

Assessment of Development Communication in a Globalised Context

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Abstract: *This paper examines development communication within the context of globalisation, focusing on how global economic, technological, and cultural flows have reshaped communication strategies for social change. It interrogates the shifting paradigms of development communication from linear, top-down information dissemination models to more participatory, dialogic, and rights-based approaches that emphasise inclusion, local agency, and sustainability. Based on the qualitative review of scholarly literature, policy documents, and selected development interventions, the paper assesses the influence of globalisation on communication practices, particularly the role of digital media, transnational actors, and global development agendas. The paper argues that development communication is no doubt an important area of both academic and professional endeavour where several approaches can be harnessed to ensure development. While globalisation is a vital concept that has impacted both positively and negatively in various parts of the world, the role of communication in the globalisation process is enormous. This paper dissects the relationship between communication, globalisation, and development by analysing the roles played by each in the actualisation of the other. Globalisation was also dissected as a concept taking into cognizance its double-edged nature and divergent ideas of various scholars about the concept. The paper then related the concepts of communication, development and globalisation, especially in a practical context and further explained how development communication operates in a globalised context. It concludes that development outcomes are more sustainable when communication processes are people-centered and when global development narratives are adapted to local socio-cultural and political contexts.*

Keywords: *assessment; communication; context, development; globalised*

I. Introduction

Development communication has emerged as a critical instrument for social transformation, particularly in societies grappling with poverty, inequality, health challenges, and governance deficits. Rooted in the belief that communication can catalyze positive social change, the field has evolved from early modernisation and diffusion models that emphasized one-way information transfer to more inclusive approaches that prioritize dialogue, participation, and empowerment (Yar'Adua et al., 2023a). In contemporary development practice, communication is no longer viewed merely as a supportive tool but as a central process through which development goals are negotiated, understood, and achieved (Yar'Adua & Aondover, 2020). As development challenges become increasingly complex and interconnected, the role of communication in shaping attitudes, influencing behavior, and mobilizing collective action has gained renewed scholarly and policy relevance.

In a globalised context, development communication operates within a rapidly transforming environment shaped by globalisation's economic integration, technological innovation, and cultural interconnections. The proliferation of digital media, transnational development actors, and global policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals has expanded the scope and reach of development communication beyond national boundaries (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019). However, this global interconnectedness also presents significant challenges, including persistent digital divides, unequal power relations in knowledge production, and the dominance of global narratives over local voices.

In this context, there have been several debates on the possibilities of getting a workable definition for globalisation. While in some perspective, the concept looks self-evident, another angle it looks complicated and obscure. By its nature, globalisation spans a multitude of disciplines, communities, and cultures. This, of course, allows for a variety of viewpoints, be they economic, social, or political. While information and communication are inevitable in every facet of endeavour, there is also need to emphasise the role communication institutions that is the media in the development of the society. Communication has to do with transfer of information from one person to another or from the use of electronic source to large anonymous audience (Onyejelem et al., 2025).

It also has to do with exchange of meanings to structures like mass media and the internet. This paper examines how development communication has contributed to the process of globalisation. Globalisation is not an isolated concept that can be defined at a go neither is a process that has a beginning or end. Thus, it is pertinent to analyse what development communication means in different societies and how globalisation affects development communication approaches in societies around the world (Vitalis et al., 2025). Against this backdrop, assessing development communication in a globalised context becomes imperative to understanding how communication practices can remain locally grounded while engaging global processes, ensuring that development initiatives are inclusive, culturally responsive, and socially sustainable.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Understanding the Concept of Globalisation

As an explanatory concept, globalisation is of relatively recent vintage. Indeed, the word 'globe' is over 400 years old, the use of the term 'globalisation' in a main sense only emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (Chadha & Kavoori, 2010). Scholars like Maikaba and Msughter (2019) have attempted to define globalisation based on their background and orientation. Hence it has been difficult adopting a standard definition. Maikaba and Msughter (2019) define globalisation as the process of intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across boundaries. According to McGillivray (2006), globalisation is one of the most pervasive, but deeply contested processes and developments in contemporary society. This is evident in the avalanche of writings and essays focusing on particular aspects of the process.

Scholars have thus disagreed not only on its actual definition, but also its nature, historical origins, relevance and impact in society. Indeed, Held and McGrew (2002) have described debates about it as one of the most fundamental debates of our time. Although in a sense, globalisation can be said to be a new term for an age-old process of social and economic transformation. The extensive scope of its operation has led to its present dominant

position in contemporary discourse. According to Stiglitz (2002) globalisation has reduced the sense of isolation felt in much of the developing world and has given many people in the developing countries access to knowledge well beyond the reach of even the wealthiest in any country a century ago.

According to a more detailed definition, globalization refers to the increasing importance of international trade, international relations, treaties, alliance, etc. International of course means between or among nations. The basic unit remains the nation even as relations among other nations become increasingly necessary and important (Daly, 1999, p.1). Globalisation, according to Berkeens (2006) refers to the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and societies that make up the present world system. It describes the process by which events, decisions, and activities in one part of the world come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe (Aliyu et al., 2023). Globalisation on the one hand defines a set of processes which embrace most of the globe or which operate world-wide and on the other hand implies an intensification of the levels of interaction, interconnectedness or interdependence between the states and societies which constitute the world community. While admitting that 'globalisation is very hard to define, Santos (2002) prefers a definition that is more sensitive to the social, political, and cultural dimensions of contemporary society. For him, globalisation is the process by which a given local condition or entity succeeds in extending its reach over the globe and, by doing so, develops the capacity to designate a rival social condition or entity as local.

According to Scolte cited in Beerkens (2006) there are five possible meanings for the word 'globalisation'. These are internationalisation, liberalisation, universalisation, westernisation/modernisation and deterritorialisation. More so, globalisation has been used to describe each and all of these phenomena. Each of the first four possible meanings is declared 'redundant' as the basis of an adequate definition. Only the last 'deterritorialisation' can provide that basis. For Scholte, it alone identifies something which is historically new, which has a real causal significance that is irreducible to the others, and which therefore merits the use of a new term.

2.2 Historical Evolution of Globalisation

Globalisation started subtly with the partitioning of African and Asian countries amongst European superpowers which led to exportation of foreign cultures and way of life into Africa and Asia. This was closely followed by various communication technologies ranging from paper, magazines, radio, Television, Optic-Fibre Cable, to the latest communication revolution of internet. Old and new media continue to co-exist but become networked and interpenetrating, creating new structures of communication through which journalism happens. Technology enabled connections permit, a redistribution of relationships, creation of new communities, and growth of new sub-national, supranational, and transnational spaces (Aondover et al., 2022).

According to Williams (2003) by breaking the barriers of time and space between people and nations, some argued that the media are in favour of what we share, what we have in common. This is apparently why McLuhan (1964) coined the term 'global village' to describe the globalisation phenomenon. He saw the growth in global media and communication technology as positive and beneficial. Electronic communications are producing an environment in which people are involved with and are responsible for, each other.

According to Dhameja and Medury (2004) the most vital development in the epoch of globalisation has been the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) influx. This is due to the seemingly endless connectivity, interactivity between and amongst world nations, sharing of information which is important to human and national development organisations. Thus, Aondover et al. (2023) observed that the third world countries are slowly but surely catching up with the technological advancement to solve its socio-economic problems. Even though the benefits of ICT come with the tag of a number of constraints, it is being considered as a panacea for all ills.

According to Mojaye and Aondover (2022), the issues such as whether ICT will be able to meet the needs of the weaker sections, or whether it will be able to bring the government, non-government and private sectors closer, or whether it will be able to establish equal and fair access to information on goods and services have become predominant in the third world context. Media globalisation has created a global family where differences are submerged. One major fault line lies within the broader context of 'media,' where journalism, film making, advertising, public relations and other related field of media have been seen as providing flows of information, entertainment, advertisement and transnational connections. That makes it a key factor in the phenomenon of 'media globalisation.'

McLuhan gave us the enduring image of the 'global village,' a quasi-utopian idea that has seeped into such theorising about the contribution of media (Reese, 2010). The metaphor brings expectations of an extensive, unitary community, with a corresponding set of universal, global values, undistorted by parochial interests and propaganda. The interaction of world media systems, however, has not as of yet yielded the kind of transnational media and programs that would support such 'village'-worthy content (Ferguson, 1992).

As a matter of fact, many of the communication barriers show no signs of coming down, with many specialised enclaves becoming stronger. In this respect, changes in media reflect the larger crux of globalisation that it simultaneously facilitates certain 'monoculture' global standards along with the proliferation of a host of micro-communities that were not possible before (Reese, 2010). In a different example, the global wine trade has led to convergent trends in internationally desirable tastes but also allowed a number of specialised local wineries to survive and flourish through the ability to reach global markets.

Information and communication played both positive and negative roles in the globalisation process (Aondover et al., 2022). Information and communication have doubt exposed the world to new ideas and culture, especially of even more developed nations. More so, it has widened the horizon of many countries as regards news ideas ranging from economic policies, political system. Also, information and communication have ensured that via communication technologies, there are no more barriers to communication of ideas. This has ensured that many people now have better ways of doing things rather than holding on tenaciously to what has been in existence for a long time.

III. Discussion

3.1 Communication, Globalization and Development

From the onset, the idea of globalisation was presumed to have started right from the colonial era when ideas and culture were communicated to the developing nations. During the first phase of globalisation, the invention of news agency like Agence French Press (AFP) led the way for media technology in the precipitation of globalisation process. This led to

communication of cultures from the western world to the developing world. For instance, the use of indirect rule via warrant chiefs ensured that new ideas were planted into the system of the third world nation. Same goes for French-speaking countries that were colonised by France via the policy of association. Thus, the globalisation agents made use of proper communication strategies in order to transmit cultures easily to their colonies.

According to Sen (2005) emergence of other communication technologies like the telegraph (invented by Johannes Gutenberg) ensured that communications were translated to many languages and this further aided the unification of the world for easy communication. Telephone invention also broke the barrier of distance as regards communication and dissemination of information across the world. The radio, television and the present internet all came along to fasten the circulation of information which was very instrumental in the globalisation process.

In this context, we can say communication and swift circulation of information aided countries to penetrate each other thereby breaking barriers of information flow, politics, economy and culture (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a). This also made transmission of idea easy thereby making the world what McLuhan described as global village.

On the other hand, the issue of multinational companies using the leverage of globalisation to cut across various nations with many products and services has been identified by scholars as a negative impact of globalisation. Curran and Sheaton (2003) argued that the third world country will end up giving up their cash-crops for export at a market price determined by the superior countries. The third worlds sadly sell their raw materials cheaply and end up buying finished products at exorbitant prices. This is the same scenario oil producing countries are facing with their crude oil. Of course, the media play a critical role in this process.

An argument was brought up by the authors that globalisation is widely agreed to kill off the state nation as an entity. This is in the sense that many countries have lost control of their economic management due to globalisation through Direct Foreign Investment and free market. Stiglitz (2006) and other scholars argued that the critics of globalisation accuse Western countries of hypocrisy, and the critics are right. The Western countries have pushed poor countries to eliminate trade barriers, but kept up their own barriers, preventing developing countries from exporting their agricultural products and so depriving them of desperately needed export income.

All things being equal, globalisation via the communication of new ideas of doing things has also brought some level of development in both developed and developing nations. While the former explored the advantages of Direct Foreign Investment to invest in the latter, the latter on the other hand enjoy some level of improved goods and services compared to the ones they can produced locally. Also, DFI has brought about employment opportunities especially in various sectors of the economy due to activities of foreign investors. Although the relationship benefit is not mutual, it cannot be overruled.

3.2 Development Communication

Development communication, according to Servaes (2012) is the social process of sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned which has been applied in research, theories and policy making. Communication and development have been viewed as closely intertwined

phenomena, where one is believed to guarantee the other. Mchphail cited in Mefalopoulos (2008) sees development communication as the process of intervening in a systematic or strategic manner with either media (print, radio, telephony, video, and the Internet), or education (training, literacy, schooling) for the purpose of positive social change. The change could be economic, personal, as in spiritual, social, cultural, or political. In this vein, it can be seen as the recognition of the power of communication as a catalyst for social development.

Basically, development communication doesn't start and end with the media alone; it uses communication holistically in reaching for development especially via the people. This could be via any media be it print or broadcast and basically and most importantly interpersonal and group communication. This is due to the fact that, there are every possibility that the majority of the regions that need development intervention the most are those that are not sophisticated enough to access the mass media. As such, door to door communication of new policies, decisions and development intervention is one of the best ways to reach people especially in the rural areas.

The aim of development communication, according to Sparks (2007) is to assist in changing situations and increasing the productivity of labour and the size of the national economies in order that citizens of developing countries could enjoy a better life. Development communication covers various aspects like political communication, population communication, health communication, agricultural communication and other areas of endeavour. While the communication sector is also part and parcel of the social system, it requires working extensively with other institutions like the ones mentioned above to bring about development.

Therefore, the role of media here is to communicate ideas, policies and instructions that will aid development (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024b). For example, health intervention program on malaria prevention will go a long way in educating and sensitising the populace about the causes, effects and prevention of the disease. In this vein, it is not the role of the media but the institutions to provide insecticides and treated nets in order to achieve the role of information dissemination in that sector. The same goes for agricultural communication where the media can relate to farmers but it's the duty of the institutions to provide fertilisers and other farm consumables to ensure success in the sector.

The development communication approach used in achieving any of these developments is basically determine by the objective intended. Globalisation can play a role here where multinational companies can be allowed to explore raw materials into finished goods thereby serving as a market for local farmers and providing employment. All of this depends on what the nation concerned sees as comparative advantage and the facilities available on ground to harness the resources.

3.3 Development Communication in a Globalized Context

Development communication in a globalised context simply has to do with how globalisation affects the impact of development communication cutting across different nations of the world. While development communication aims to communicate development approaches in the society by aiding the development approach process, globalisation in may enhance the process or thwart the process depending on the approaches used. In this vein, development communication approaches which could come in various forms in a bid to enhance development may adopt some development models which could explore the pros of globalisation to enhance development.

According to Angell cited in Beerkens (2006), the world economy has become as highly interdependent as to make national independence an anachronism, especially in financial markets. The interdependence is driven by science, technology and economics, the forces of modernity and these forces, not governments, determined international relations.

Yar'Adua and Msughter (2023) observed that development communication in developed communities may be to explore and exploit the openings in the globalisation process to generate capital across the world via Direct Foreign Investment (DFI) and internationalisation of capital. Stigliz (2002) argued that the rules of the game that govern globalisation are unfair, specifically designed to benefit the advanced industrial countries. In fact, some recent changes are so unfair that they have made some of the poorest countries actually worse off. Thus, when developing countries try to evolve approaches for development, it becomes difficult because everything is occurring in a globalized context.

Stigliz (2002) further argued that the way globalisation has been managed has taken away much of the developing countries' sovereignty, and their ability to make decisions themselves in key areas that affect their citizens' well-being. In this sense, it has undermined democracy. Perhaps most important, the economic system that has been pressed upon the developing countries in some cases essentially forced upon them is inappropriate and often grossly damaging. Globalisation should not mean the Americanisation of either economic policy or culture, but often it does and that has caused resentment.

According to Yar'Adua et al. (2023a), the media as an agent of development communication is also an agent of globalisation. This may bring about complication as the same media which is trying to spearhead development communication is trapped in the web of media imperialism as a result of globalisation. In this direction, rather than disseminating information in a local perspective that could enhance development, the media which are either directly or indirectly stooges of global multinational media organization tend to emulate their counterpart in the west. According Williams (2003) there is an unequal distribution of the information hardware and software throughout the global village. For example, 75% of the landline telephones are located in nine countries, while less than 10% of the world's telephone, telex and telegrams traffic occurs in Africa, Asia and Latin America where two-third of the planet population live.

They went further to say even there is not an equal exchange of ideas in the global village. Western values, lifestyle and product, in particular, those of United State prevail. For example, the English language is the lingua franca of the world and US entertainment programmes are mostly seen on global TV screens. Also, the control of the media and communication industries rest in the hand of small number of firms. Therefore, the issue of massive growth of global media is uneven and unequal (Yar'Adua & Aondover, 2020).

Furthermore, this situation affects all other subsystems in the social system either directly or subtly. The communication system needs the optimum performance of other social system to ensure development. While communicating how a favourable political or social system that could enhance development, the importation of foreign political and social ideology will no doubt hinder development process, especially in developing countries (Yar'Adua et al., 2023b). For instance, the democratic system of government in concomitant with the bicameral form of legislature has become inherent in developing nations especially those colonised by the British. This system hasn't necessarily proved to be effective but it has continuously become difficult if not impossible to change. The most development

communication has continuously met this and other form of hindrances which has curtailed development.

IV. Conclusion

Communication is an important segment of the social system which needs other subsystem to function adequately. It is basically through information and communication that ideas, and cultural traits can be passed from one people to another and consequently from one generation to another. In this context, the authors concluded that information and communication was very instrumental and as a matter of fact was the key behind the entire globalisation process. Also, communication, especially via the media played a double-edged role in the process of globalisation which may either enhance or derail development. While communication technologies broke borders and boundaries and exposed countries to new ideas, it also exposed nations to their superiors which made domination easier.

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