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Research Paper

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Development communication is used as an instrument to assess opportunities and risks in various fields such as economic, politics, science, agriculture, environment, education, and

nment, education, and other fields. It is also used for filling the gap between various fields and sections. It helps initiate prerequisite actions to bring change, betterment, and development in society. Thus, it, directly and indirectly, helps bring expected results. Development communication plays a distinguished role in human development all over the world. In this modern and technological era, development communication extensively uses technology and technological devices and it enters every walk of human life and it plays a key role in the betterment of human life and progress. Development communication spreads information, supports, and advocates various possibilities that are useful get developed. It propagates all sorts of information and opportunities for the well-being of humanity and sustainable development. It transmits information through various channels such as radio, broadcasting, film, communication research, and multimedia studies, TV, YouTube, various social networks, and through print and electronic media. Since the inception of development communication, media plays an unfailing role in transmitting development communication to its receivers. Thus, media literacy gains a prominent position in the success of development communication. This paper focuses on investigating the role and implications of media literacy in development communication.

KEYWORDS :Development communication, media literacy, importance, advantages

INTRODUCTION

Development communication plays a very key role in enhancing the active participation of individuals or communities in their development as well as conflict resolutions and disaster recoveries. Media is the prime transmitter of development communication. Development communication mostly depends on media for driving its information to home successfully. Media literacy helps media people in sharing, presenting information, and the audience understanding and using the information for their benefit. The role of media literacy in development communication is undoubtedly very highly useful as media transmits a major portion of information in the world.

People depend and access media for information for a number of purposes viz. study, research, knowing and doing business, getting and doing a job, knowing information about persons, goods, services, places, institutions, continents and countries, traditions and cultures, kings and kingdoms, wars and truces, art and music, sports and games, videos and audios, movies and serials, animals, etc. Thus, having awareness of media literacy has become a much-felt issue nowadays. Those who want to work in media as reporters, journalists, columnists, editors, presenters, etc., study media literacy in educational institutions or journalism institutions but most people acquire it by observing or reading, or watching media.

Definitions of the Terms

Media: The media is “the main ways that large numbers of people receive information and entertainment, that is television, radio, newspapers and the Internet” (OALD).

Literacy: Literacy is “the ability to read and write” (OALD).

Development: The OALD defines the term, development as “the gradual growth of sth so that it becomes more advanced, stronger, etc.”

Communication: Communication is “the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people information” (OALD).

Media literacy: “Media literacy is generally understood as an informed, critical understanding of the prevalent mass media, and it involves examining the techniques, technologies, and institutions involved in media production; being able to critically analyze media messages, and recognizing the role audiences play in making meaning from those messages” (Malik 2).

Development communication: Nora C. Quebral who has coined the term, defines development communication as “the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential” (Nora C. Quebral).

Why Development Communication?

Development communication, also called ‘Emancipation Communication,’ has a wide range of purposes and it serves its purpose using various approaches such as broadcasting, educating, propagating, and advocating information through both print and electronic media and by mobilizing communities to take initiative action towards the change of their perspective, thought process, attitude, behavior, etc. As a social approach, development communication abundantly influences the progress of a community or society. It helps an all-round human development in all possible ways.

Initially, the term, development communication is confined to addressing social development but over the past five decades, the term development communication undergoes many changes in its meaning and functions. It addresses all the societal problems and tries to help resolve them as well as helps improve the damaged social conditions. Development communication discharges different functions such as teaching, coaching, mentoring, fixing expectations, and providing feedback. The selection of the type of communication is done based on the person, the situation, and context, and formal or informal settings.

The objective of Development communication is to make an attempt to achieve a consensus, share knowledge and provide all the necessary information to achieve the target development in society.

It enables people to perceive significant concerns and to realize the common factors that help resolve problems or achieve the common goal.

Development communication is used as an instrument to assess opportunities and risks in various fields such as economics, politics, science, agriculture, environment, education, human services, psychology, social work, sociology, political science, history, and other fields. It is also used for filling the gap between various fields and sections. It helps initiate prerequisite actions to bring change, betterment, and development in society. Thus, it, directly and indirectly, helps bring expected results. “Development communication refers to the use of communication to facilitate social development. Development communication engages stakeholders and

policymakers, establishes conducive environments, assesses risks and opportunities, and promotes information exchange to create positive social change via sustainable development. Development communication techniques include information dissemination and education, behavior change, social marketing, social mobilization, media advocacy, communication for social change, and community participation" (Wikipedia). The concept of Development Communication in India took place in the 1940s with rural radio broadcasts in the majority of Indian languages.

The Role of Media Literacy in Development Communication

Development communication plays a distinguished role in human development all over the world. In this modern and technological era, development communication extensively uses technology and technological devices as channels for transmitting information and enters every walk of human life playing a key role in the betterment of human life and progress. Development communication spreads information, supports, and advocates various possibilities that are helpful to get developed. It propagates all sorts of opportunities for the well-being of humanity and sustainable development. It transmits information through various channels such as radio, broadcasting, film, communication research, and multimedia studies, TV, YouTube, various social networks, and through print and electronic media. Bessette defines development communication as a "planned and systematic application of communication resources, channels, approaches and strategies to support the goals of socio-economic, political and cultural development" (Bassette). Since the beginning, media plays a prominent role in transmitting development communication to its

receivers. There is no shade of doubt in saying that media literacy occupies a major position in the success of development communication. The role of media literacy in development communication has no little significance.

The ability to either read or write can be termed literacy. Media literacy is almost the same as literacy. The difference between general literacy and media literacy is that media literacy has a specific purpose of educating, enlightening, and making aware of certain dangers. "Media literacy is an umbrella term that involves practices allowing people to access, evaluate, manipulate, as well as produce media in a variety of forms. Basically, media literacy can help a person think critically about what they hear, see, or read in media." (Hasa). Media literacy also involves examining media content and social efforts; the functioning of media as well as the way the media is produced.

Media and media literacy are synonyms that help people to imbibe basic skills. Media can instruct people, educate and prompt them to participate in the development process. Media helps people to update themselves with happenings around them and make them aware of the important national and international issues and incidents. It plays a key role in making them understand the various barriers that come in the way of human progress.

Till recent decades, print media has been the major source of development communication to transmit information since it is the only source of information on the trending and significant issues and events around the globe. From the time of the freedom struggle, print media serves as an unfailing source of information. It plays a vital role in many movements, reforms, policy-making, etc. Print media is used by both government departments and the public for both receiving information and transmitting information since it covers and reaches a wide range of audiences and it is available in regional languages also.

Media can broadly be divided into three categories such as print media, broadcast media, and digital or new media. Print media: Newspapers, journals, periodicals, magazines, books, comics, brochures, advertisements, text messages, memes, photographs, etc. Broadcast media: Radio, TV, drama, music programs, etc. Electronic or Digital or New Media: Internet media platforms such

as websites, blogs, podcasts, and online streaming, audio messages, video games, etc. Social media or social network makes a momentous contribution in transmitting development communication. Development communication makes use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, TikTok, Pinterest, Reddit, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc., to share information among the stakeholders.

Media Literacy in Implementation of Development Communication Techniques

With the ever-widening demands and requirements of both individuals and society, the focus of development communication shifts from 'merely communicating information for the economical growth' to 'communicating information to make people realize the importance of active participation in communication as well as in the process of economic development and in acknowledging the other social issues that influence the individuals and community development along with changing their attitude and behavior positively. To make its mission a successful one, development communication effectively amalgamates interpersonal and media. That's why development communication is considered an integrated social approach. Today, media literacy plays a very significant role in understanding the development of communication and responding and reacting to it individually and society as a whole.

Development communication uses certain techniques such as information dissemination and education, behavior change, social marketing, social mobilization, media advocacy to bring positive change in a community or society. Most of the successful implementation of these techniques is done through various channels of media.

Information dissemination

Information dissemination is a very helpful technique that is used in the concept of development communication to forward information or knowledge of something to a wide range of audiences. Information is disseminated in two ways: through both print, electronic and social media and publication and presentation. Publications of program and policy briefs; project findings; and

presentations at conferences and professional association meetings are other than print media publications. These publications and presentations provide authentic information that is useful to tackle socioeconomic problems and to further human progress.

Whatever the channel for transmitting information, a large amount of information is disseminated through media or mass media including the internet. Both print and electronic media immensely play a major role in gathering from reliable sources and sharing it with individuals and communities. More importantly, electronic media grabs the attention of a majority of the public. It disseminates information in different forms: blogs, websites, images, videos, etc.

Information dissemination has the credibility of its content and reliability of the information. It improves the application ability of communities, and it motivates people to move on to research. People

improve their knowledge as it educates and/or explains certain concepts and processes that help the people to develop in their socio-economic conditions. People trust the information or knowledge transmitted through this technique and are considered as a necessary source for socio- economic development and behavior change.

Behavior change Development communication plays a very key role in bringing change in the individuals as well as society. It educates individuals or the community to bring change in their behavior positively. By improving understanding abilities, knowledge, beliefs, customs, attitudes, development communication brings a change in the behavior of individuals, community, and finally society. It educates people to adopt healthy and positive behaviors. It supports people to interact with other people. It motivates to actively engage in the process of behavior change. It educates people to find the opportunity for their growth. It enables people to utilize the opportunities for their development.

Through the concept of behavior change, development communication increases learning abilities and knowledge among target individuals or communities. The behavior change tries to bring positive change in not only socio-economic aspects of a community or society but also in the

thought process regarding improving health conditions. It identifies the areas in which the target people to be improved regarding health issues.

It identifies the target individuals or community to be changed; make them set their goals by providing necessary information; make them involved in the process that helps bring change their knowledge, thought process, norms, and behavior. The behavior change may be shunning alcohol consumption, tobacco usage, reckless attitude, etc. The concept of behavior change creates a healthy mental climate that helps gain self-control, self-discipline, health-improving manners, etc. It enables people how to improve self-motivation, and builds a sense of ownness.

Social marketing

Development communication through the concept of social marketing creates the awareness among the target people how to reach their economical, political and other social objectives successfully. Social marketing paves a platform to get comprehensive information regarding marketing trends and it interconnects people and organizations belonging to various fields. The term, social marketing can be understood as “the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product designing, pricing, communication, distribution and Marketing research” (Kotler and Zaltman).

Social marketing is different from business marketing and its objectives are to elevate the status of individuals and the community by providing all necessary information. The ultimate objective of social marketing is to bring change in the attitude and behavior of individuals and communities. Social marketing is successfully incorporated into the process of development communication to make it a reciprocal communication. With the inclusion of social marketing into development communication, development communication has become a two-way communication as the end audience has a chance to voice their opinions and feelings. Media literacy immensely helps people in understanding the strategies and happenings imparted through social marketing. Social marketing information provided through development communication helps a community or people to amplify the chances of getting growth and improve the standards of livelihood and social status. Development communication through social marketing enables people to not only realize

profitable opportunities but also analyze possible risks. This helps form a conducive environment for better understanding the happenings around to move forward in one's development and that of society’s. It enables people to understand their position in society and what opportunities they have and what they have to do to grab them. Social marketing is a technique used in development communication to expand activities intended at changing or maintaining people’s behavior for the economic benefit and other developmental areas of individuals and society as a whole.

Social Mobilization

The main objective of social mobilization is to raise the living standards of individuals in a community or a society. It mobilizes a group of people or a community or a society to get the awareness of knowledge or set of skills that help them to improve the standards of their life. It exposes the sources and opportunities that are available for them to get developed. Sometimes, it also targets to help them to achieve a particular goal. The concept of social mobilization is very useful when a community or society faces natural calamities such as earthquakes, cyclones, tsunami, etc., ethnic problems, or any other massive loss. The togetherness of a community or society is very important in such situations as the feeling of togetherness provides incredible moral support, a sense of belonging and security, inspiration, and inner motivation. This sort of psychological boosting is very necessary to overcome a massive loss or natural disaster. Social mobilization increases an individual's engagement in activities. It encourages individuals to participate in activities to change behavior and improve the standards of their life. Social or “Community Mobilization is the process of bringing together or empowering members of the community from various sectors to raise awareness on and demand for a particular development program. It facilitates change and development taking into account the felt needs of the community and leads to community organization” (Khasnabis et al).

Through social or community mobilization, the human and non-human resources are brought together to assume a developmental activity to see sustainable development in a community or society. It increases the participation of individuals in the development. it enhances the sense of responsibility and accountability among the participants. It improves governance abilities and develops a common vision by forming a proper structure in a community. Ultimately, it helps to bring the desired change in a community or society.

Media Advocacy

Media plays a very influential and powerful role in the change of individuals and society by transmitting all necessary information and knowledge because it has the capability to spread the information to each and everyone in the community or society and it has the ability to connect the public to the government and vice versa. Media advocacy promotes connectivity among people, between people and institutions, and between people and government. It enhances the voice of the public and helps reach the target audience. It helps people of a community or society who have common goals or interests or similar targets by leveraging their social networks and thus, it builds trust and creates bondage among them to work collectively to achieve their goals.

Media advocacy is used as a strategy to enhance public policy initiatives to achieve the target goals of society. It aims to bring

positive change in society. It is a very influential technique that has the power to create or alter the public's view of an issue. It can prompt people to act on it. Media advocacy shares the interests of individuals or a group of people and recommends or supports a cause or policy and it encourages people to give their voice.

Benefits of the Awareness of Media Literacy

Media literacy helps to think critically about the information published or presented in media; helps understand various points of view; teaches how to create responsible media content; educates to be a clever consumer of both information and products; helps recognize the role of media in culture and enables to comprehend the goal of the producer of the media.

There are many profits to individuals and society of media literacy. Media literacy enables people more aware of not only the content presented by media but also how to respond to it by analyzing it critically. So they can influence both the content presented in media and media itself as well as themselves. Media literacy enables people to express their opinions and perceptions of various social issues.

Media literacy skills such as analysis, evaluation, grouping, induction, deduction, synthesis, and abstracting are very helpful in understanding information available in any sort of media platform. Media literacy skills enable the audience to distinguish genuine information from manipulated or fake information. Thus, Media literacy is helpful in not only gathering, sorting, and producing information in any sort of media but also understanding and interpreting it well. The awareness of media literacy is useful not only to the presenters of the information but also to the receivers (audience) of the information.

Media has an ineligible impact on its readers and influences them immensely. Media literacy enables people to critically evaluate the content of media as well as to contribute to media. It motivates the public to take part in the developmental activities of their communities as well as their nation. It persuades the audience to do or not to do.

CONCLUSION

The role of media literacy in development communication is very significant because that shows income generation sources and makes people participate in income generation activities in the community as well as in society. It plays a very important role in the act of development communication as an information facilitator. Media literacy helps communities and other stakeholders to better understand the information presented in both print and electronic media. People's awareness of media literacy strengthens not only individuals and society but also the role of media and its content.

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