

## **DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION AND NIGERIAN ECONOMY: A RELATIONAL ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

This study set out to determine the relationship between development communication and the Nigerian economy. Survey research method was used. The work was anchored on the Development Media Theory and the Agenda Setting Theory. The findings show that development communication is at the heart of the development of Nigeria's economy: The study recommends greater democratization of the nation's media system to enhance freedom for the dissemination of development communication messages and strategies, among others.

### **Introduction**

According to Edeani in Okorie (2006:95) development communication means "the use of all forms of communication in reporting, publicizing and promotion of development at all levels of society." It implies communicating development message to the audience. It is the foundation of economic development. It takes a form of transaction between the source and the receiver. It is participatory and collaborative. It is Behaviour Change Communication (BCC). Okunna (2002:296-300) describes BCC as "A practical two-way communication task." Okoro (2006:97) describes it as "A planned process of economic transformation ... which operates at the levels of advocacy to provide resources and socio-political leadership commitment and support for development goals and objectives." Emphasising this, Okorie (2000:67) points out that the major aim of such communication is:

to make life better for people in a given society economically by encouraging them to understand the vision of the change agent, accept to participate by developing their capacity and skill that will enable them change from unprogressive or underdevelopment conditions of the past to a better condition.

Similarly, Quebral (2007:3) believes that development communication is agent of societal transformation for the betterment of people's lives. He goes on to describe development communication as:

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 equality and larger fulfillment of the human potential.

Contributing, Ohaja (2003:3) states that such communication "focuses on people in communities, nations and the world with a view to transmitting messages on idea and practice aimed at improving their welfare and helping them to attain more productive and fulfilled lives."

Ekwelie (1992:2) explains the concept in such a way that it places self-determined need of the masses at the centre of development communication. To him, "a remarkable feature of development communication concerned with people's welfare as defined by them." He goes on to say that

development communication is "news from below as against news from above, that is, news as packaged by those who believe they know what we need."

However, in this discussion economic development refers to positive economic advancement, which in turn brings positive advancement of life and society. It implies progressive economic change for the betterment of the conditions of individuals and consequently of the society. This is usually achieved by wise distribution of economic resources in the society. As a process of positive change. It is development aimed at achieving economic self-reliance and improved economic living conditions especially for the under privileged majority of a given human population.

Economic development is a participatory process, which demands collaborative effort of members of a given society. This is why it should be handled with sound development communication or communication for development. This implies that where there is no communication, there will be no development. Communication and development are strongly interconnected.

Okunna (2002:301) concurs when she says that: "Communication is so important in the process of development that it is seen as the very soul of development." This paper argues that there should be communication for development and it will consequently bring economic advancement in the society.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For many years development communication has been practised in Nigeria, but it is still controversial whether such form of communication can encourage or discourage economic development in the country. Therefore, in this study, the researcher attempted to empirically find out the role development communication could play in the process of developing Nigeria's economy. The study is important because if ignored, the nation's economy could remain stagnant and the nation would remain at the losing end.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to assess the relationship between development communication and the development of Nigeria's economy. However, the specific objectives include:

1. To determine whether communication has been making positive impact towards development of Nigeria's economy.
2. To examine communication challenges of Nigeria's economic development policies.
3. To find out how better application of communication in Nigeria will lead to improvement of the nation's economy.
4. To suggest, based on the empirical study, how development communication can be used to solve Nigeria's economic problems.

### **Research Questions**

Bearing in mind the problem, which the research intends to solve, as well as the objectives, which the research intends to achieve, the following are the research questions.

- i. Has development communication made positive impact towards development of Nigeria's economy?
- ii. Does Nigeria's economic development depend on sound communication to fully excel?
- iii. Will development communication be effective in securing supports of Nigerians for the improvement of the nation's economy?
- iv. Can development communication contribute meaningfully towards solving problems of Nigeria economy?

### **Literature/Empirical Review**

According to the result of survey carried out by the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), cited in Okorie (2006:33-37), economic poverty increased in Nigeria between 1980 and 1985, and between 1992 and 1996. Between 1985 and 1992 there was decrease because of some level of economic recovery. In 1980, poverty in the country was 28.1%.

Translation of this means about 17.7 million poor people in Nigeria. In 1985 it climbed to 24.7 million. In 1992 we recorded about 39.7 million poor people. In 1996 the population increased to about 67.1 million. But between 1985 and 1992 there was little decrease. However, between 1992 and 1996 there was index rise. In 1980, the rate increased to 29.3%. In 1985, it rose to 51.4%. In 1992 it decreased to 46.1%. In 1996 it skyrocketed to 69.8%. Moreover, in the urban areas, poverty increased in 1980 and 1985. It maintained about the same rate between 1985 and 1992. Between 1992 and 1996 there was rise to 55.2%.

The study further showed that male-headed households were poorer than the female-headed ones. Female-headed households rose from 29.2% in 1980 to 59% in 1996 while within the same period, male-headed families rose from 29.2% to 67%. Then, between 1997 to 2007, the situation has maintained higher percentage due to lack of resources to match the fast increase of human population in the country.

However, going by 1992 reference point using projected population figure of 178.5 million, by 2015, percentage of the poor in Nigeria is expected to decrease to 21.4% by 2015. This indicates that about 38.1% million people will still be economically poor in the country. Based on the data: income, inequality and food security are worsening in the country and they indicate that economic poverty is rising, (Okorie 2006:32-60).

The above scenario go to show why recent Nigerian government keep mapping out economic reform policies as corrective measures. Prominent among the policies are: NEEDS, which Soludo (2007:25) described as Nigeria's comprehensive plan for poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value reorientation. Others are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS), Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Bank Reforms, debt reliefs, Anti-corruption crusades, monetization policies, etc. The economic reform policies respectively go with some development communication challenges directly or indirectly, (Okorie 2006:95-114).

In view of the challenging economic problems and reform policies/programmes in Nigeria, development communication experts, scholars, researchers, etc. have been calling for better management of development communication resources in order to fully liberate the nation's economy from the shackles of alarming failure. Discussing the situation that led to the introduction of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in Nigeria, Okorie (2006:25) states:

Despite great natural resources abundant in Nigeria, the country is poor with limited social (and of course economic) development. The legacy of mismanagement and corruption by past administrations encouraged many ways of sharing the national cake instead of helping to bake it.

### **Theoretical Support**

This study is based on two theories. (a) **Development Media Theory**; To McQuail in Folarin (2005:45-49) this normative media theory maintains the following principles among others:

- i. Mass media must accept and carry-out the responsibility of positive development in the society in line with the established policy of national development,
- ii. Freedom of the media should be determined by economic priorities and development needs of the society.

This theory believes that the primary aim in media use is societal development especially at the grassroots level. The theory sees media as tools of national integration, socio-economic modernization, promotion of literacy and cultural creativity, (Folarin 2005:47).

(b) **Agenda-Setting Theory**: According to Wogu (2008:141), "...People consider as important those things reported in the media, and that major issues discussed in society e.g. economic development) are introduced by the media. This is the idea behind agenda setting theory of mass communication".

Applied to this study, it provides the link existing between the mass media reportage of the Nigerian economy and the invariably development that takes place in the country.

### **Methodology**

Survey research method was used. The questionnaire served as instrument for data collection. Using the purposive and the simple random sampling techniques, a sample size of 300 respondents was drawn from our population.

### **Data presentation**

**Table one: Educational Qualifications?**

<b>Educational Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
FSLC	60	20.6 %
SSCE	110	37.9 %
Diploma /NCE	50	17.2%
B.A., B.Sc. or HND	48	16.5%
M.A., / M.Sc.	10	3.4%
No Response	12	4.1 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>100%</b>

60 (20.6%) of the respondents had First School Leaving Certificate. 110 (37.9%) had Senior School Certificate. 50 (17.2%) of the respondents had either Diploma or NCE. 48 (16.5%) had either First degree or HND. 10 (3.4%) of them had Masters degree. Then 12 (4.1%) of the respondents did not respond at all to the question. See table one above:

**Table two: Respondents' Occupation**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Students	67	23.1 %
Civil Servant	68	23.4%
Politicians	46	15.8%
Faarsers	42	14.4%
Traders	57	19.6%
Unemployed	10	3.4 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>100%</b>

67 (23.1%) of the respondents were students. 68 (23.4%) were civil servants. 46 (15.8%) of them were politicians. 42 (14.4%) were farmers. 57 (19.6%) were traders. .4%) of the respondents were unemployed. See table two above:

### **Research Question One: Ascertaining whether development communication has made positive impact on Nigeria's economy**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	270	93.1 %
No	15	5.1%

No indication	5	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>100%</b>

270 (93.1%) of the respondents indicated that development communication have positively impacted on Nigeria's economy. 15 (5.1%) of the respondents indicated that such communication have not made any positive impact on the economy. Then 5 (1.7%) of the respondents did not make any indication. See table three above:

**Research Question two: Ascertaining whether Nigeria's economic development policies need development communication to excel**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	278	95.8 %
No	18	6.2 %
No indication	4	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>100 %</b>

278(95. 8%) of the respondents indicated that the policies need Development Communication to excel. 18 (6.2%) indicated that the policies need not development communication to excel. 4(1.3%) of the respondents did not indicate whether the policies need development communication or not to excel. See table four above:

**Research Question three: Ascertaining whether modern and traditional media combination is necessary in communicating for development of Nigeria's economy**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	258	88.9 %
No	30	10.3%
No indication	2	6.8 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>100%</b>

358 (88.9%) of the respondents indicated that such combination is necessary in the process. 30 (10.3%) of the respondents indicated that such combination is unnecessary. 2 (6.8%) did not indicate whether the combination is necessary or not. See table five above.

**Research Question Four: Ascertaining whether development communication will be effective in securing supports of the masses for economic development in Nigeria**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	271	93.4%
No	15	5.1 %
Not indicated	4	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>100%</b>

271(93.4%) of the respondents indicated that development communication will be effective in securing supports of the Nigeria masses. 15 (5.1%) of them indicated that such communication will not be effective in doing that. Then 4 (1.3%) of the respondents did not indicate whether development communication will be effective in securing supports of the masses or not. See table six above:

**Research Question Five: Whether development communication can meaningfully contribute towards development of Nigeria's economy**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	189	65.1%
No	81	27.9 %
Not indicated	20	6.8 %
Total	290	100%

89 (65.1 %) of the respondents indicated that development communication can help to tackle the problems. 81 (27.9%) indicated that such communication cannot help to do that. 20 (6.8%) of the respondents did not indicate. See table seven above:

**Discussion of Findings**

This part of the study focuses on the review of the results presented above. This work attempted to find out how development communication would enhance development of Nigeria's economy. Discussion of the findings is based on the five research questions of the study.

**Research Question One:**

In research question one, the researcher attempted to know whether development communication has had positive impact on Nigeria's economy. Based on the results presented under table 3 above, the researchers discovered that such communication has been making positive impact towards development of Nigeria's economy. This was informed by 93.1% of the respondents.

**Research Question Two:**

Do you think Nigeria's economic development policies need sound communication to excel?  
In the question above, the researcher attempted to discover the ways development communication contributes towards excellence of Nigeria's economic development policies. Based on the analysis from table 4, it is obvious that such communication is needed in facilitating the success of the nation's economic development policies. This was confirmed by 95.8% of the respondents.

**Research Question three:**

In communicating for the development, do you think it is necessary to combine modern mass and traditional media?

The aim of this question was to find out the advantages that can be derived from the combination of modern and traditional media in communicating for Nigeria's economic development. Based on the analysis given under table 5, communicating for development of Nigeria's economy will gain a lot of advantages by combining the two forms of media.

**Research Question Four:**

Will development communication be effective in securing support of Nigerians for the improvement of the nation's economy?

In the above question, attempt was made to evaluate the effectiveness of development communication in attracting supports of the Nigeria masses for economic improvement. From the analysis given in table 6, it is clear that development communication will be effective in securing supports of the masses for development of the nation's economy.

**Research Question Five:**

Can development communication contribute meaningfully towards solving problems of Nigeria's economy?

The purpose of this question as to find out contributions development communication can make towards tackling problems of Nigeria's economy. Based on the analysis presented under table 7, it is evident that such communication can contribute meaningfully (through various ways) towards tackling the problems. This was supported by 65.1 % of the respondents.

### **Conclusion**

This study was embarked on in order to find out how development communication can be used to enhance development of Nigeria's economy. So far, the researcher's findings revealed that development communication has been impacting positively on the nation's economy; and that such communication if well managed, can facilitate greater development of the economy. It is therefore the conclusion of this study that development communication is a powerful catalyst of economic development.

### **Recommendations**

Based on these findings, this study recommends that:

- (i) Government should work towards more democratization of the nation's media system to encourage better development communication for the improvement of the economy.
- (ii) Media institutions should give better professional attention to communication for the development of the nation's economy.
- (iii) Private organizations across Nigeria should patriotically compliment positive efforts of the government and the mass media in the task of national economic development.

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