

The Nexus between Communication and Development Planning. Exploring the Communication Methods Used by Development Planners in Ghana

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Abstract

The nexus between Planning and communication especially in Africa is barely explored despite suggestions by renowned writers such as Habermas, whose communicative action theory has informed several Planning strategies that focus on providing more practical frameworks for understanding and practicing in the field. Using the case study methodology, this study explored the case of four agencies engaged in development planning activities in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana. It was found out the Planners hardly employ the wide range of communication methods available. This study reveals that the situation results from Planners' preference for keeping to comfort-zones shaped by their limited levels of awareness, knowledge and competence and recommends that Planner employ the broad range of options to achieve greater efficacy in the communicative process of development planning.

Keywords: Communicative planning, communication methods, development planning, participation, Ghana

1. Introduction

The attraction of participatory approaches to planning since the early 1990s resulted primarily from the anticipated contribution of such approaches to project sustainability. According to the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO, 2007), participatory development planning where communities were directly engaged in defining their developmental problems and solutions had gained root in many development organisation, especially Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) by the late 1980s. Increasingly, the planning process has been recognized as an interactive and dialogic process in which communication plays an important role. In the 1980s, considerable efforts that produced extended debates but with limited development were dedicated to 'competing conceptions of rationality and establishing an appropriate place for rationality in planning theory' (Harris, 2002: 21). After opportunities for centre-stage theoretical debates on issues that were hitherto discussed on the fringes, approaches to planning that emphasize the role of the Planner as in a communicative process have emerged. Collaborative planning and communicative rationality fall within this range and have heavy reliance on Habermas' Theory of Communicative action. With their heavy emphasis on the practicalities of planning, they are better described as approaches to planning that attempt to serve 'both as a framework for understanding and as a framework for practical action' (Harris, 2002: 23). The emphasis hereby is on Planners' role as players who foster participatory processes to enable citizens to access their rights, to support their voices and to re-direct resources to the needy (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002: 66).

While Planners can facilitate communication between stakeholders, they can also hinder the communication by blocking communication opportunities or using the wrong methods of communication. In this work, we do not focus on the plan but on the role of the Planner. In his contribution to the discourse on planning as a participatory process, Jenssen (1998) indicates that planning is a dialogic process characterised by the interaction among different actors who have different interests as well as different negotiation capacities. In the process, conflicts and tensions arise which have to be resolved amicably. Fekade (1994) also notes that there are different stakeholders representing different interests; conflicts between stakeholders; and overlapping interests are common occurrences that become visible when stakeholders are brought together (Fekade, 1994). The planning process therefore involves 'conflict solving, consensus building, learning and increasing mutual understanding and knowledge' generation (Jenssen, 1998:32). These draw attention to the importance of communication in the planning process. In this paper, we examine how Planners communicate.

Especially in countries such as Ghana where development planning has been decentralized to the local governments, with the expectation that local governance will foster stakeholders participation in planning processes (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2010; World Bank Group, 2001; Tabaire and Okao 2010), the roles of Planners as facilitators, coordinators and communicators have become very important. Indeed, the emphasis in recent times is on participatory approaches to planning. Yet communication in participatory planning is not always a harmonious process. It is therefore understandable that Planners cannot be perceived as mere administrators. They are initiators, negotiators, facilitators and managers of the development

process (see Jensen, 1994). Particularly with the role as a facilitator in the development process, the Planner is more likely to achieve good contributions from stakeholders by employing good and effective communication methods; for example on what developmental problems an area has, how to solve them and areas that deserve priority. This way, stakeholders begin to feel committed to the development planning process (Jensen, 1994).

Communication in participatory planning has the potential of bringing together information and views from a diversity of sources rapidly. However, the extent to which participatory methods yield their potentials depends critically on how carefully they are used and the context. Participatory approaches are not a fixed set of communication methods, materials and tools but a range of possible techniques which need to be flexibly adapted to particular situations and needs. Often problems that arise can be resolved through innovation within the methods themselves.

Despite the sway in planning literature towards approaches that appreciate planning as a communicative process, there seems not to be much in the literature to explore communication options and methods¹ available to Planners or address the experiences of Planners in the use of the different communication methods that are available today. Existing literature points out the benefits to be derived from recognising the communicative processes that planning entails. They include consensus building, multi-stakeholder collaboration, conflict resolution and knowledge generation. Indeed, the importance of communication has featured significantly in the area of health planning where research has underscored the grave importance of communication (Institute for healthcare communication, 2011; Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005; Kasisomayajula, 2006). Nonetheless, there is a dearth of information on the appropriateness of the different communication methods for different planning purposes, appropriateness for various stakeholders, how the methods should be used and the issues that inform Planners' choice of particular communication methods. We recognise though that the importance to Planners of the use of graphic tools such as maps, graphs and tables that capture data are well acknowledged in planning literature. Anyaegbunam et al. (2004:6) observe that 'most of the development workers, who work with the rural people, frequently lack the skills, tools, techniques and attributes to ... involve them in the development process'. They further indicate that inadequate 'practical attention has been paid to the research, development or adaptation of techniques and training approaches' to facilitate communication with stakeholders especially in rural areas. This paper considers these issues within the context of Ghana. It seeks to identify the main communication methods used by Planners as well as examine the issues that inform their choice of communication methods and the appropriateness of the methods for the participants used in participatory planning agencies in Ghana.

2. The Contextual Scope

The transformation of planning ideologies has seen shifts among several approaches:

- Those approaches that considered planners to be agents who acted as instruments of the dominant interests - as the structuralists analysis seeks to convey
- Those that agree that Planners identify problems in the structure (Foley, 1997: 3) but through their use of discretionary power and the power of communication they are able to bring change by influencing the context. Thereby, they challenging and questioning the status quo (ideology, political practices, power structure prevailing) and wrong perceptions; often by inserting communicative acts in the planning process within the context prevailing (Foley, 1993: 3)
- There are the more recent planning approaches which focus more on the practicalities of the planning process and the importance of communication in the process. This is what Innes (1995) has described as a 'new paradigm' in planning theory.

The field of Planning has become more open to more elaborate and expressive forms of communication. Actual communication in the planning process has seen the suggestion of methods such as simulation games, focus groups, theatre and action research in furtherance of participatory planning (Gutenschwager 2004: 192). The range of communication methods to be considered by planners has therefore been broadened from reports, memos and letters to more interactive methods that solicit the involvement and views of stakeholders. In this paper, we refer to methods other than reports, memos and letters as the 'alternative communication methods'.

Ghana's planning field has seen the use of the mass media (radio, television, print media and electronic media), community-based methods and interpersonal communication. Access to the mass media has enabled Planners to reach a wide audience within much shorter periods. However, with the proliferation of media houses which have political biases and exhibit low ethical standards (Awiah, 2013; Obeng-Quaidoo, 1988; Ghana News Agency, 2013) the mass media is often considered less credible than more interpersonal sources of information (Mehrabani et al., 2013). Community-based methods involve the use of well-established community avenues such as fairs, malls and libraries (CDC, 2004).

¹ By communication methods we mean the techniques used to communicate.

Community-based methods can re-enforce and expand upon media messages and offer instructions. Like interpersonal methods, community-based methods support active participation and are two-way, allowing discussion, clarification and providing opportunity for motivation. Interpersonal methods provide opportunity for Planners to be in close proximity to their participants during the planning process.

In interpersonal communication, there are several sensory channels that are active and feedback is instant (Gouran et al., 1994). These channels provide opportunity for the Planner to put issues in a more familiar context. Formal meetings and group discussions fall within the interpersonal communication category.

A last category – which may be separated from other forms of interpersonal communication because of its nature – is the popular media. The popular media include story-telling, drama, music and drumming as well as dance (all of which can be produced with the involvement of members of the community). These methods have been found to be very effective in passing on information to stakeholders in some African countries; for example Kenya. They have the ability to attract and hold participants' attention by entertaining them. They present messages in such interesting and entertaining manner '...by the incorporation of drama, humour of music in a presentation and people are more apt to remember the message' (Antione, cited in Fry, 1997). With due consideration for the strengths and limitations of the various methods, the study covered as many of the available communication methods as possible.

3. Factors To Be Considered By Planners In The Assessment And Selection Of Communication Methods

The American Planning Association (2013) identifies writing and synthesis skills as necessary to the Planner's job. Over the last decade, Planners have become proficient in doing presentations and in the use of PowerPoint and other visual technologies that aid the communication of messages about their plans, development guidelines, information sharing and change communication. The power of communication as entailed in presentations is particularly important to Planners in the private sector.

In principle, planning for the use of communication in the delivery of project or programme goals follows basic steps of (a) situational analysis, (b) determination of the communication goal and objectives, the main message(s), and evaluation of communication options available to ascertain which option suits the resources available, would be most effective for reaching the target audience and ultimately lead to the realisation of the set goals and objectives, (c) designing of the communication plan and budget, as well as plans for monitoring progress on the communication effort, and (d) implementing and evaluating the communication effort. While all the steps are important, making the right assessment of the communication options (i.e. the methods) available requires careful consideration as the wrong choice can mar the success of the communicative effort (Inett & Shewchuk, 2003).

Whether in the private sector or the public sector, Planners ought to consider issues of time availability, suitability for contents and participants, and project objectives when deciding on the method to adopt. The Planner's understanding of participants in the planning process ought to be informed by the analysis of his or her audience with due consideration for their characteristics, preferences and interests. The Planner also has to understand the properties of the different communication methods available to him or her; and the time and financial requirements of the methods. The two elements mentioned have to be carefully considered within the context of the project goals and objectives in order to select the right communication method to use as illustrated in Figure 1. We delve into these further in the following paragraphs.

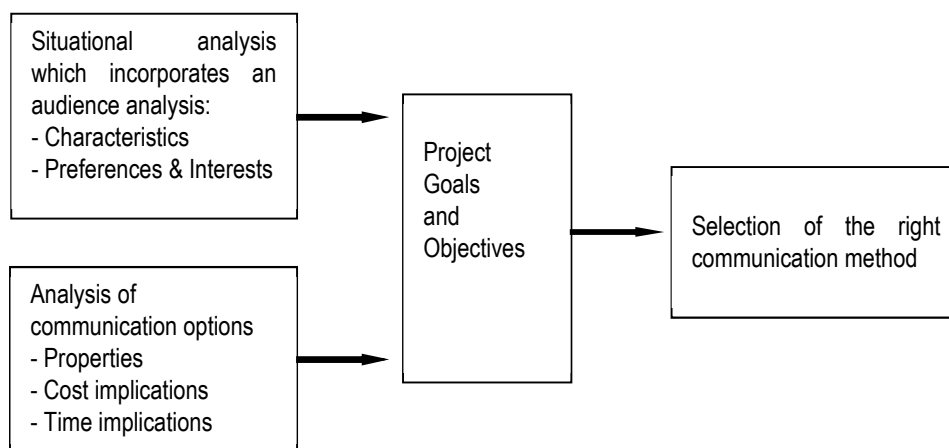


Figure 1: Determinants for the selection of the right communication framework
Source: Authors' Construct, 2013

Suitability of the method used: This concerns the comprehensiveness and satisfaction derived from the method. It relates to the ability of the methods to convey the message well, simply, easily and interestingly. If the method used to communicate the message is not understood by the participants, then the participants are less likely to comprehend the message easily. Depending on the literacy level of participants, some methods may be found to be more easily comprehensible than others. For example an illiterate community is likely to more easily comprehend and internalise messages delivered through the popular media such as dance, drama, music and groups discussions than through lengthy presentations.

Beyond the participants, certain issues are better communicated using certain tools. Illustrating events (for example, processes and experiences of cocoa farmers in adopting improved farming techniques) that have taken place in another location, for example is better done by audio-visuals or a combination of audio-visuals and presentations rather than presentation using flipcharts (Office of Cancer Communications: 1989; WRAP, Undated). It is in this regard that the Planner needs to consider the appropriateness of the method for the planning issues being communicated.

Time spent using a method: Participants' ability to maintain focus on the issues being dealt with is influenced by the characteristics of the audience and the length of time taken by the communication event. The Planner may not have control over the characteristics of the participants but he has control over time spent. Generally, when a communication method takes too long and involves little variance in activity, the participants soon get tired and lost.

Preparation for the use of some methods takes much longer than other methods. A Planner therefore must consider the estimated date for the completion of the project and relate it to the time needed to prepare and deliver the message that is to be communicated. The method finally chosen should be one which will least affect the critical activities and the final completion of the project.

Suitability of tools or materials used: Materials used in a communication process constitute an important part of using the communication method. A good choice of materials will aid the success of the method and the communication process. The materials ought to provide appropriate variety to the communication process and be easy for participants to understand, use and see.

Suitability of language used: This concerns familiarity of the participants with the language used. Language is the medium of communication. It should be easily understood by the audience otherwise the planner will fail to communicate successfully. Some languages work well with literate audiences. Others work well with both literate and non-literate audiences. For this reason, Planners ought to be mindful of the potentials that the language used will bring to the planning activity and choose the method that better suits the intended language.

Appropriateness for participatory planning: Participatory planning approaches are the trend in planning in several parts of Africa. Such approaches aim at reaping the benefits that can be obtained from target group participation in the planning process. Indeed, Kauzya (2003) suggests that participation of should be in the setting of priorities, planning, production and paying for projects; and consumers should further participate by paying for their consumption of the products/yields of the project. Some methods of communication foster more stakeholder involvement and discussion by virtue of their nature. Such methods offer more opportunities for audience involvement (Jarvis et al., 2002; Boggs et al., 2007). For example, a skit or a role-play performed by community members can be used to illustrate sensitive issues about which community members have difficulty talking. This is a good way to generate, albeit indirectly, discussion among community members about the issue. In discussing the contents of the skit, the community members indirectly discuss their context and are involved in defining solutions/recommendations.

Attainment of the project objectives: The objectives of the communication activities that Planners engage in are tied to their project objectives. It is imperative that the Planner considers the extent to which a communication method is likely to assist the project to achieve its main objectives. This constitutes the main aim of the Planner who has been placed in charge of a project and thereby the reason for the communicative processes that take place.

Cost considerations: Planning projects and programmes must be done within the constraints of a budget. The Planner has to be mindful of the amount of funds available to the project so that he does not spend unrealistic proportions of project fund on communication. Some methods are more expensive to use than others. According to the Office of Cancer Communications (1989: 21), communication materials could represent a major expenditure for a programme. It is therefore necessary to ensure that notwithstanding the importance of communication, methods that are used support active participation, allow discussion and clarification but do not 'blow the budget'.

Conversance with the communication methods: The various ways of handling an issue become options for consideration only when the planner is aware of the method and how it can be used. A good appreciation of the benefits that a method brings to bear on the planning process is necessary when choosing a method. Beyond knowing and appreciating the method, the planner has to be comfortable using it. This can be achieved through

training in the use of the method. (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2002; Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), 2001; Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 1993 and 1997).

4. Research Method

The study was conducted within the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana because Kumasi has a wealth of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private planning agencies, government departments and foreign development agencies operating in the field of planning. Private agencies that were involved in participatory planning, who provide planning services to public sector entities and whose planning functions generally span the entire country were the focus of the study because they were very likely to have a lot of relevant experiences. Selected agencies were engaged in the broad range of activities involved in development planning: advocacy, project or programme planning, facilitation and implementation of projects at the national, regional, sectoral, institutional, and community levels. The criteria used for selecting the agencies were: (a) the duration of operation of the agency, (b) involvement in participatory planning, (c) whether the agency was actively engaged in a project that relied on participatory planning over data collection period, and (d) convergences of perception of experts on the prominence of the various planning agencies in the use of participatory planning. The agencies had to have been operating for at least five years: a period of time that is relatively long enough for the agency to have had an impact through its activities. Based on the above criteria, three planning agencies met the criteria and were purposively selected and studied.

In order to meet first hand and obtain responses from the people, whom the Planners in the selected agencies interacted with in the planning process, project workshops (in the development planning field) were used to gather data on their experiences in the participatory process. Data was collected from five project workshops between March and May, 2012. The first workshop was held at Buoho in Kumasi and was on the theme: 'reducing the stigmatisation of people living with HIV and AIDS'. The second workshop focused on the preparation of business plans for small scale businesses and it was held at Adum in Kumasi. The third workshop was conducted at Amakom in Kumasi. Its focus was on developing skills of participants and training them on how to achieve a livelihood. The fourth workshop was held at Kokomlemlle in Accra on the theme: 'civil society strengthening'. It addressed the participation of civil society in the management and formulation of policy for the forest sector. The fifth workshop was on knowledge management in the water and sanitation sector in Ghana. It focused on improving access to and use of information and knowledge in the water sector. It was held at Ridge in Accra. The workshop respondents comprised two main categories: facilitators/planners and participants. Facilitators provided background information about the workshop (for example the purpose, reasons for choosing the methods used, location and duration of the workshop).

Workshop participants provided information on their opinions and experiences with the methods used through an interviewer administered questionnaire. One hundred and twenty (120) participants out of a sample frame of one hundred and sixty (160) participants (with a 4.5% error margin) were selected using simple random sampling and were interviewed using questionnaires. They comprised seventy-five percent of participants at each workshop. The facilitators (5) were purposively selected to provide responses because they were in a good position to provide the required data. Semi-structured observation was used to note participants' general reaction to the methods used. The data collected was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data was analysed qualitatively using Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. In order to make computation and comparison easier and more specific, averages were used to quantify and analyse responses. T-test was used to ascertain if there were significant differences between the samples. The test results revealed that the populations were not significantly different at 1% and 5% level of significance, with the exception of Workshop 2. As a result, data from Workshop 2 has been analysed and discussed separately.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 Trends in the use of communication materials

The main methods used by the planning agencies were group discussions, presentation and role plays. A summary of the extent of application of the various communication methods that are readily available to Planners in Ghana is presented in Table 1. The first column of the table contains a list of the agencies that were studied. The first row categorises the methods according to their type while the second row provides further details on the particular method considered under each category. The methods rated '2' are those that are used very often (i.e. in almost every project handled by the agency). Those rated '1' (meaning often) are those used frequently but not in every project. Those rated '0' (meaning seldom or never) are those that have only been used when necessary or have never been used.

The use of report writing, letters and memos are not considered critical in this paper because they were indispensable to planning agencies. Among the agencies studied, methods within the mass media and community categories were less popular. Presentation was used in every project although the time and purpose for which it

was used varied among the projects. Group discussion was also a popular method among the planning agencies. As the fifth column of Table 1 shows, role plays were used but were less popular than group discussions.

Table 1: Application of communication methods by planning agencies

Method ↓ Agency	Written forms	Interpersonal methods			Popular media			Mass media			Audio-visual	Elec-tronic	Community-based methods		
	Letters/reports/memos	Presentations	Group discussions	Role plays	Drama/skits/story telling	Dance	Music/drumming	Radio	News-paper	TV	Video/Film	Inter-net	Fairs	Libra-ries	Mobile public address systems
Agency 1	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agency 2	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agency 3	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

KEY: 0 - Seldom/Never (only when necessary) 2 - Very often (almost every project) 1- Often (60 – 75% of projects).

Source: Authors' Construct, 2013

As indicated by the ubiquity of modal value (0), the range of communication methods being used is limited. Altogether, less than 70% of the options available were being used. The used options were skewed towards written and interpersonal communication methods. This suggests that the strengths of the other communication methods, have not influenced Planner's use of the communication tools.

Although there exist several alternative communication methods that offer more opportunities for workshop participants to make contribution to proceedings, consideration was given to the other options when the Planners considered it a necessity to do so. Some of the alternatives found in the popular media category (for example, skits) offer great opportunity to generate audience interest and help achieve good communication and lively participation when combined with follow-up discussions. In sum, the emphasis on participatory planning has not resulted in the use of a wide range of communication methods, as the range of communication methods available are still not extensively explored by Planners. As Table 1 shows, less than a third of the methods available are being harnessed.

5.2 Processes and satisfaction derived from planners' use of communication methods

Current emphasis on the incorporation of a communication component in plans as required by the Ghana's National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and by international donors has been in recognition of the importance of communication in planning. Often, such requirements have influence on the extent to which varied and more participatory approaches to planning are used in projects (Ocloo, 2004). The entire process the Planner goes through to incorporate communication into project design for participatory planning can be broken down into six steps as follows-

- Definition of the target audience.
- Determination of the communication type to be used.
- Identification of communication methods that can be used.
- Definition of the desired level of audience participation.
- Choice of one or more methods to use.
- Obtaining feedback through evaluation (see for example U.S. department of health & human services, n.d; Inett and Shewchuk, 2003).

Figure 2 illustrates the entire process diagrammatically.

Among all the Planners interviewed, none of them could elucidate clearly a systematic process through which they selected the communication methods that they used. None had researched or been trained in the use of methods other than in written or interpersonal methods as Table 2 shows. As a result, the systematic process through which communication methods are selected – as presented above and in the section on the contextual scope- was lost on them. They only considered the methods that the agency had been using traditionally – the status quo. The first column of Table 2 shows the planning agencies and their facilitators at the workshops (projects).

For the first agency, one facilitator and one workshop was considered. This is illustrated as 1/ Fac. 1. For the third agency, three workshops with a facilitator each were considered. This is illustrated as 3/Fac. 1 for the first workshop; while the second workshop is represented by 3/Fac. 2. The first two rows show the categories of methods being used by the Planning Agencies. The respondents were asked whether they had been trained or

had researched into the various communication methods. Their responses are captured as a percentage of the total number of communication methods available on which they could have been trained.

They were therefore more comfortable with the written communication and interpersonal communication categories. Indeed, as the Table shows none of the planning agencies had staff who had researched or been trained in as much as a third (1/3) of the communication methods. With hardly any awareness about the potential benefits of the adoption of other communication methods the respondents hardly had any motivation to adopt them.

Although literature identifies benefits to be derived from using the various methods, the extent of success depends largely on the peculiarities of each participant (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2008; Office of Cancer Communications, 1989). In principle, it is important that the issues outlined in the conceptual framework of this paper are considered before choosing a method in order to assure success. Practically, the ultimate aim is for Planners to communicate successfully. Although the issues elucidated in the conceptual framework are relevant according to the literature, all the Planners (100%) interviewed indicated that very little time (<6 hours per 6 month project) is spent considering the methods to be used for communicating with participants. general tendency was to keep to the methods that they were

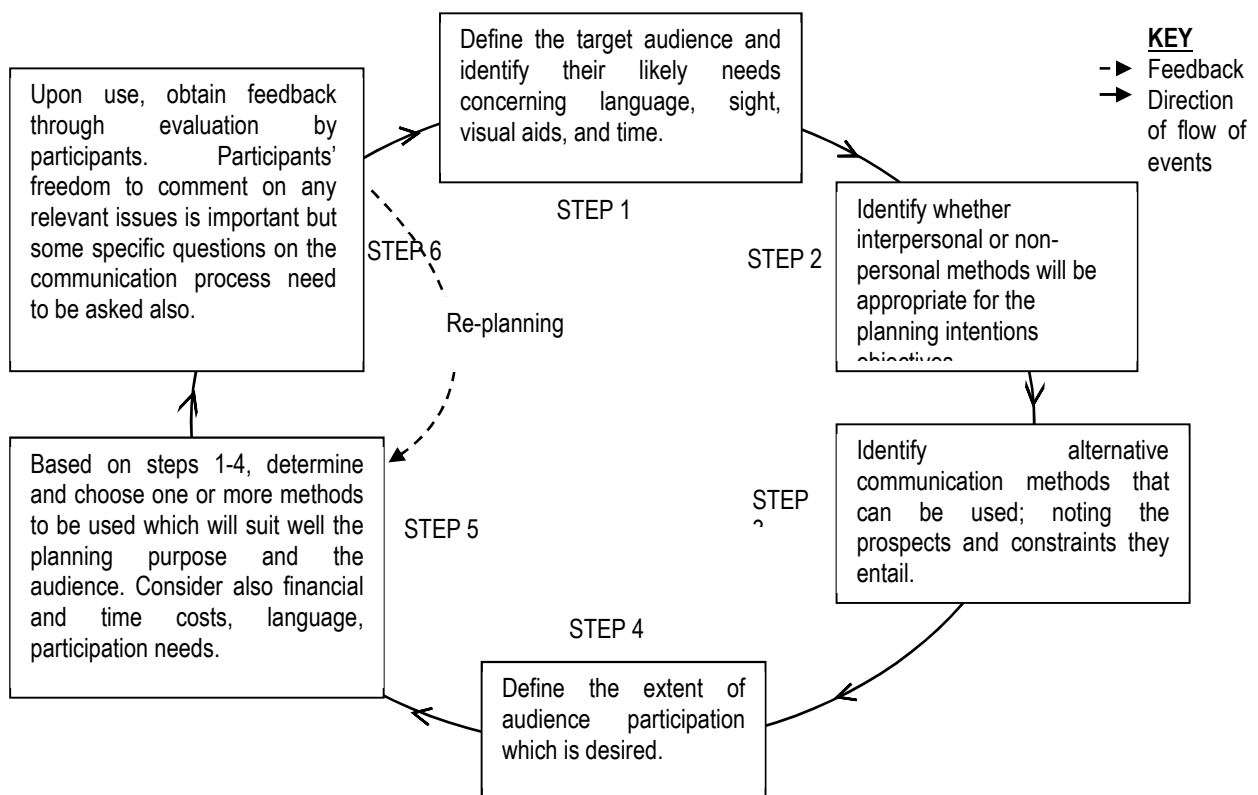


Figure 2: The process of selecting an appropriate communication method for participants
 Source: Authors' Construct, 2013

Table 2: Summary of facilitators and communication methods on which they had been trained or had researched on

Method ↓ Agency/facilitator →	Values in percentage			
	Written forms	Interpersonal methods	Other methods	Summary
1/Fac. 1	6	12	0	18
2/Fac. 1	6	12	0	18
3/Fac. 1	6	18	0	24
3/Fac. 2	6	18	0	24
3/Fac. 3	6	6	0	12

Source: Authors' Construct, 2013

already familiar with; and to deliberate on how to adapt it to suit project activities. Therefore we assessed appropriateness of methods used in the cases studied from the participants' perspective by analyzing the

averages (mode) of the responses. The criteria were adapted from the propositions in literature on the issues that should inform the choice of communication methods. The respondents provided information pertaining to some criteria. These criteria were derived; from the literature reviewed and which informed the contextual scope to this paper (U.S. department of health & human services, 2002ATSDR, 2001; FAO, 1993 and 1997):

- Comprehension and satisfaction derived from the communication method used.
- Language used
- Level of participation
- Time spent using the method
- Skill of modernization and facilitation
- Attainment of the objectives of the communication process

Respondents provided rated responses on the various performance criteria, such that the better performances scored higher ratings. Using the Likert scale participants chose from five categories of ratings. Ratings for each criteria (and their sub-criteria) ranged from zero to four; where zero meant not good, one meant quite good, two meant good, three meant very good, and four meant excellent. The Likert scale, which is well accepted as a means for assessing personal traits, preferences, attitudes and inclinations, provided as simple way for participants to grade their preferences (Edmondson, 2005; Likert, 1932; Bowling, 1997; Burns & Grove, 1997; McLeod, 2008). Ratings for each sub-criteria to the five major criteria listed above, were collated and their averages determined as the rating on the criteria. Table 3 presents a summary of the average ratings from responses on 90 participants at four workshops² (workshops one, three, four and five) used in the study. To be considered as the average score (see second column of Table 3), a rating had to be representative of the response of at least 50% of participants.

Some responses were one rating lower than the average rating (4) and in other instances responses were up to two ratings lower than the average rating; giving variability ranges of one and two respectively. The third column in Table 3 shows the ranges of variability corresponding to the various indicators (criteria). The fourth and fifth columns respectively show the number of respondents whose responses were lower than the average, and the percentage of the responses which were lower. From the four workshops, presentation and groups discussions were found to be the dominant methods of communication. All four workshops made use of flipcharts, PowerPoint slides and handouts. These materials did not dominate by chance. The Planners were rational and sought to take advantage of the benefits to be derived from using them. They were trained and confident in their use of the materials and the methods.

Table 3: Summary of data on selected indicators from Workshops One, Three, Four and Five

Indicator	Average score			Range of variability			Number of variant responses			Variant responses in percentages		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Suitability of materials used	4	4	-	2	2	-	17	12	-	19	13	-
Suitability of methods used	4	4	4	2	2	-	19	12	-	21	13	-
Appropriateness of facilitation skills/Competence exhibited by facilitator in use of method	4	4	3	1	1	1	5	11	5	5	12	5
Appropriateness of method used for participatory planning	4	4	4	2	1	-	11	10	-	12	11	-
Suitability of language used	4	4	4	1	1	-	13	14	-	14	16	-
Suitability of length of time spent using a method	4	4	4	1	1	-	38	22	-	42	24	-

‘A’ refers to presentations ‘B’ refers to group discussions ‘C’ refers to role plays ‘-’ means not applicable

Source: Authors’ Construct, 2013

Table 4 presents a summary of responses from the thirty respondents from workshop two (excluding the facilitators). It indicates the average score on each indicator. The second column in the table presents the average score for the two communication methods used at workshop two (presentations and group discussions).

² Data collected from the workshops were subjected to statistical tests (t-Test). The results revealed that all workshops (with the exception of Workshop 2) belonged to similar populations: there was significant difference (at 1% and 5% level of significance) between the responses obtained from workshop two and the other workshops. As a result, data from workshop two have been considered separately.

Table 4: Summary of averages from all five workshops

Indicator	Average score from Workshop Two			Average scores from the four Workshops		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
Suitability of materials used	4	4		4	4	-
Suitability of methods used	2	3		4	4	4
Appropriateness of facilitation skills/Competence exhibited by facilitator in use of method	2	2		4	4	3
Appropriateness of method used for participatory planning	2	4		4	4	4
Suitability of language used	2	3		4	4	4
Suitability of length of time spent using a method	2	2		4	4	4

‘A’ refers to presentations ‘B’ refers to group discussions ‘C’ refers to role plays ‘-’ means not applicable

Source: Authors’ Construct, 2013

To facilitate comparison, the third column in the table shows the average score from the other workshops put together (same as the second column in Table 3). Comparison of columns two and three reveals that there was an obvious difference between the average ratings of Workshop Two and the average ratings for the four other Workshops. It is important to note that at Workshop Two the two of the communication methods used in the other Workshops and the same type of materials were used. Participants therefore found the sessions to be long and unexciting. What was evidently different was the demeanour of the facilitator. The facilitator showed much less confidence in the use of the methods and materials. The shortfall underscores the importance of the facilitator as the pivot which holds the communication process together.

Notwithstanding the outcomes of the assessment on Workshop Two, it is evident from all five workshops that the Planners’ audiences were satisfied with their focus on interpersonal communication and on the three methods. The high levels of satisfaction (note the dominance of the highest rating in the participants’ assessments) leave much less motivation for Planners to seek alternative methods of communicating with their stakeholders. It is therefore logical that only the three communication methods were being used. The ability of the planning agencies to achieve such satisfactory performance without due consideration for the emphasis placed upon the criteria that we identified from literature casts doubt on the relevance of the criteria to a Planner who has access to the three dominant methods and to written communication methods. It is nonetheless important that the potentials that the other methods possess are explored; for the possibility of improving the current state further. People’s attitudes and perceptions are the result of their personal experience, relationships, values, religious belief, education or lack thereof (Stern, 2011 & Scheonwandt, 2008). We are all composites, particularly people expressing their ideas. The respondents had only experienced the three interpersonal communication methods that the Planners use they could only compare the three methods in the interpersonal category. It is therefore not surprising that the respondents rated the communication methods being used highly. It is likewise not out of place that the planning agencies considered their methods to be good enough and hardly had the motivation to use other communication methods. Opening up to other methods has the potential of making planning activities less mundane by offering more variety and more interesting ways of handling the communicative processes in planning.

6. Conclusion

The nexus between planning and communication remains barely exploited, although there exists much literature on communication and on planning respectively. The main communication methods found where communication meets with planning in practice are few: presentations, group discussions and role plays; although there is a lot more that communication has to offer planning. The state of stakeholder satisfaction with existing communicative practices in the field of development planning, coupled with the limited training and awareness among Planners of alternative methods leaves little impetus for Planners to improve upon their communication methods. In this study, none of the Planners were aware of the potentials that the entire range of alternative communication methods offers to Planners. Potentials can only be harnessed to serve as resources when the actor is aware of its existence. Since Planners kept to those methods that they were conversant with, the level of awareness among Planners on communication methods, the prospects that the methods offer to planning, issues that ought to be considered when choosing a method and how the different communication methods can be used to attain more effective communication has to be improved; if Planners are to enhance their communication efforts through the use of diverse communication methods.

Development Planners ought to make more effort to explore the potentials of various communication methods available. Exploring the nexus between communication and development planning would bring other communication methods to the fore and thereby, enable Planners to have a broader choice range by which to achieve greater efficacy in the communicative processes that they engage in.

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