same view is Alozie (2012), he reveals that development communication is concerned with the acquisition, establishment and control of mass media outlets by third-world government. Explaining that, is with the aim of promoting national unity and survival, maintenance of law, order and peace, observation of fundamental human rights; probity in public and private life; and commitment to the promotion of government programs.

Machado (2002) observed that at its conception (development communication), the goal aimed to train Journalists "to cover and report fully, impartially and simply the myriad problems of a developing nation" through the "systematic use of communication in support of national development".

Contrary to this common view is the work of Amadi (2002) that defined development communication as an attempt to apply the science of human communication to the transformation of a country from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater economic and social equality that leads to the embitterment of the quality of life. He further explained that development communication is also known as Rational Discourse. This means that development communication (Rational Discourse) involves the people (citizens) coming together to deliberate on communal, social and/or national improvement or issues bordering them.

Drawing back to the common view of development communication that state that the theory advocates the use of the media to project efforts being made by government in building health centres, roads, schools and provision of other basic amenities, agriculture etc. To engage in development communication, you must look for an alternative media instead of government own media because no government in developing world would allow the use of its media for the type of development communication in focus here. For example, when Europe was devastated after the Second World War which led to Marshal Plan to restate Europe. Marshal Plan used a public sphere-improvised media because that was the only kind of media which the egoistic hegemonic class then could not successfully repress or manipulate. According to Jurgen Habermas (1992) as cited in Amadi (2002): the idea of public sphere is based on the view that individuals come together in a shared locale and engage in dialogue with one another as equal participants through a reasoned debate.

In line with this view is that of Quebral (1973) as cited in Alozie (2012) which states that development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equity and the larger fulfillment of the human potential. Explaining further that

development communication allows Journalists/people in the developing countries to contribute responsibly to modernization by helping the formulation of the programs to “mobilize the citizens” to reap the fruits of development programs. Also in support of this theory, is the work of Ndimele & Innocent (2006) which uphold that development communication favours democratic and grassroots involvement and participatory communication models which give every member of the society the right to air their views on all matters concerning their welfare. Encanto (1982) as also cited in Alozie (2012) observed that development communication is a process of communicating with the intent of promoting development in all aspects and at all levels. They regarded Development Communication as a developing phenomenon, whose key element is motivation of and main targets the rural farm folks who are generally drawn more to oral and pictorial communication.

### **Functions of Development Communication**

There are various functions of development communication which is in line with the view of the propounder. They are as follows:

- Prevention of Oligarchy Rule – This is the rule of few. According to Amadi (2002) oligarchic rule produces apathy and alienation amongst the ruled. To avoid this must include the process of debate or rational discourse.
- Conflict Appreciation and Resolution – According to Amadi (2002) one pressing area development communication is needed urgently in Nigeria is in the area of conflict evaluation and resolution. Development communication has a task of informing and making Nigerians appreciate the fact that social change usually involves conflicts. Rational communication should make people, especially the ruling class appreciate the conflict should not be seen only negatively. Amadi (2002) further revealed that it is a necessary situation if stagnation is to be avoided, that awareness of problems which conflict raises leads to solution. That at any point a solution is found for a social problem, that development has gained a point.
- Surveillance and Scrutiny of Government Policies – This is a process where bureaucrats at the top allow themselves to be mired down with excessive details instead of an overall policy guideline. This, according to Amadi undermines the implementation of political programmes to solve social problems.

### **Media for Development Communication**

A number of development communication media have been suggested beginning with the traditional media systems, symbols, oral, song, folklore, dance that can deplore in dramatic ways to enhance or drive development. However, “Agenda setting” is communication driven, it is always the prerogative of the communicator to highlight what the audience can think about using the mainstream media to drive the message (Uwakwe, 2013). The people themselves are free to make use of the freedom of speech, association in order to give expression to those issues that are of benefit to them within the constitution. It gives or grants freedom of participation.

According to McNelly (1998) “Reciprocal Agenda Setting” is highly encouraged in development communication. It is a process by which the people (citizens) and not the media or government tells the Press what should be published or discussed to enhance development through their community or society. Community radio model: According to Pool (2003), due to the promulgation of Degree 38 of 1992, which deregulated the liberalization of broadcast media, it can now be used by development communication to reach the government, stakeholders and the society at large.

## METHODOLOGY

Survey research method was adopted in this study. The survey is a research method which focuses on a representative sample derived from the entire population (Ezinwa & Okoye, 2015). The survey method was adopted because of its ability to ensure a representative outlook and provide a simple approach to the study of opinions, attitudes and values of individuals.

### Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises all the academic staff in department of mass communication, Rivers State University and department of Linguistics and Communication studies, University of Port Harcourt with a total population of forty eight (48) persons.

### Sample/Sampling Techniques

A sample is a representative part of the entire population which a researcher selects for investigation. Purposive sampling technique was used to select elements of the sample size. Purposive sample according to Wimmer & Dominick (2011) includes subjects selected on the basis of specific characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who fail to meet these criteria. The purposive sampling technique has to do with elements which are selected for their particular characteristics or qualities, while abandoning other elements that fail to meet these criteria. However, the sample size of the study is twenty four (24) persons which is 50% of the total population.

### Instrument for Data Collection

Questionnaire was the instrument used for the collection of data for this study. Questionnaire is an instrument for gathering primary data for survey research. The questionnaire was designed with the aim of eliciting the opinions of the respondents on the topic of the study.

### Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaire were presented and analysed using frequency table and weighted mean score for easy interpretation.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of twenty four (24) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to twenty four (24) respondents. The researcher tried as much as possible to ensure that all the twenty four (24) copies of questionnaire distributed were returned indicating a hundred percent (100%) return rate.

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** *What are the views of the scholars on the concept of development communication in universities curriculum?*

**Table 1: Views of the scholars on the concept of development communication in universities curriculum**

S/N	Response	Frequency		Mean		Percentage		Remarks	
		SA	A	D	SD	N	$\frac{\Sigma X}{X}$		
1.	Government should use the media (Press) as instrument for development as development communication.	3	5	10	6	24	53	2.21	Rejected
2.	Development communication has a universal meaning all over Nigeria university curriculum.	-	6	8	10	24	44	1.83	Rejected
3.	Scholars have the same coursework content about development communication.	-	4	9	11	24	41	1.71	Rejected
4.	Development communication serves as Rational Discourse, dialogue.	10	8	6	-	24	76	3.17	Accepted

**Research Question Two:** *To what extent does orthodox view of development communication applicable in Nigeria universities curriculum?*

**Table 2: Orthodox view of development communication applicable in Nigeria universities curriculum**

S/N	Response	Frequency		Mean		Percentage		Remarks	
		SA	A	D	SD	N	$\Sigma \bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$
1.	We have general view or believe about development communication in universities curriculum.	4	4	8	10	24	46	1.92	Rejected
2.	Development communication should be like authoritarian system of government where Kings, Queens, Stakeholders and Politicians have the liberty to express ideas openly.	-	6	8	10	24	44	1.83	Rejected
3.	Press (mass media) should be controlled by government.	3	3	8	10	24	47	1.96	Rejected
4.	There should be another or alternative media to enable the country develop.	8	10	6	-	24	74	3.08	Accepted

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study set out to investigate the evaluation of development communication in the mass communication curriculum of Nigerian universities.

The first research question was asked to find out the views of the scholars on the concept of development communication in universities curriculum. It was discovered that the respondents rejected the view that government should use the media or Press as their instrument. It was also discovered that the respondents also rejected the view that development communication has no universal definition all over Nigerian universities curriculum. The findings also indicate that the respondents rejected the view that scholars have the same coursework content about development communication. However, it was observed that the respondents accepted the view that development communication should serve as a rational discourse or dialogue.

The second research question shows that the respondents rejected the view that we have general view or believe about development communication in universities curriculum. The findings also revealed that the respondents rejected the idea that development communication should be like authoritarian system of government or Press where only the Kings, Queens, Stakeholders and Politicians have the liberty to express ideas openly. The findings indicate that the respondents rejected the view that Press or mass media should be totally controlled by the government. However, the results show that the respondents accepted that there should be alternative media to enable the country develop instead of using Press, mass media or government owned media in development communication.

### CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of orthodox mass media in developing countries to perform the function of disseminating information about government statutory responsibility is not encouraging or ideal. There should be general or central definition or meaning of the concept of development communication and it should reflect in all Nigerian universities' curriculum. The development communication should contribute to the unity of newly developed nations by focusing attention on salient issues, problems and facilitating the ensuring discussion and debates on national level. In times of practice, development communication should not depend mainly on government support to avoid being influenced. Nigeria should stop budgeting or using development communication as an instrument used by government for social change instead of centres or channels for dialogue. Development communication should serve as Rational Discourse centre for dialogue and deliberation of issues or problems affecting the nation's development.

Development communication should not be like authoritarian system of Press where ideas and words of Kings, Queens, Stakeholders, Politicians and nobles beyond question are only allowed or have the liberty to expressing ideas openly.

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