Motivating Factors to the Engagement of Kenyan Personalities in Communication Development for Societal Benefit

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Abstract

The development of any community is based on the communication that gives its people the ability to conceive of a desired change, imagine how to change it and make a choice to change. This paper is an analysis of the factors that motivated various Kenyan personalities to communicate in a way that could influence others to engage in beneficial and developmental actions for the community. The paper is based on the experiences of these individuals. The study used a qualitative research design to select ten Kenyans to share their life stories. In-depth interviews were used to collect data. Analysis focused on participants' narratives, and especially those parts of their stories that responded to the question on their motivation to act for the benefit of others. From the findings, the participants were continually critical of their lives and that led them to continuously search for solutions. That left them with a sense of inner security that could have given the freedom to be authentic and ready to learn and share in the on-going social construction of reality that resulted in transformation. It was found out that a sense of self, curiosity, questioning, trusting, caring and seeing new possibilities were positive influencers to community engagement leading to both personal and national development. Communication was key in their participation thus the paper concludes that communicative development is a combination of several factors including; family background, love of God and people, and interpersonal communication skills including speaking more than one language. The study recommends promotion of economic equity, strengthening family ties that incorporate ideals and aspirations which would inculcate in people unique, curious, and continuous learning with deep love for God and people.

Keywords: Motivation, Communication, Participate, Community development, Engagement, Kenyans

1. Introduction

In the First World Congress for Development Communicators held in Rome in the year 2007, development communication scholars, the United Nations agencies, and Non-Government organizations all acknowledged that the core of all development is communication (World Bank, 2007). For any significant change to occur in a society, Molitor (1999) posited that it begins with an individual or a group of individuals having an idea, and then communicating the idea to others who agree to follow them in the new direction, and then they act on the idea. Development communication is the ability by people to conceive of change, hold the picture of that image of change in their minds, reflect on it, imagine how to change it and make a choice to change it (Freire, 1985).

Few, if any books have comprehensive answers to the challenge of development communication in developing countries. Nonetheless, there are some people whose actions lead to what benefits a majority of the people. In spite of a history of dominance, reinforced by an education system that was inhibiting and egocentric (Rao & Reddy 1992; Thiong'o, 1994), it is noteworthy that some people have not followed the pattern of self-focus and self-indulgence. These are the people who, because of their experiences and knowledge, could contribute insight into what motivated them to engage with the community and how they engaged community members. This study sought to examine what factors contributed to and motivated such people to be more selfless and desire to do and to communicate what engaged others in what was beneficial and transformative. One of the major obstacles to the development of Africa, as noted by Maathai (1995), is inability of a country to communicate effectively with itself. In addition, Gatimu (2009) argued that for people to transform colonized views of their histories and develop a sense of authenticity, they should tell their stories from their social locations as colonial subjects and not from some theories and points of view that continue to alienate them. Thus, there is the need to hear the stories narrating how people addressed concerns about power inequality, inequity, dominance, hegemony and other vices in order to interact in meaningful relationships.

Success in embracing Kenya's long-term development blueprint, Vision 2030, which mirrors the Millennium Development Goals, (replaced by Sustainable Development Goals as at January 2016), is dependent on communication (UNDP, 2009). Since development policies operate with assumptions, values and concepts that are shaped in conjunction with historical and material forces (Manyozo, 2012), it is necessary to understand what motivates people to engage in developmental activities and the type of messages that connect with the people. Such an understanding would point out the type of people who can be used to engage the community that goes beyond information dissemination or raising awareness. Sustainability of development projects would result when there is an understanding of messages that are appropriate. This would save money spent framing developmental needs on ideas that are externally produced which leads to failure to resonate with the needs of the people. It is apparent that every society needs to address the issue of the relationship between practices,

ideals, and structures in the past and present that orient the thinking of individuals and the community. Carey (1989), Chomsky (2006), Craig (2013), Freire (1974) are among those who have argued that insiders' perspective is valuable for studying developmental issues because culture is key to the way people perceive the world. Understanding the messages used to engage people and so gain a sense of ownership would result in sustainability of development efforts. This study was offering a way of rethinking existing assumptions, ideas and beliefs that would lead to having a majority of the people engage in communicative acts that are transformative.

Communicative acts that engage the community begin by rethinking one's role as a member of a community. In his book *Long walk to freedom*, Mandela (1995) was said to have had a sense of mission which made him have an interest in the welfare of others and a vision that made him have a sense of integration, enabling him to see his every action as an indispensable part of the whole. It has been noted that communication that is transformative is not only involving the people but is also a process that links the past, present and the desired future of the people (Woodson, 2006).

People with a sense of purpose concentrate on the mission which creates a sense of being able to pull out of the hegemonic communication by opening up and deepening conversations with other people. For example, Woodson (2006, though his work was first published in 1933) who had a comprehensive view of a development problem, having studied to PhD level at Harvard, gave up a prestigious educational career, including being a school principal, in Washington, DC, and the position of Dean at Howard University and devoted his finances and energies to raising the consciousness of his people on the need to rethink their view of development.

Indeed, communicative acts that engage community members begin with a healthy view of self which includes self-confidence, self-image, self-awareness and self-esteem. A healthy sense of self is critical in enabling a person to focus on what meets his needs as well as the needs of others (Knapp, 1984). The family environment, the father, mother, siblings, and grandparents contribute to one's sense of self. It could be that self-esteem enables one to have a degree of mastery in the art of listening. It is also possible that through listening that one is able to identify contradictions, conflicts or dissatisfactions and how they are addressed. Knapp (1984) and Freire (1970) postulated that people acquire sense of security in their families of origin, schools and communities. For example, Kere of Burkina Faso and Wangari Maathai talked of childhood experiences and relationships that remained as a stamp recalling them back to help their communities.

Furthermore, communication acts that centralize the issue of transformation have the people's interests served by development. For example, Smith (2003) left the mainstream as an academician to engage on the front lines of the struggle to critically examine the system. (Smith is an indigenous Maori, whose work has developed wide-ranging academic discussions centered on Kaupapa Maori theory, critical theory and transformative praxis. He has also made significant contributions to the political, social, economic and cultural advancement of indigenous Māori communities. The Maori are aboriginal people of New Zealand whose culture had been submerged by the coming of the Europeans).

Smith maintained that development begins with self-interrogation of notions of individualism in the capitalist market-oriented thinking. Some of the communicative acts of Smith's efforts include persistence in making known the plight of the Maori people through his writings and publications in journals, presentation of papers in conferences, and engaging people. To Smith, political, social, cultural, and economic advancement of his people made him seek the communication that dealt with what he referred to as distractions. Distractions are activities that kept his people busy, doing what they understood as expected of them, keeping records, explaining transactions, following what did not add to their welfare as a community.

The shared vision of a community requires more than involvement because it engages thinking that examines reality. This is explained by Freire (1970, 1974) who had personal experience of living in an environment where some were getting richer while others were kind of locked in situations that were depriving, yet accepted as normal. Through his writings and life, he demonstrated that it is through communication that human life holds meaning and that communication begins with authentic thinking. Authentic thinking begins by people learning to read their world in a way that they ask questions about the past, natural, cultural and historical situations and the present. It is as they pose and think through their problems together that they gain critical consciousness that enable them to choose actions.

Moreover, communication that influences a community to get involved begins when people break out of submission to a hierarchical structure and establish their own independent system of communication and organization (Servaes, 1996, 2001, 2008). Servaes, who has integrated the thinking of most major contributions in the field, and has provided a comprehensive view of various aspects of development communication, acknowledged that perspective on communication has changed from being a process of transmission to a process where meaning is constructed (Servaes & Malikhao, 2004).

2. Methodology

This paper purposed to find out what motivated some Kenyans to engage in what led to transformation of their

communities. Underpinned on the interpretivist paradigm's assumptions, beliefs and values that are concerned with meaning, the study sought to uncover the way society members understand given situations. The author attempted to establish the values that incline people to act in a way that generates consensus and benefits a majority of the people in a way that transforms the community (Freire, 1974; Mefalopulos, 2008). This study used a descriptive qualitative research design. Descriptive research allowed an understanding of what was fundamental knowledge in explaining the nature and shape of society (Creswell, 2013).

The interviewees included those people who went through the education system yet they were involved in the community's transformation. The columnist of *New York Times* (2014, February 15) in an article titled "Professors, We Need You!" pointed out that the most stinging dismissal of a point is to say: "That's academic." In other words, to be a scholar is, often, to be irrelevant (Kristof, 2014). That is what is intriguing about people some of whom are academics yet they are not dismissed by their community. Instead, they are engaging the community in what is beneficial to them. The study interviewees were chosen by observation, reading and listening to people whose contributions were intriguing. The sample size was therefore the purposively selected and included: Rev. Dr. Timothy Njoya had been deeply engaged in having Kenyans participate in tabling the new constitution; Prof. George Kinoti is the author of 'Hope for Africa and What the Christian Can Do'; Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat had schooled with Prof. Kinoti hence the connection; Prof. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o had often been cited in journals of development communication; Mrs. Jane Njeru had an outstanding interest and investment in people; while Prof. Julia Ojiambo, Prof. Miriam Were, Ambassador Tabitha Seii, Dr. Edwin Muinga Chokwe and Dr. Eddah Gachukia were recommended by colleagues who have interest in development communication.

The selected participants had a memory of pre-independent Kenya, had each attained a university degree as the minimum academic qualification, and have gone through the three stages that Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009) described as anti-colonial struggle, independence, and post-independence. In addition, the people had been involved in development activities.

Data collection was done by the stand alone life story interviewing tool which is a qualitative research method for gathering in-depth information (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Using life story narratives, which are a fundamental form of human communication, was an effort on the author's part to give up power, and follow participants down their associative trails. Collected data was analyzed using excerpts and themes from the original stories to develop exhaustive description from the narratives.

3.   Findings
Motivation in this study referred to the beliefs and assumptions beneath the conscious mind that becomes like a compass pointing to the preferred choice in any situation (Freire, 1970).

3.1 The family of origin and childhood experiences
The family is the starting point where the maps of reality are inscribed that guide peopled that becomesv acts. The study reveals that all the participants were born into families that had already made some choices toward embracing change. The parents had willingly embraced change and so became community trailblazers. Eight of the ten participants were born into homes where serving the community members was the norm. The parents who had a high standing in the community desired to see their communities embrace change. The fact that the participants were born to literate parents at a time when the literacy levels were very low meant that their performance in school mattered to their parents. Seven of the ten participants passed through the prestigious Alliance Boys or Alliance Girls' school which might have boosted their self-esteem. Carey (1989) explained that communication that transforms is one in which people are involved. In a healthy family people are known, listened to, given opportunity to ask questions that enable them to have a healthy sense of self (Stewart & Logan, 1988). Stewart and Logan explained that a school can play the role of a family and encourage the learners to have healthy sense of self.

Several points came from the family of origin: inculcation of sense of self, the exposure to service, participation in family discussions and the role of mothers. Smith (1992) argued that the core beliefs that are inculcated in children by the age of twelve become deeply embedded in their decision making process.

3.1.1 A healthy sense of self
The participants revealed that communication that engages community members should begin with a healthy view of self which includes self-confidence, self-image, self-awareness and self-esteem. A healthy sense of self is critical in enabling a person to focus on what meets his or her needs as well as the needs of others (Knapp, 1984). There was a kind of humility and pride that radiated from some of the participants. Such statement as "I am an original thinker," "I am humble," "I am a model," "I was the best in my year," "I never struggled with academics," among others, would be regarded as a form of pride yet in the context the phrases were genuine expressions of the reality of the individuals. That self-acceptance resonates with how Freire is described by those who knew him as a generally humble man who seemed always proud of his use of language and skills as a writer

(Freire & Macedo, 1987). The explanation is that for people to reach out to others, they have to have gained some inner freedom. The person has to value something in who he or she is or what he or she does; that is what releases him or her to reach out to others. That self-acceptance seems to be the beginning of what frees people to adapt to their environment. When that self-acceptance is expressed, it could be mistaken for pride and yet it seemed to be what motivated the people to work alongside others. 3.1.2 Early exposure to a life of service
Exposure to a lifestyle of service inculcated community centered values. Ojiambo, Were, Njoya, Muinga, Nyong'o came from homes that were open to outsiders and their parents engaging with the people is what gave them joy to have a participatory community.

3.1.3 Involvement in family discussions
The participants grew up in homes where children were not excluded from adults' discussions and engagements in other people's lives. Freire (1978) mentioned that his own father was always ready to talk with his family and that he brought up his children with authority, yet also with understanding. He also mentioned that his father taught him the alphabet even before he went to school and that could have oriented a certain outlook about communication. Similarly, Njoya was taught to read and write by his mother before he went to school. That may have given him inner confidence. The fact is that growing up while observing people considered important or heroes of the community visiting their homes and holding conversations with their parents, made familiarization in relating to people considered important in the community.3.1.4 The role of mothers
      The participants had mothers who paid special attention to them and helped them to sort out their beliefs in a way that made a lasting mark that served as their internal source of motivation. Prof. Were's mother for instance, would kneel down and attentively listen to her daughter's fears and then give satisfactory explanation on how to escape the fears. It was the same with Njoya's mother who would choose to sit down beside her scared son and explain gender differences to him. As argued by Stewart and Logan (1988), the beliefs and values inculcated in childhood become pointers in how people communicate interpersonally. Kere (2013) had an inner compulsion to go back to his people using the skills he had learned after his training in architecture to work with the community because of the love he had experienced from the mothers.

3.2 Education
Nyamnjoh's (2012) argument that education is the inculcation of facts as knowledge and also a set of values used in turn to appraise the knowledge in question is what makes education a trail for searching. Freire (1970) theorized that education can either function as an instrument used to facilitate integration of the learners into the logic of the existing system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom. The participants in this study considered education as a practice of freedom through which they were able to communicate critically and creatively with reality and in so doing discovered how to participate in the transformation of their respective communities (Freire, 1974; Harries 2012; Ndirangu, 2009; Nyamnjoh, 2004; Servaes, 1989, 1996). The findings of this study confirm what Nyamnjoh (2012) noted that the history of some African countries tended to emphasize imbibing of knowledge that inculcated values that made the communication needed for development be rendered irrelevant by a limited and limiting set of values. It is the ability to deconstruct those values that made the participants' communication responsive to the needs of the people. From the findings of the study, it is clear that the participants deconstructed their values by viewing their context and realized that to get to the desired future, there was a need to alter their reality.
      As part of their education, most of the participants had engaged with a complex history; a   history that included an education that was full of contradictions in that it alienated the learners from their environment and history (Kinoti, 1994; Njoya, 2012; Nyamnjoh, 2012) and yet it provided insights to the participants with tools that were necessary for them to desire development for their people. Such complexity as brought by the Mau Mau uprising of 1952-1960, for example, was a mark of cross-cultural conflict that left some of the participants with an awareness of who they were as they watched the humiliating situations that their people went through. The living experiences of the participants left them with a firm grasp of their realities and made them aware that lasting sustainable relevance of a people has to arise from within their context. Kinoti, Gachukia, Njoya, Njeru and Prof. Were shared some observations of power that left them with an inner resolve to be able to see themselves as individuals within a system.
      Most of the participants had their self-esteem enhanced by a love of learning that resulted in good performance in school. Their good performance may have endeared them to their teachers who were also caring and concerned about their well-being. That may explain why the participants, though learned, did not define themselves by their societal ranks such as professors, doctors, and ambassadors, but instead considered their status as opportunities for service. For instance, Kinoti did not see himself as a leader but a servant of the people.

3.3 Vision that Transitioned into Action
The participants were motivated by their ability to do self-interrogation. Smith (2003, 2009) maintained that development begins with self-interrogation of notions of individualism in the capitalist market-oriented thinking.

Smith's persistence in making known the plight of the Maori people through his writings and publications reveals that someone with a vision transitions into action. To Smith (2003, 2009), political, social, cultural, and economic advancement of his people made him seek the communication that dealt with distractions and what kept his people busy, engaged, accounting, following and explaining what did not add to their welfare as a community. The participants recognized that being busy did not result in transformation and thus the need to be intentional in communicative acts that lead to development. Nyong'o has had several publications on various dimensions of development. Were, Kinoti, Ojiambo, and Njoya have published papers, books and other forms of communication that communicate knowledge of what could transform their communities.

The participants' understanding of the role of faith in their choices of action in regard to the community was noteworthy. There was a trust and a dependence on God that gave them courage to dare to listen to voices different from what was dictated by their living environments. Though they received formal education, an imitation of the West by style, content and use of language and so advocated for Western solutions, for most of them, their faith in God through Christ enabled them to remain connected to a Higher Power. Development thinking needs to be re-connected to a faith that allows individuals and the community to engage with beliefs that should be discarded and then indigenize what enables them to be relevant and what meets their needs (Freire, 1970).

The study found such traits as love, humility, remaining focused, perseverance, curiosity, and love of God exhibited by the participants as being necessary for people who engage others in what is beneficial to a majority. Freire (2004) advocated that love motivated by care, benevolence, and love for others and desire to raise awareness was necessary for transformative communication.

While each individual family made significant contribution to the participants' stance in school, in later life it was the stamina of each individual that kept them going. For example, not every participant made it through to the university or to the career that they used to engage the people. There was something in them that Njoya described as selfhood that made them not settle without getting the answers of what they sought. That is what led Ojiambo to write the fifty two university admission applications at a time in history when letters by post took not less than three weeks to get to its intended destination and another three weeks for the responses to reach the author. The concept of time is necessary for communication as a ritual (Carey, 1989). There were questions Ojiambo could not answer and yet she could tell from her reading that there were others who had the answers she was looking for. That persistence driven by an inner sight of seeing what others may not be seeing is a noteworthy quality in all the participants.

4. Conclusion

The love of God gave the participants an inner security that enabled them to transcend the need for affirmation as would be expected; instead they sought ways to engage their people. The intimate and personal knowledge and relationship with God made them not be easily swayed by external rewards that would have hindered their development of a healthy sense of self. That made their motivation not be based on fear of failure and rejection by the people; instead they depended on God in relation to their emotional needs and in setting their standards. The fear of God gave them courage to remain on course, be authentic, and dare to act differently and to continually love people and seek what was best for them. In essence, the inner resolve gave them standards that were not forced on them.

Knowledge and ability to use more than one language equipped the participants to indigenize knowledge from sources outside their cultures and share with their people. The participants had an awareness of the importance of being multilingual. As Thiong'o (2009) argued, language is the carrier of a people's culture while culture is the carrier of a people's values which are the basis of their self-definition.

5. Recommendations

Since the inner security on which strength of character, the unique personal and interpersonal aptitude and skills are embedded are in family value system, there is need to have communication that strengthen family ties.

Communication that will lead to development should incorporate values, ideals and aspirations that would inculcate in people the need to be unique, curious, and continuous learners who have deep love for God and people.

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