

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: TOWARDS A PSYCHOMANAGEMENT PARADIGM

OYERO, OLUSOLA S.
COVENANT UNIVERSITY
NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

There have been diverse theoretical perspectives on African development and communication for development in Africa. As logical as these propositions are, their impacts on African development seem not to have been really felt. This is because the challenges facing the continent's development continue to grow by day and her development situation seems getting worse. However, a diagnosis of African development situation reveals a fundamental leadership problem. The consequence of this is the infusion of afro-pessimism- the idea that Africa is doomed, into the psyche of Africans. This in turn has birthed cohorts of other problems, like greed, ignorance, corruption, poor self-esteem, poverty, etc. The solution to these problems is the subject of this paper. The position here is that there cannot be a meaningful development without reorientation of African people and change in our value system. Thus, the psychomanagement paradigm is all about the management of Africans mind through effective behavioural change communication strategies.

The fact that man is the centre of meaningful development has been severally stressed (Meomeka 1989, Tomori 1995). This realisation brought about paradigm shift on the conception of development. In the 1960s, development meant a process of modernization modelled on the industrialized societies of the North. The measure of progress in this direction was economic growth. But as time passed, evidence accumulated which indicated that more complex socio-economic forces were at work. The basic needs approach received increased attention. The quality-of-life aspects of development came to the fore embodied in programmes for improvement of nutritional status, maternal and child health care and later primary health care (Fugelsang and Chandler, 1987).

Development came to be known as "a change for the better in both the human, cultural, socio-economic and political conditions of the individual and consequently, of society"(Meomeka 1989:4). Emphasis is now placed on every part of human life, a full integration of human, economic, socio-political, and cultural and environmental dimensions.

Interestingly, development communication philosophy was also modelled after the paradigms of development. So, the era of industrialization and modernization stressed the pervasive power of the mass media. The reigning issues were diffusion of innovations, communication effects and mass media and modernization approach. The belief was that communication media would have great effect on people and bring about great changes. It operated on the philosophy of hypodermic needle principle which sees the media audience as a mental paralytic, incapable of resisting powerful media messages (Baran and Davis 2003).

However, the flaw of the dominant paradigm came to be realised, thus giving way to the alternative paradigm for development communication. This was as a result of the realisation that development for each society is determined by that society's own needs which in turn are a question of the peculiar circumstance of climatic, historical, cultural and social conditions. The alternative model of development communication stresses access to the media of communication, participation in communication activities and the relevance of content to the socio-cultural context. Thus, the better understanding of what development is- that it is human centred, has more than ever brought to the fore the relevant of communication.

The Challenges of Development in Africa

Africa lags behind other regions of the world in economic and technological development. Though Africa is the origin of human civilization, new technological, industrial and economic developments seem to have bypassed the continent.

A critical look at African situation reveals a fundamental leadership predicament which has birthed cohorts of other problems for the continent. Generally, African leaders have consistently manifested tyrannical traits and have refused to be "servants" of their followers. They could well be described as rulers rather than leaders because a sense of service is significantly missing in their approach. As described by Utomi (2004:13), an African leader "is separate from his people and separated from his people".

One notable characteristics of African leadership is the institutionalisation of what may be described as 'executive corruption' as a culture. One cannot but remember the Babangida and Abacha of Nigeria, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Samuel Doe of Liberia, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Gnassingbe of Togo, etc, who plundered the continent, leaving the populace to languish in destitution and famine. The consequence of these corrupt practices is the denial of the African populace their rightful benefits; thus perpetuating them in poverty and wants.

As the poverty epidemic ravages the continent, the result is the emergence of the mindset that Africa is doomed- an idea that expresses

itself in what is known as Afro-pessimism. This of course can be seen in Africans' ways of life as it manifests in poor self-image, inferiority complex, complacency, irresponsibility and resignation to fate. There is loss of confidence and responsibility. Corruption becomes a culture and attracts adoration to those who successfully exploited it. Our continent becomes a continent of poverty, ignorance and greed. Mediocrity thrives and rewards are not based on merits but favouritism, nepotism and tribalism.

Unfortunately, the emerging generation grows to imbibe this negative value system and consequently, emerging from this new generation Afro pessimistic leadership who lacks right sense of value and true meaning and spirit of leadership. And so continues the vicious circle of bad leadership, corruption, poverty and afro-pessimism.

The way out of this doldrums should begin from the point of rethinking leadership; then changing our value system, our attitudes, beliefs and our culture and orientation. So, the whole task is that of managing the Africans mind. This is where communication comes in.

The Role of Communication in African Development

As noted by FAO (1994:5), communication is the key to human development and the thread that binds the people together. Meomeka (1991) also states that development effort cannot be successful without planned communication because its flow determines the direction and pace of dynamic social development. For development to occur, communication must be at the centre stage, because communication is the mutual learning process from which each cultural partner could derive knowledge valuable for its own development. (Fuglesang, 1982).

In very clear terms, FAO (1994) identifies significant roles that communication plays in the process of development; among which are:

- For better planning and programme formulation. This involves consulting the people and actively involving them in making the decision that will affect them. This cannot be done without thorough dialogue which puts the people's mental faculty to work and reason about the need for change in their situation.
- For people's participation and community mobilisation. This helps to release people's energy by building their confidence to make decisions about their situations.
- For changing lifestyle: Communication can focus on the long and sensitive process of changing behaviour and lifestyle. Quite recent communication research methodologies make it possible to gain insight into the underlining reasons why people adopt a certain lifestyle
- For rapid spread of information: The mass media can provide a powerful service to spread information far and wide for development purposes.

- For generating the support of decision makers: Communication can influence those who are in the position of authorities to take good decisions on African issues. Continuous campaign for change can yield a good result that will turn the fortune of Africa around for good through its decision makers.

Communication for Participatory Development

Participation is the most crucial factor in development. True development stresses the power of the people to solve their own problems with their own wisdom, experiences and resources. Participation is the active mass involvement of the citizens in the process of elaboration, implementation and following-up of development plans (Adnan et al 1991: 8). By this involvement, the people take up responsibility to determine and shape their future. It starts from the conception of developmental projects through to its implementation, follow-up and evaluation.

Participation is unique because it is a common denominator for development and communication. Participatory communication- a two-way sharing of information among communication equals, is necessary for participatory development. As stressed by Rockefeller Foundations, cited in Coldevin (2001), 'access to and control of information sources are essential for people to participate fully in decisions affecting their lives and communities' (p.24), adding that sustained social change is impossible without their full participation.

Also, FAO, cited in Richardson (1997), while maintaining the centrality of participation to development and communication states that:

People oriented development can only realize its full potential if rural people are involved and motivated and if information and knowledge is shared. Communication caters for the human dimensions of development; it establishes a dialogue with rural people, involves them in the planning of their own development, and provides information as a basis for social change and conveys the knowledge and skills required to improve the quality of their life (p.14)

So, development cannot occur without participation, and it is communication that can bring about the needed participation.

Psychomanagement Paradigm of Development Communication for Africa

Despite the recognition of the role of communication to bring about development, a lot still needs to be done to save Africa from the doldrums of underdevelopment. The major obstacles to African development, as earlier identified, are embedded bad leadership and afro-pessimism which have birthed cohorts of greed, ignorance, corruption, poor self-esteem and poverty. The major task of communication for African development is to address these problems through a systematic

communication campaign that will effectively manage the mindset of Africans, giving them a new orientation and positive value system.

In more specific terms, such communication campaign will target:

1. Presentation of service-mode philosophy as the right leadership style
2. Communicating to build a positive self-image for Africans; injecting self-confidence and replacing afro-pessimism with afro-optimism.
3. Imbibing in Africans the right values for development; the values of honesty, diligence and excellence.
4. Mobilisation of individual to take self-determined action in politics and governance.

So the whole business of communication begins with the changing of attitude of Africans, which will eventually lead to a change in behaviour and decisions and then a realization of development ends. The ideas expressed above are captured as the psychomanagement paradigm.

Communication and Behaviour Change

The process involved in behavioural change has shown that communication can exert enormous influence in bringing about change in people's behaviour. Broadly, individuals are thought to transverse stages of change ranging from "not interested in change" to "sustained change". Prochaska & Velicer (1997) identify the stages involved:

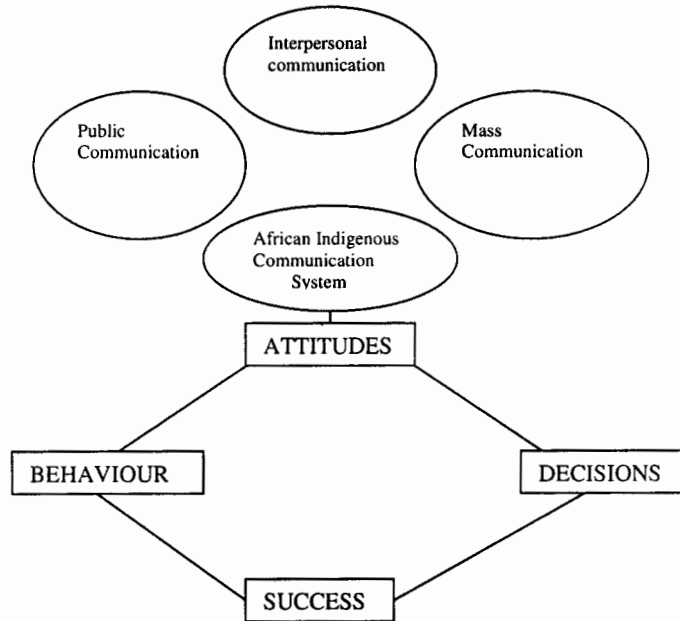
- **Precontemplation:** People at this stage are not ready to change or take action in the foreseeable future. One reason why people are at this stage is the lack of information about the consequence of their behaviour or possible benefits of changing their behaviour.
- **Contemplation:** This is the stage where people are intending to change within the foreseeable future but are still stuck in the analysis of the cost and benefits of changing.
- **Preparation:** People are ready to change at this point. They are warmed up to change and can clearly see the benefits for themselves and for others.
- **Action:** This is the stage at which people have made specific overt recent modifications to their behaviour.
- **Maintenance:** People are working to prevent a relapse to the previous behaviour. They are also less tempted to relapse and demonstrate more confidence (self-efficacy) that they can continue their changes.
- **Termination:** People have zero temptation and 100 per cent self-efficacy to maintain their behaviour.

Prochaska & Velicer (1997), further describe the activities that people engage in to progress through the stages highlighted above and the methods of interventions that can bring about the needed change in the people.

1. **Consciousness Raising:** This involves increasing awareness about the causes and consequences of relevant behaviours. Interventions that increase awareness include feedback, education, confrontation, interpretation of behaviours and communication campaigns.

2. **Dramatic Relief:** This initially produces increased emotional experiences followed by reduced affect if appropriate action can be taken. Psychodrama, role-playing, personal testimonies and media campaigns are examples of techniques that can move people emotionally.
3. **Self-evaluation:** This combines both cognitive and affective assessments of one's self-image with and without a particular behaviour. Value clarification, appropriate role models, and imagery are techniques that can assist people evaluate effectively.
4. **Environmental Re-evaluation:** This combines both affective and cognitive assessments of how the presence or absence of a personal behaviour affects one's social or physical environment. It also includes the awareness that a person can serve as a positive or a negative role model for others. Empathy training can be particularly helpful here.
5. **Self-liberation or willpower:** Involves both the belief that one can change and the commitment and recommitment to act on this belief. Statements of commitment, public testimonies and multiple rather than single choices can enhance willpower.
6. **Social Liberation:** Involves an increase in social opportunities or alternatives. Advocacy, empowerment procedures and appropriate policy interventions.
7. **Counter-conditioning:** Involves the learning of new behaviours to replace or substitute for current or identified problem behaviours.
8. **Stimulus Control:** Involves removing cues for past inappropriate behaviours and add prompts for the changed behaviours. Avoidance, and self-help or support groups can provide stimuli that support change and reduce the risks of relapse.
9. **Contingency Management:** Involves providing consequences for taking steps in a particular direction. While contingency management can include the use of punishments, research shows that self-changers rely on rewards much more than punishments. Contingency contracts, overt and covert reinforcement, positive self-statements, and group recognition are procedures for increasing reinforcement and the probability that more appropriate behaviours will be repeated.
10. **Helping relationships:** This involves relationships that are based on caring, trust, openness and acceptance as well as support for the behaviour change. Rapport building, peer support and buddy systems can be sources of social support.

A thorough examination of the above activities involved in behaviour change further reveals the enormity of the task of changing Africans value system, attitudes and behaviour. This is because those activities show that communication simply works among a nexus of other factors that enable behavioural change. Nonetheless, communication still remains primary, fundamental and very significant for the potency of those other factors to achieve behaviour change.



Communication campaign Model for Behavioural Change

With the understanding of the intricacies involved in behavioural change activities highlighted above, there is need for a careful selection of communication channels, considering their strengths and weaknesses, for the fulfilment of this task. The paper has identified three modes of communication for the accomplishment of this task. They are: face-to-face communication, public communication, the mass media and the folk media.

Face-to-Face Communication: This kind of communication is of considerable importance in any strategy for public education. It involves interaction and it is potent to change what people say about African development and subsequently what they do. By engaging in an active interaction with people, and stressing the need for value change, we are able to trigger the people to think in a new direction towards African development. This is actually the point where behavioural change begins.

When bare facts of Africa's situation is presented to an individual through face-to-face interpersonal communication, personal reflection is permitted or encouraged; individuals begins to examine his/her values and orientation and this can actually trigger a change in behaviour.

Interpersonal communication is very significant because this is the level at which individuals take decision to change in a particular direction. It allows for interpersonal orientation and persuasion, thus making change easy and firm. This then should begin from every individual who has got the fire and fervency of the need for change in Africa.

Public Communication: This involves a speaker speaking to an audience. It could be in form of public lectures, symposia, talks, religious sermons or conferences like this. One advantage of this strategy is that it brings large audience members together to be exposed to the same message.

Using this strategy, issues affecting African development - things bordering on selfless ethical leadership, change of our value system, self esteem, dignity of labour and social justice can be seriously addressed. Public Communication can be used to arouse people's consciousness about the need for a positive change in Africa.

Mass Communication: The media of mass communication - radio, television, film, newspapers and magazines are effective means of mass education. They will be very impactful in creating awareness about African development and its demands on Africans.

Television is very persuasive because of its combination of picture, sound and text. Though not accessible to everybody especially those in the rural areas, it is nonetheless a veritable instrument of reaching the urban dwellers; and its enormous influence will of course be felt by the decision and policy makers in governance.

Newspapers, magazines and other printed materials can be very useful in mobilizing the social class comprising the opinion leaders, decision makers and their social networks. These printed media allow thorough analysis of issues and can provide the platform for thorough analysis of development issues in Africa. Through the various genres of the print media, adequate attention could be given to those fundamental issues affecting African development.

Radio, of course, may be the most useful of the media for communicating the right values for African development. Its ubiquitous nature makes it very relevant to African context. Radio sets are cheap to own and maintain, and its non-reliance on electric power supply (which is a great predicament in many African states) makes it more useful. Since radio provides the only reliable communication system that reaches large portions of African population, it thus constitutes a potent weapon in behavioural change process.

The only major challenge for the use of mass media for behavioural change in Africa is the centralization and urbanization of these media. Radio especially should be a local medium that will give people access to information and public education. Community radio provides this access; allowing expression of opinions by people in their various localities and enabling participation in communities' activities towards development. Unfortunately, in Nigeria for example, there is no single community radio out of about sixty-four stations in existence. It is actually not too much for a radio station to be established in every local government area in Nigeria. Towards the end of the last century, there were over eleven

thousand radio stations in the United States; Paris alone has about fifty radio stations- examples for African states to follow. There is therefore need for media localization, radio especially, so that its potentials for development can be effectively exploited.

Folk Media: The folk media consist of theatre, stories, songs, folk dances, ballads or chants and mime. They are rooted in culture, norms and values of African people. Folk media have a great potential for being used in the campaign for attitude and behaviour change for Africans.

Naturally, traditional African value systems teach and promote hard-work, honesty, loyalty, courage and accomplishments. These values are adequately embedded in those folk media and they are the conduit of their transmission and preservation. Traditional African songs and stories teach and speak of heroic deeds of African leaders; the proverbs and wise sayings are media of instructions and wisdom on all aspects of life. They also capture historical landmarks that serve as a guide for chatting ways forward in management of life in those traditional societies.

Though some aspects of these media are already displaced by the Western incursion into our cultural system, a factor responsible partly for our current malaise, the existing ones can still be effectively used for development purposes. The campaign for Africa's transformation when woven into proverbs and poems, songs and dances, puppet plays and stories, rhythms and beats and made to work in synergy with the mass media will definitely produce a great result in changing Africans' attitude and behaviour.

Conclusion

The possibility of a change in African development situation is very visible. With the transformation of the Africans mentality, change in our value system and taking a self-determined action, we will definitely, though gradually, arrive at our desired destination. The task, however, calls for the involvement of everyone who has the right understanding of African needs of growth and development. All needs to be involved to hold all aces to set the tempo of progress for our depressed continent.

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