Communication for development in Africa - a clarion call

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Abstract

A major concern about African development is not so much that the war on poverty is far from being won but because the practice of development administrators lacks professionalism. Calls for involving beneficiaries in democratic project decision making, for conducting systematic social science research as the basis for external intervention, and for building the capacities of indigenous officials to reduce national dependence on expatriate expertise have gone unheeded. Development policies, nowadays are sound but until these are properly carried out poverty eradication will be impossible. The paper argues that it will require development communication expertise to carry out the above policies and hence the need for development support communication experts in development programming. The paper examines the promise DSC has for making projects work better and urges donor agencies to incorporate it into their projects.

Introduction

In an October 1997 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a group of African scholars expressed regret that after many decades of independence, Africans were no better than they were before independence. The World Bank (1989) made a similar observation: "Overall Africans are almost as poor today as they were 30 years ago" (1989:1). A World Bank report, *Taking Action to Reduce Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa*, shows the situation has become much worse. "People in sub-Saharan Africa are among the poorest in the world, both in real income and in access to social services" (1997:5). The deteriorating nature of development efforts, led Sachs (1992:1) to conclude that after more than four decades of development aid: "Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: It did not work" (1992:1). Clearly, many explanations can be offered for the dismal development record. Unreliable rains has become a fact of life in Africa development. Political instability has also dominated the major part of many post-independent African countries. Clearly, if one were looking for excuses, they abound. The tendency of many donor agencies to invest in multi-million dollar projects without any

systematic effort at understanding the real needs of the people, is another (Hammer, 1994).

However, the objective of this article is not blame assignment but to offer a way out of Africa's predicament. It argues that with the end of the Cold War and many African countries returning to democratic governance and free market policies, the climate for real development to occur appears to be in place. What remains to be done is a strategy for mobilizing, organizing and preparing people to take charge of their own development. Abraham Lincoln's famous statement of "government of the people, by the people and for the people" has application for societies worldwide.

Africa's masses who are largely uneducated, must be empowered if they are to become major role players in the development process. Communication is essential to empowerment. Thus, the thesis of this paper is that Africa can develop faster and more sustainably if communication is given serious attention in the development policies of donor agencies and government leaders. Furthermore, it is argued that much of the communication failures occur during implementation thus, there is an urgent need to include communication professionals in projects and programs to help deal with communication concerns such as participation, empowerment, and integration. This communication input is called "development support communication" (DSC) (see Food and Agriculture Organization, 1987; White *et al.,* 1994 and Agunga, 1997). DSC represents a new discipline and profession whose primary goal is facilitating development. Bordenave (1996:11) argued that "participation is impossible without communication" noted further that: "What has been so obvious is that not just any kind of communication makes genuine participation possible". DSC has come to represent the type of communication necessary for enabling people to become active participants in their own development.

Development support communication, is advanced in this paper as the key to development that is lasting, one that can be managed by the people themselves long after foreign aid is gone. As Rogers and Svenning (1969) point out, communication is the key that opens the door to change. Clearly, many factors affect the development process such as the political, economic, weather and markets. However, when people act as a community they can take measures to address these concerns. Political stability is possible under a democratically elected government. When people are organized into cooperatives they are also more likely to benefit from government credit schemes and to find better ways of marketing their produce. Even poor weather, such as unreliable rains, can , in the long run, be effectively managed through irrigation. What is essential is that people are assisted to develop a critical consciousness of their situation. Freire (1987) contends that when people are able to "problematize" or understand their predicament they can take action to improve it. The solution to a problem is only

limited by one's imagination. When a community develops a vision it will find the resources to meet its goals.

Failure of the modernization theory

To appreciate the position taken in this article one must understand the development record. The 1950s and 60s witnessed the gaining of political independence by many countries, particularly those in Africa. India and other southeastern countries gained their independence in the 1940s while Latin American countries got theirs much earlier. At independence, western economic theorists, such as Freedman (1966) and Rostow (1960) had offered industrialization as the gateway to modernity. Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manisfesto* offered a blueprint for industrialization. Capital was necessary for industrialization. Since developing countries were buried deep in poverty, western countries had to provide the capital, technology and expertise to break this vicious circle of poverty (Lewis, 1948; Rosenstein-Rodan, 1961).

The "goodwill" effort to feed a suffering people may have masked other reasons why western countries offer aid, such as the search for new markets and raw materials. Rodney (1989) in his book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* noted that foreign aid and free trade were sure ways to keeping poor countries in a vicious circle of dependency, not taking them out of it. Sayeed (1978) also argued that the West promoted industrialization largely as a way of selling their heavy machinery and providing jobs for "their boys abroad" since developing countries lacked the expertise to operate hi-tech machines. There appears to be much truth in this as Africans stay abroad on a brain drain when western aid institutions could have recruited them to return to help their own countries. As a result, technical assistance which was intended as a temporary measure, has now become a permanent institution.

Whatever the case, the industrialization approach did not work. While countries like Brazil, Mexico, and India were able to increase Gross National Product (GNP), many developing countries experienced negative growth. Not only did the gap between rich and poor countries increase, but in developing countries there was a noted increase between the rich few and poor majority as well (Ward, 1970). Berstein (1979:822) says the message from the West to the Third World seemed to be: "If you want to have what we have, then be like us, do as we do". Development was viewed as simply imitating western ways. Undoubtedly, many developing countries would have been satisfied to be like the United States, Britain or Germany, at least from the economic standpoint. The problem with industrialization is that its success depended on the existence of trained Africans to manage the factories, make policy and generally take control of their own development. However, under foreign aid, this right to manage their own destiny was taken away from them as the saying goes: "he pays the piper, calls the tune."

In short, it can be argued that the industrialization policy did not fail because the essential ingredient for its success, the development of local skills, was never attained. The expatriate technical assistance experts, rather than teach, opted to do the work themselves for fear that once the local elite mastered the skills they will be rendered jobless.

Dependency theory faired no better

Dependency theory emerged in the late 1960s mainly as a reaction to modernization theory. It draws strength from neo-Marxism by focusing attention on how western imperialism deters development of "backward societies" (Schuurman, 1993). The thrust of dependency theory is assigning blame for the underdevelopment of poor people to external factors, such as foreign exploitation or corruption on the part of local elite (Larrian, 1989). What is significant about dependency theory is that it was dominated by Third World scholars. Thus, some westerners viewed it as representing nothing but the discontent of disgruntled writers from the poorer nations. For example, Portes (1977:124) states: "In the hands of some writers, dependency has become a *deus ex machina* explanation of everything that is wrong with the Third World societies". And he was probably right. There is a common tendency for African writers to blame the West, their leaders, traders or any one else but not themselves for the woes of their societies. There is also concern that dependency scholars mainly criticize without offering novel ideas for dealing with the development issue. Without a doubt, constructive criticism is necessary and healthy. What dependency scholars failed to do was educate the masses of Africans about how imperialism acts as a deterrent to development. Rather than empower the masses to fight imperialism, dependency theorists did so themselves. Unfortunately, underdevelopment and exploitation is occurring in the offices of government ministries and in the rural areas where poverty projects and programs are being implemented, not in the halls of academic institutions. It is for this reason that Freire calls for the education of the masses so that they can become the architects of their own destinies. It is the masses whom, when mobilized, can tell donor agencies, the kinds of projects they like and who should be in the villages as experts and how much salaries they would be paid.

Growth-with-equity theory

By the mid-1970s, it had become clear that neither dependency nor modernization theory offered a sure way to progress. This led to a "middle-of-the road" or compromise theory called "growth-with-equity" (Weaver and Jameson, 1978; Streeten, 1976). GWE rejected the revolutionary socialist vision of society on the grounds that revolutions are disruptive. It also argued that it was almost impossible for developing countries to delink from the West as advocated by dependency theorists (Szentes, 1973; Frank, 1969). Finally, GWE advocates also rejected the modernization or economic growth school on the grounds that it favored capital-intensive over labor-intensive development. A GWE scholar, such as Brookfield

(1975) stressed the value of "interdependent development" whereby the developed and developing countries could engage in co-equal exchange of goods, services and ideas.

There were four distinguishing features of the GWE theory which made it appealing to development investors: meeting basic needs, people participation, an integrated approach to development, and the need to consider each country or people as unique.

Meeting basic needs

One was its emphasis on meeting the basic needs of the poor. It argued that industrialization, with its emphasis on GNP will not benefit poor people or do so quickly. In its place, they advocated a basic needs approach whereby development efforts must focus on meeting the basic needs, such as shelter, health care, food and clean water. Hope (1984:15) stated: "The basic needs approach does not call for asceticism or Puritanism. All that it insists on is a certain order of priorities: first meet the basic needs of those most in need and then, and only then, go about satisfying other needs if they are felt". Development investments were to focus on food production, provision of clean water and health care. The choice of technology was also to be "appropriate," that is, affordable and environmentally sound. Schumacker (1973)'s book, *Small is Beautiful*, was published in time to support the argument by the appropriate technology school. However, the basic needs approach has not yielded fruit beyond the rhetoric. Top-down or blue-print planning still takes place whereby project decisions are made without planners even seeing the villages. Hammer (1994:32) on "Why Projects Fail" asks why "feasibility studies" are not being done at the village level as a part of "doing aid business sensibly". She warns that the "everything boils down to communication, understanding and establishing reasonable expectations" 1994:35). But it appears that communication for development is a concept which has not yet caught on with major donor institutions.

Childers and Urquhart (1994:83) note that World Bank project planning staff usually arrive "in developing country capitals with projects already designed in Washington, D. C.," which "is incompatible with the principles of respect, cooperation and partnership on which all United Nations system development activities are based". A point of contention in this paper is that much of the social science contribution to the development process is theoretical. The practice of social science in development projects, such as assessing the human behavioral factors, need for people involvement, assessing attitude and behavior toward innovations are often not done or left to natural scientists who, by training, are not capable of getting it done right (Hammer, 1994; Lehmann, 1979). Herein lies a niche that development support communication scientists seek to fill--providing an applied, social scientific approach to development--one that combines the rigor of theory and the experience of real life.

Need for people involvement

A second feature was its position that real development cannot take place if poor people are not given opportunity to contribute to decision-making. Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank became a champion of this cause. In his speech to his Board of Directors in Nairobi (1973:23), he stated: No program will help small farmers if it is designed by those who have no knowledge of their problems and operated by those who have no interest in their future". According to McNamara, for development programs to work, the bottom 40 percent of society, whom he referred to as the "poorest of the poor" must be identified and their interests taken into account in project design. This view culminated in the policy of "popular participation" which virtually all donor agencies have embraced at the 1979 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in Rome. The participatory construct is still favored by policymakers and dependency theorists alike. Servaes (1996:15) says: "Development efforts should be anchored on faith in the people's capacity to discern what is best to be done as they seek their liberation, and how to participate in the task of transforming society".

The realization by developers is that rural people have intelligence and millennia of experience which they must draw upon. The fact is "the participation strategy has not paid off so far for the simple reason that, all the promotional verbiage notwithstanding, it has still to be systematically tried in development projects" (Ascroft and Masilela, 1994:268). It is argued in this paper that participation requires communication and the absence of professional communication scientists in projects may explain the lack of participation success.

Call for an integraded approach to development

A third feature of the Growth-With-Equity Theory was a realization that development must be defined in holistic terms, such as food, shelter, environment, cultural preservation and enhancement, liberty, economic growth and equitable distribution of development benefits. Given that development activities are often compartmentalized into sectors, such as agriculture and health, there was a need for these organizations to work together in a cohesive manner to deliver resources simultaneously to beneficiaries (Mosher, 1976; Waterston, 1974). The IRD approach was also viewed as a way of promoting efficient use of limited resources by avoiding duplication of effort.

While the integration concept was technically sound, and in fact, in my view remains the strategy of choice for sustainability, in practice, leaders of government ministries perceived it as an attempt to reduce their powers and spheres of influence (Agunga, 1995; Honadle, 1985; Hurni, 1980). A World Bank report (1998) notes that the failure rate of IRD programs was 80 percent in eastern and southern Africa and 43 percent in western Africa. The report identified the main

reasons for failure as including weak interesectoral linkages, poor management, lack of beneficiary participation, failure to build local capacity and heavy reliance on foreign technical assistance. This author was involved in the implementation of some of these IRD programs and can attest to the problem of donor agency officials' lack of trust of local officials, and hence, failure to involve them in project decisions. Improving communication between local officials and expatriate experts holds promise for making IRD programs work. Communication input can also help elicit beneficiary participation and build local capacity.

Need to consider each country as unique

The last feature of the GWE theory was its ability to recognize that the developing world is not a homogenous entity but rather a conglomeration of heterogenious states. In the past, a "one model fits all" approach was used. It was either modernization theory or dependency theory; either capitalism or socialism. The new thinking was that each country needed to shape its own development agenda based on its resources, cultural identity, and goals (Henderson, 1994; Inayatullah, 1994). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported this new view of development by promoting its concept of a "Human Development Index" (HDI) which measured "quality of life" indicators, such as physical well-being, cultural values and environmental protection (UNDP, 1990).

In summary, while the Growth-With-Equity theory did much to improve our understanding of why development fails it provided little insight on how its recommendations could be realized. As Ascroft and Masilela (1994:291) argued, it is not enough to say there must be participation and integration without saying who should make these happen or without stating whether development experts had the "know-how" to bring these about. They warned:

> We face up to certain realities, the most significant of which is that the development business is heavy with personnel trained in the techniques and technologies for controlling every known essential variable (technical subject matter specialists) and correspondingly light on personnel trained in the art, craft and science of communicating the knowledge and skills that would enable millions of peasants to benefit from them (communication scientists), the cybernetic aspect".

Ascroft and Masilela are not alone in questioning the quality of development "experts" charged with implementing social science activities in projects and programs, such as participation, empowerment and integration. Rau (1990) complains that development policies have become fashionable, often "ushered in with great fanfare as the way to promote development, but then quietly down graded or abandoned as problems arose. Rarely was rhetoric matched by effective action" (p. 70). Beckman (1986) and Hurni (1980) note that the main cause of

development failure is not lack of funding or the political will but the ability to implement projects.
Rondinelli (1987:137) found that 88 percent of projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development in Sub-Saharan Africa encountered human resource management problems, such as "managing the participation of beneficiaries, creating interest in the project among intended beneficiaries, and implementing management improving programs".

Dwivedi (1994:xi) adds that:

> The story of administration for development in the Third World is a story of various policy failures and administrative mishaps . . . It is the story of failed development goals, told through the looking glass of administration. But more, it is about the role of the state in directing, managing and controlling the means used in and by Third World nations to achieve development goals; and finally, it is about the process of development administration by which those goals are supposed to be met.

Even the structural adjustment programs in which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have invested billions of dollars in the last 15 years, have been judged as ineffective. Childers and Urquhart (1994) report that of 1,800 World Bank projects in 131 countries involving loans totaling $138 billion, 37.5 percent of those completed in 1991 failed. It would seem from the foregoing that the political climate exists for effective development to take place. Reasonable funding is also available. Thus, the contention of this author is that the search for a viable strategy for sustainable development must focus on implementation, particularly, the role of communication in it.

Communication: a major development need

Communication is defined as the process by which two or more people share knowledge so as to arrive at a common understanding (Rogers, 1995). As the focus of development failures changes from external to internal causes so has the importance of communication grown. Gro Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway and Chairperson of the World Commission on Environment and Development stressed the role of communication in development thus:

Sustainable development is a major challenge for the next century. People are central to that task. The only way we can work for a common cause, for common interest, to improve our condition, is really through communication. Basically it has to do with democracy, with participation, with spreading of knowledge and insight and ability to take care of our future" (see Fraser and Villet, 1994:1).

Development embraces issues like participation, integration, collaboration, delegation, linkage, coordination and teamwork--all of which imply

communication. Axley (1996) in his book, *Communication at Work: Management and the Communication-Intensive Organization,* states that "many of today's most pressing organizational and management challenges--leadership, empowerment, shaping organizational culture, building effective teams, and managing change--hinge on communication activities and can best be understood and met in terms of communication and communicating" (Preface). Mowlana (1992:114) notes that "opportunities for applying improved communication to both stimulate development and mitigate problems appear substantial . . . but questions of effective implementation remain unanswered". Finally, Williams (1992:7) concludes that "there cannot be development without participation and it is almost impossible to have participation without communication. Yet communication is hardly present in the strategies and policies of most donor agencies". These authors clearly advocate the inclusion of communication professionals in development programming to address these social science, communication-based concerns.

Asking communication scientists or journalists, who have long used the "objectivity" argument to stay clear of development action, to participate in the change process is a relatively new concept. Certainly not one those interested in critical discourse would want to participate in. However, not wanting to be involved is one thing, having the skills to do so is another. Eapen (1994:288) after reviewing the literature on communication research laments the inability of communication scientists to participate effectively in social action: The usually unanswered question is: "What is the role of the social scientist in his or her own society?"

Communication for development: theory and practice

Over the last 15 years, a number of communication scholars have embarked upon improving the professionalism of communication in development. Until now, the task of communication for development has been left to extension workers, trained more in technical agriculture than in communication (Benor and Harrison, 1976; Hayward, 1990). Roling and Engel (1991:128) contend that extension agents need training in "extension science," which they explained as, an understanding of the "systematic use of *communication* to help farmers solve their problems". There is a general feeling that the communication function in development is being poorly handled by project managers and policy administrators. Chambers (1983) concludes that the management of rural development remains a "blind spot" in the sense that there is hardly any institution of higher learning which prepares graduates specifically in development management. Even the United Nations has come to accept the weakness of management training institutions in meeting what it called the "human capacity" needs of developing countries. In a 1992 report, *Measures to enhance the capacity of management improvement agencies in developing countries,* the Department for Technical Cooperation of the United Nations Secretariat and Institute of Administrative Sciences contended that despite "recognition of effective management as a fundamental requirement in public

administration, management improvement agencies have largely not been able to fulfill their missions . . . in the phase of ever-changing and . . . ever-growing requirements for development" (1992:2). Borgin and Corbett (1982:34-35) say the real need in development is not more politicians, economists, anthropologists not sociologists, but new game players:

> The politicians can talk for the rest of the century, and the economists and the sociologists can do research and write books for years to come, but whatever they say and whatever they find out will be of little importance to Africa. Still, this group comprises more than three-quarters of the experts in international aid and Africa!

Their view is supported by Carmen (1991:75), who states that, "There is an equivalent to quantum theory in development," meaning that current development strategies are sound. "What we probably are still lacking is a Development Bohr, Einstein, or Planck". Prewitt (1980), another social scientists, notes that development is a task of the social sciences but he adds, "those areas of life about which the social sciences have claim to expertise are presently the source of frustration and perplexity."

Clearly what are missing in the repertoire of program managers are: (1) understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of the development process; and (2) having the communication skills to promote human behavioral change by helping beneficiaries meet their goals.

Development Support Communication grew out of a need to meet professional communication roles in development. The primary emphasis of DSC is "problem solving" development issues, beginning with a systematic understanding of the local condition. Roling (1974:3) urges "problem solving" or "decision-oriented" communication research which "aims at solving social problems, or at developing prototype solutions which can be replicated by the practitioner". Ascroft (1987:1) says DSC "focuses more heavily upon the utilization of communication skills with the rigors of action research". Coldvein (1987:4) contends that communication for development is the "systematic utilization of appropriate communication channels and techniques to increase people's participation in development and to inform, motivate, and train rural populations, mainly at the grassroots".

Downs (1988:3) refers to communication research as "communication audit" and argues that every organization needs a communication audit from time to time:

> Managers would not dream of making a major financial decision without basing it on as much up-to-date information as possible. Nevertheless, some managers often make decisions about people and organizational communication on the basis of an unsystematic

collection of hearsay, intuition, personal experiences, and three-year-old attitude surveys.

No one needs to convince us of the importance of communication: we know it intuitively; we experience its importance daily; we have faith in what it can accomplish. But we are still stuck with the habitual behavior of not paying attention to it until something goes awry (Dawns, 1988:22).

Greenbaum and White ((1988:1) agree, adding:

> Communication problems in the organization are not unlike the progressive development of a headache. If the initial bodily cues are ignored or not monitored, the full "throb" will hit. The result is much more time and effort lost in trying to correct the unbearable condition than would have been needed to prevent the situation in the first place.

Nowhere are communication audits necessary than in development arena. Development is about people's perceptions of what should be. Perceptions also play a key role in the way people communicate in development organizations. There is frustration and even outright rebellion when people feel their perceptions are not being taken into account in organizational decision-making.

A disciplinary base for DSC

Finally, the theoretical framework for communication in development is inherent in systems theory which has ruled the hard sciences for decades (Laconte et al., 1982:15). As far back as 1948, the great mathematician, Norbert Wiener, coined his concept pf cybernetics which he defined as the "science of communication and control in the human and machine". He linked communication and control together because he viewed communication as the means by which organizations are governed. Wiener (1948:18) stated: "To live effectively is to live with adequate information. Thus, communication and control belong to the essence of man's [a person's] inner life, even as they belong to his [or her] life in society".

> The system uses a variety of mechanisms to attain its goal(s) and to keep itself in equilibrium or steady state(alive). In a rural development program, components of government need to function cohesively to achieve program goals and the communication expert acts as the integrator, the glue that binds development sectors together and makes the IRD program works.

Another source of theoretical strength for DSC comes from Karl Weick's (1969) book, *The Social Psychology of Organizing*. Drawing on information, evolutionary and general system theories, he demonstrated that any given system is interlocked

with its environment, that is the system interacts with broader systems or suprasystems of which it is a part. The relationship between system and environment stresses the complexity of decision making and the need for improved communication. Indeed, the deeper the analysis of the "web of life" is pushed, the more meaningless the word "independence" becomes and the greater the need for a systems approach to development. Thus, development support communication is concerned not just with organizing people at the grassroots but also helping policy makers at the governmental and donor agency levels make decisions that lead to the betterment of the poor. Perrett (1982:10) summarized the DSC function as helping to "create the human environment necessary for a development program to succeed". She added (1982:10):

> [The communicator] provides the information, motivation and education activities which are needed to change any indifference toward the project that local people might have to interest and commitment, ignorance to knowledge, opposition to acceptance and support, and established attitudes or habits that militate against change to ones that actively support it.

Stuart (1994:1), after observing DSC professionals at work in the Philippines, agrees that communication is key to empowerment: "It is a strategy for reaching specific groups of people with new ideas, information, and technologies to get rural communities to participate in development programmes to act as their implementors". Systems scientist Stafford Beer (1975) says we have spent decades doing social science research, now it is time to move to action. This is the philosophy behind DSC--translating what is known into action. Hopkins' (1937) pioneering book, *Integration: Its Meaning and Application*, also offers insights for the role of communication in IRD programs. For example, he stresses the importance of the "whole" over "component" goals; the need to keep development programs simple; and above all, ensure that "people to be affected by the project must accept it as their own." DSC scientists draw strength from these theoretical frameworks.

A professional base for DSC

DSC grew out of a need for a professional communication role in development. Joseph Ascroft (1994), a professor at the University of Iowa, USA, founded perhaps the first DSC graduate program in 1981. He exzplains his reason for creating this academic program:

> There is no shortage of impressively credentialled professionals in mass communication. Likewise, people steeped in development theory and process abound. There are just not many who combine a marketable expertise in doing both. This is the discipline called development support communication (Ascroft, 1994: 3).

Erskine Childers, who was Director of the Information Division of UNDP until his retirement, is viewed as the father of DSC, having coined the phraseology in 1963. He was an information officer stationed in Thailand, in the early 1960s and witnessed development projects failures which he felt could have been prevented with a communication input. In 1976, Childers advocated the establishment of a disciplinary program for DSC and defined the concept as a:

> Discipline in development planning and implementation in which more adequate account is taken of human behavioral factors in the design of development projects and their objectives. Then, on the basis of a behavioral analysis and the development of a feasible design, the requirements for technical and human communication are built into that project as part of its own plan of operation and as a part of its budget (Childers, 19776:46).

Childers was successful in promoting DSC within the UNDP system as DSC was adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization, to name a few. However, DSC as a concept has been slow to spread because of the absence of a disciplinary body to promote it. While many advocates acknowledged the value of communication in development the expertise was nowhere to be found because there were no schools training graduates in DSC. Brody (1984:63-64) says: "DSC had no fairy godmother, no Prince, no search throughout the kingdom to identify and crown the missing damsel". Translated, unlike the "appropriate technology" school promoted by Oxford University scholars, DSC had no academic home and few donor agencies wanted to be associated with an idea lacking an academic record.

This academic recognition, however, came with the establishment of the Iowa Graduate DSC Program in 1981. Ascroft (1992) says the Iowa Program subjects the ideas and events of the past 50 years of development to careful, critical analysis in light that such new insights may redirect the efforts and energies of development theorists and practitioners toward more fruitful outcomes:

> The basic idea of the program [curriculum] is that DSC, to be effective, must amalgamate many skills in common cause. But for a pair of centrally critical ones, these skills already exist in many universities. DSC students also understand that theirs is not a stand-alone professional enterprise. It finds its greatest utility and fulfillment especially in intimate partnership with other development workers (Ascroft, 1992:1).

DSC, therefore, is the systematic application of knowledge and skills of development and communication to make development projects and programs

work more successfully. Ascroft and Masilela (1994) note the importance of identifying the DSC role in projects:

> Here precisely is the sticking point of communication for development. No body seems to know for sure what the communicator's role ought to be, least of all the communicators themselves. So every body turns a blind eye to the problem, leaving those saddled with the problem to fly as best they can by the seat of their pants hoping for the best. And the best is often make-believe that either there is no problem in the first place or that it can be handled in the normal conventional way. Whichever the way, the result is often the same: no participatory anything (Ascroft and Masilela, 1992:290).

University of the Philippines at Los Banos (UPLB) also started its development communication (DevCom) at about the same time as Iowa, offering degrees at the Bachelor's, Masters' and doctoral levels under the directorship of Professor Nora C. Quebral. The UPLB program, like Iowa's consists of "an eclectic set of theories and principles to guide practice" (Stuart, 1994:1). Today, many developing countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, and those in the Southern Africa region are demanding DSC.

In Nepal, the DSC Branch of the FAO assisted in revamping the Agricultural Communication Department of the Ministry of Agriculture into a modern communication production facility. It was also made autonomous so that it could earn its keep through cost recovery. Staff of the DSC Unit conducted communication needs assessments for development agencies and produced media campaign materials for them for which they were paid in return. DSC services are voluntary. Organizations adopt DSC because they feel it can help them do better.

Case studies of communication success in development

Communication for development is a strategy for applying communication to make projects work better. Like any other input, communication is not an end in itself but only as a means. However, the argument in this article is that when the appropriate communication input is present, projects tend to perform better. While field experiments are needed to confirm the validity of DSC, several project-support efforts over the last 20 years indicate that effectiveness of DSC. For example, in the Upper Region Agricultural Development Program in Ghana implemented from the mid-1970s to the early 1980's, World Bank project evaluators noted the significant impact of DSC (Abudu, 1980). The World Bank had recommended the establishment of large-scale cattle ranching schemes which would have displaced several people without any compensation. DSC professionals in the project were able to convince the Bank to abandon its cattle project an to

encourage the production of hybrid rabbits which became quite popular among small-scale farmers (Africa Report, 1979).

How Communication Aids Project Success

It is argued here, and elsewhere (Agunga, 1997; 1996) that communication could serve as the key that opens the door to sustainable development in Africa. This is because the communicator can perform a variety of functions essential for development success. In 1987 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations organized an Expert Consultative Meeting in Rome which brought together the world's development communication scholars and practitioners to identify communication functions in project and programs (FAO, 1987; Agunga, 1994). The following nine functions were outlined:

1. Advising governments and donor agencies on communication for development policy
2. Promoting the mobilization and participation of beneficiaries
3. Communication training for field workers
4. Production of multimedia and audiovisual materials on a cost-recovery basis
5. Promoting networking among development professionals
6. Designing and conducting communication campaigns
7. Promoting coordination and linkage among development agencies
8. Promoting communication research, information generation, storage and sharing
9. Facilitating learning among project management staff

These functions are yet to be fully adopted by major donor agencies, such as the World Bank nor have many communication specialists shown themselves to be capable to the task. The task of DSC advocates seem to be two-fold: On the one hand, they must convince policy makers of the importance of communication in development. At the present time, when budget is tight, communication units are often the first to be cut. On the other hand, DSC scholars must train a cadre of professionals who can take up the challenge when called upon.

At the field level, the DSC practitioner must show that she or he has something to contribute. Experience shows that often the DSC practitioner is despised or viewed with suspicion at first. However, as the DSC practitioner demonstrates knowledge of what is needed, he/she gains respectability, trust and support. What makes DSC professionals successful is having information policymakers people need. To be effective, therefore, the DSC person must be broad-based in knowledge. Fisher (1992) says so much rides on the head and shoulders of the DSC expert. It is a "jack-of-all-trade" task. However, DSC professional soon gain respectability among colleagues because they focus on making others look good. By making decision makers look good they, in turn, will give DSC practitioners the opportunity to help. Second, DSC practitioners are concerned with the interest of

the entire development organization, not specialized units. Thus, promoting interagency collaboration is a major DSC function. Third, DSC experts show a willingness to learn from the people. Try to learn as much as possible from the local people and the project staff. Listen attentively to suggestions and try to relate the new knowledge to your own convictions. People are likely to be offended if they are told things they already know. Learning from the people helps the DSC person to determine what information is required.

Third, the DSC person has no formal authority. The challenge is to give suggestions not instructions. Acceptance of DSC recommendations are based on their perceived goodness of fit. This voluntary adoption often gives people a sense of ownership of the idea and creates respect for the facilitator. Finally, the DSC professional must be a student of development--its history, theories, policymakers, and practitioners. Gran (1982) and Hope (1984) state that the "development catalyst" must have vision, creativity, and knowledge of development itself. S/he must be well-informed and aware of the political implications and social consequences of his or her actions and judgments. Understanding development is critical to effectively facilitating it.

The success of DSC lies in the trust its professionals gain from people based on expert power. Galbraith (1973:98) states that the only power the facilitator needs is "expert power" at managing the decision making process:

> It is expert power based on knowledge and access to information. The integrator will be effective only if his influence facilitates the coordination of those individuals who have the formal authority and if his power is not seen as contrary to or as a replacement for the formal authority of the participants of the joint decision.

The facilitator's authority lies in the agencies s/he seeks to integrate. They have the power to decide whether or not they want to work with him or her. His or her success lies in becoming an information collector, summarizer and group facilitator. In the final analysis, the success of the DSC professional rests on two factors: expert knowledge and personal qualities. Galbraith (1973:99) rightly states that effective facilitators are a rare breed: "Such individuals are difficult to find and training technologies are not yet developed to create them. Yet this role is becoming increasingly important."

Communication for Development: A Concept Whose Time Has Come

In 1992, this author wrote a project proposal based on a simple research question: Why is popular participation much talked about but little practiced? Is it because governments are afraid of the concept or that those changed with its implementation simple lack the skills to make it work? The proposal received funding and a team of DSC planners including this author visited several countries

to find an answer to this question. The general finding was that governments were interested in seeing participation occur. What proved problematic was the virtual absence of communication scientists to make participation a reality.

The FAO and Government of Italy agreed to establish a training program to prepare change agents for participatory development work. The result was the "Communication for Development in Southern Africa" now known as the SADC Center for Communication for Development, based in Harare. Upon hearing about DSC, and based on a survey, many policymakers in the region felt that DSC is precisely what was needed in their development efforts (Agunga, 1995). From Nepal to Pakistan , through Nigeria to Mali, those who hear the word of DSC clamor for it. In short, communication for development is a concept whose time has come. Galbraith (1973:30) notes that the "critical factor limiting an organization's attainment of high levels of performance in the presence of division of labor, size, and diversity is its ability to communicate and make decisions about unique, non-routine, consequential events which could not be anticipated in advance."

Conclusion

This article has examined the development problem in Africa from a communication perspective. It is has argued that African countries may be returning to democratic rule, thus providing the political stability for development to occur. It notes further that development policies stressing participation, integration and capacity-building seem to be appropriate remedies for sustainable development. However, all these seemingly sound policies and huge financial investments seem to add up to nothing due to poor implementation. Based n a careful review of the literature and the researcher's own field experience, it is concluded that many of the problems afflicting development today are largely communication concerns and can best be addressed with communication input. Communication is the key that opens the door to change. It may well be the missing link in Africa's development puzzle.

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