

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The democratic changes that took place in South Africa since 1994 provided the media in general with a new critical zeal in their reporting. This was largely because they had the confidence that they would no longer be harassed as it was the case during the apartheid era. They therefore had room to be more critical of government. As a result, the political leaders, especially from within the ranks of the African National Congress (ANC), started to become concerned that government achievements were not receiving adequate media coverage. There was also a perception that the media seem to enjoy highlighting stories of perceived black incompetence and that ANC leaders were not receiving fair media coverage.

The then Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, concerned about this trend, called a meeting of government communicators and those involved in the media and communication industry. The meeting was held at a Western Cape Town called Arniston in August 1995 to discuss government communication and to recommend ways for improvement (Communications 2000:10). The conference brought together members of the media, government communicators, academics, South African Communication Services (SACS), media unions and civil society groups.

The conference recommended that a Communications Task Group (Comtask) be established. Deputy President Mbeki was given a mandate to appoint a 10-member board of inquiry, following a public nomination process (Horwitz 2001:297). This became known as the Comtask Group. The purpose of this inquiry was to review all government communication processes, and to make recommendations for improvement.

Amongst other things, one of the findings of the Comtask was the need for increased access to government information and the need for more government interaction with the people (Communications 2000: 15). This was necessitated by the fact that the new government adopted from the apartheid government infrastructure and systems which restricted people's access to government information.

In order to have well coordinated government communication, the Comtask Group recommended the establishment of a Government Communication and Information System (GCIS). The GCIS was mandated to strategically manage and coordinate government communication and to facilitate the interactive processes between government and the people. In order to achieve this objective, an Imbizo approach was adopted (see 1.7.7 for a definition of Imbizo).

Against this background, this study will focus on Imbizo as a strategy for participatory development communication. The main reason why Imbizo was

introduced was the recognition that there is a need for government (in line with findings and recommendations of the Comtask) to interact more with the people.

The purpose of the interaction would be to explain its policies and programmes to the people and to gain a first hand understanding of the people's living conditions and needs, and to explain government's programme of action to the people.

Although the Imbizo programme is still in its infancy stage, it can be argued that it is gaining momentum, it is receiving extensive media coverage, and people are beginning to talk about it to such an extent that even soccer clubs brand their meetings with supporters "Imbizos".

The main objective of the study is therefore to analyse the role of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) in the strategic management of government communication, with specific reference to Imbizo as a strategy for participatory development communication. The focus will be on the communication strategy framework for Imbizo, its implementation and the extent to which it encourages and/or inhibits participation by the people.

1.2 NEED FOR THE STUDY

The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) has been tasked by the Cabinet approved Task Group on Government Communication (Comtask) to provide development communication and information to the public and to interact more with the people.

The need for coordinated participatory development communication was necessary because the majority of the people in South Africa, especially the poor, do not have access to all of the media, which was largely used in government communication, as well as the high rate of illiteracy. This situation limited their access to government information, which would help them to take decisions that could improve their lives.

The other problem was that the language used in the messages and documents that government distributes to the community was mainly English. The problem with an increased use of English is that most people do not understand English,

and this ultimately minimises the impact of the information that government distributes. The ability of the community to actively interact with government was also limited because most people could not understand the content of the messages.

In order to address the problem of inaccessibility to government information, the Comtask Group envisaged that to ensure the effectiveness of development communication, all appropriate forms of media, including print, electronic and interpersonal face-to-face communications have to be used to provide the required information and to provide a platform for a two-way communication process. As recommended in the Comtask Group report, government had to communicate with the people in the languages and idioms that they understand. This would enhance participation and an understanding of the people's needs and a discussion of possible solutions in an interactive two-way process.

In this regard, Pahad (1998:2) emphasised the need for a two-way communication process when he stated that:

“...If we are talking about two-way communication with the poorest of the poor, then our target is to reach the African women or moreover the African

female disabled child in the rural areas. Unless we are able to do this, we will not be doing enough.”

The implication of the above statement is that there is a need to make sure that all the people in South Africa have an opportunity to interact with government.

The challenge in this regard is that government should make sure that platforms for such interaction are created.

In placing emphasis on the need for interaction between government and the community, Netshitenzhe (1999:1), in his address during the launch of the Tombo Multi-Purpose Community Centre (MPCC) further stated that:

“But this Centre is not only about you telling government what it is that you want. President Thabo Mbeki wishes to know what your views are: whether we are doing the right thing as government and what the priorities should be in this province”.

It is evident from the above statement that the two-way process is not only supposed to be about government telling people about what it is doing, but also to listen to people's suggestions on what needs to be done.

In his State of the Nation (SON) address (2003:10) President Mbeki also alluded to the need for increased access to government information when he said that:

“The process to set up a government-wide call centre will be speeded up. In addition, we will start this year to phase in an electronic system, an e-government gateway, in which the directory of government services will be available, according to citizens' needs rather than the silos of the state bureaucracy, an electronic version of the Multi-Purpose Community Centres”.

Although the above quotation does not directly refer to Imbizo, it is evident though that it places emphasis on the need for increased access to government information. It also places emphasis on the need to use all available avenues for this purpose. Imbizo is in this instance one of those channels through which people can access government information.

It is on the basis of the need for interaction with the community as recommended in the Comtask Report that the GCIS has adopted Imbizo as a strategy for interaction with the people. The adoption of Imbizo as a strategy for government's interaction with the people makes it necessary for a study to be conducted on how Imbizo is conducted from a government perspective. The focus of the study will also be on how Imbizo as a strategy for participatory development communication enhances or inhibits people's interaction with government.

Firstly, it is important to note that the youths in South Africa have demonstrated a certain degree of apathy with regard to political issues and developments in the country. It should be noted that this is not just a South African problem, but an international trend as well. For example, in Britain as indicated in the Independent Review of Government Communication (204:2), the review of government communication was necessitated amongst others by the fact that there has been disengagement and withdrawal from political and democratic processes, which has been evidenced by the declining participation in local and general elections.

This could amongst others be explained by the fact that government communication takes place in an environment where it competes with other

interests, such as sports, entertainment and the perceived lack of government interests on issues that are of interest to the youths. Although the example used in this case focuses on the youths, it raises questions around the impact of government communication. How effective are channels used for government communication? How accessible is government information (with regard to language and the actual packaging)?

Secondly, the other aspect that should be taken into consideration is the manner in which government conducts its communication with the public, the media and its employees (public servants). In the South African context, there is a tendency to focus most of the communication on the outside, and little or nothing to government employees. The problem with this tendency is that a communication opportunity is missed. The importance of focussing a greater amount of communication on public servants is that if public servants have a thorough understanding, it places them in a position where they can be “marketers” of government services. The general trend is that once neighbours and friends have somebody who is a civil servant, the assumption that they make is that that person knows all there is to know about the civil government services.

Thirdly, the GCIS is responsible for the co-ordination of all government communication (at the local, provincial and national level). The implication in this regard is that the GCIS must provide a framework within which government

communication should take place at these levels, and also provide support. This is important to ensure that all government communicators at all levels operate from the same framework.

Fourthly, government communication is a major responsibility, and as such requires that people with the required expertise are recruited and retained. This requires that a clear retention strategy to ensure that there is consistency in government communication is developed. This will involve making sure that proper training is provided to government communicators.

Fifthly, building capacity amongst government communicators at all levels should be prioritized. In this regard special attention should be paid to the regional structures of government. This is important mainly because it will ensure the relevance of government communication. This is because people at the regional level are more familiar with the circumstances at the local level and therefore are able to ensure that communication is tailored to meet the needs of different communities. This will require that regional offices are well- resourced. What is of importance in this regard is that government service should be customer focused and responsive to public needs. The implication is that government departments'

activities will have to transcend narrow department-specific activities, hence the importance of Imbizo.

This study was also necessitated by the fact that as far as this researcher could determine, there is no academic study that has been conducted on the use of Imbizo as a strategy for government's interaction with the people.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

As Horwitz (2001:318) indicated,

“...the Comtask Report conceptualised the communications task of government as providing information quickly, transparently, and with accountability to the people and the media, and enacting policies to spur the growth of communications structures so as to enable people to function as active citizens in a democratic environment”.

It is evident from the above quotation that communication in this context is at the core of government's interaction with the people. This is because if people do not have access to government information, they will not be able participate in government activities. In a democratic society such as South Africa, communication should therefore be seen and practiced as a dialogue.

The role of the citizens is therefore conceived as far greater than simply as voters in periodic elections. This clearly indicates that the citizens of the country should be involved in decision making processes, if democracy is to be consolidated. In this regard, Mtaka (2002:2) indicates that participation at community level is necessitated by the fact that there is a need to move from building to consolidating democracy. It is therefore through building an enabling environment at community level that democracy can be consolidated in the broader community. However, looking at Imbizo as adopted by government, it is evident that the people are not involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the campaign, which compromises the purported community participation. As a result, this could ultimately undermine the democratic principles on which South Africa prides itself.

Mtaka (2002:3) further argues that to sustain democracy, efforts should be made to ensure that all citizens understand the nature of their participation, and what it is in which they have to participate. Access to information is therefore key to participation as it could help citizens to understand government programme and

therefore remain committed to democratic principles. It also shows that there is a need to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the process so that they can understand their roles and responsibilities to ensure the success of Imbizo. The importance of participation is that it could help to ensure that the citizens have ownership of the whole process.

This approach would also help to ensure that there is a buy-in by all affected parties, which could help in the consolidation of democracy. However, the other concern with government's adaptation of Imbizo is that an Imbizo meeting can only reach a small fraction of the people in a particular community. This is largely because of logistical limitations such as, amongst others, the size of the venue and limited access to the venue.

The other concern is that there is also no way to ensure that the views and opinions expressed at these meetings are representative of the majority views in the community.

It is with the understanding of the need for this study and the research problem that the focus of this study will be on the role of the GCIS in strategic management of government communication, with specific reference to Imbizo.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions formulated for this study. These research questions are based on the need for the study and the research problem discussed in 1.2 and 1.3 above:

- Is there a communication strategy framework for Imbizo?
- To what extent are the target audiences of Imbizo campaigns involved in the planning process?
- To what extent are the issues identified during Imbizo meetings implemented?
- How is the impact of Imbizo campaigns measured?
- Is there a direct link between people's participation during Imbizo meetings and language usage?
- To what extent are the citizens consulted in the planning of Imbizo campaign?

1.5 UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The following assumptions are based on the research questions discussed in 1.4 above:

- There is no direct link between language and the community's ability to participate during an Imbizo meeting.
- There is no framework for Imbizo communication strategy.
- Citizens are not involved in the planning of Imbizo campaigns.
- Citizens are not consulted in the planning of Imbizo campaigns.
- There is no effective plan to assess the impact of Imbizo campaigns.
- There are no mechanisms to ensure the implementation of issues identified during Imbizo meetings.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Purpose of the study

The study will combine exploratory and descriptive aspects. Firstly, as Babbie (2001:91) indicated, exploratory studies occur when a researcher examines a new area of interest or when the subject of study is relatively new. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:41) further state that the purpose of exploratory research is to gain a broad understanding of a situation, phenomenon, community or person, and could arise from a lack of basic information in a new area of interest.

This study will be exploratory largely because as far as this researcher could determine, no academic research has been conducted on the role that traditional meetings such as Imbizo in general can be used as strategy for development communication. With regard to this study, the role of the GCIS in strategic management of Imbizo as a participatory development communication strategy has also not yet been academically examined.

Secondly, in descriptive studies, the researcher observes and then describes what was observed and as a result, most qualitative studies are descriptive (Babbie 2001:93). It should be noted that in most descriptive studies, the researchers proceed to go on and examine why the observed patterns exist and what these patterns imply, which is also the case in this study. As a result, it has become important to include the descriptive part of the research.

1.6.2 Delimitations of the study

The focus of this study will be on the role of the GCIS in strategic management of government communication. The focus will largely be on the Imbizo as a strategy for participatory development communication. The focus will be on the analysis of the communication strategy framework for Imbizo, and the extent to which it encourages or inhibits people's participation with regard to planning,

implementation, evaluation and overall decision-making. The focus is more on the processes than on the people's reaction to Imbizo campaigns.

1.6.3 Research Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, with field research and content analysis as the main research methods. These methods have been selected because they enable the researcher to examine the subject of examination in its natural setting. The other aspect is that the use of two data collection methods helps to improve the validity of the research findings.

1.7 CONCEPTUALISATION

Conceptualisation is important because academic concepts that are often used have different connotations, and therefore have different meanings. Concepts as Mouton (1990:59) argues...

“...are the most basic linguistic constructions by means of which people order and categorize their reality:”

Mouton (1990:59) further states that....

“...concepts may therefore be regarded as the primary instruments which we employ in coming to grips with our experiences”.

It is with this understanding that the following concepts will be discussed in relation to this study.

1.7.1 Strategy

There is a lack of consensus on the definition of the concept strategy. However, according to Kitchen (1997:45), a broad consensus in literature exists that strategy is essentially concerned with a process of managing the interaction between an organisation and its external environment to ensure the best “fit” between the two.

According to Steyn and Puth (2000:52), strategy is often (mis) used by corporate communication practitioners to describe something “important” (as in strategic messages, strategic direction) or to describe activities (as in communication strategy). Strategy can be seen as an outcome of a thinking process which provides a framework for planning.

It can therefore be concluded that a strategy should reflect the organisation's assessment of its current situation, future operating environment and its key objectives in support of its policies and strategies for achieving them with the available resources.

1.7.2 Strategic management

Strategic management as Thompson and Strickland (1995:14) indicate, is a process that involves the development of "...a mission, setting objectives, forming a strategy, implementing and executing the strategic plan, and evaluating performance...". David (1999:5) in this case argues that strategic management can be defined as the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organisation to achieve its objectives.

As part of the strategic management process, constant changes taking place in the world also make it necessary for organisations to conduct environmental scans on a regular basis. Information technology and globalisation, for example, are some of the external changes that are transforming internal business dynamics in society today.

As a result, strategic management should be seen as an ongoing process because the environment within which a business enterprise operates is dynamic and keeps on changing. This view was further explained by Thompson and Strickland (1995:14) who state that strategic management requires constant evaluation and decisions have to be taken on whether to continue or to change a particular action.

The constant evaluation of strategic management is as Thompson and Strickland (1995:14) argue important, because nothing about strategic management is final. This is largely because all prior actions are subject to modification as conditions in the surrounding environment change and ideas for improvement emerge. The strategic management process is therefore based on the belief that organisations should continually monitor internal and external events and trends so that timely changes can be made as the need arises (David 1999:7).

Thompson and Strickland (1995:19) indicate that strategic management is important because it helps the managers to provide better guidance to the entire organisation, making managers aware of the changes in the environment, in terms of the opportunities and threatening developments, providing managers with rationale for evaluating competing budget requests, helping to unify the numerous strategy-related decisions by managers across the organisation, and creating a more proactive approach to management.

1.7.3 Communication strategy

There is limited available literature on communication strategy. Most of the available literature is either from a marketing or a public relations perspective. This concern was also articulated by Moss and Warnaby (1998:131) who argues that....

“...where mentioned at all within the strategy literature, communication often receives only superficial consideration, often not going beyond the basic articulation of its importance to the strategic management process”.

However, in general, it has been discussed as a process that is directly related to concrete communication goals and target groups. The communication strategy therefore defines how exactly the communication goals are going to be achieved. It also indicates which means of communication are to be applied for whom, when and for what goals (Van Gemert & Woudstra 1999:85). As Steyn and Puth (2000: 53) indicate, in order to achieve the organisation's goals, the corporate communication strategy should reflect the corporate strategy, and as a result, strategy formulation and strategic planning in the organisation are therefore a prerequisite for developing sound corporate communication strategy.

1.7.4 Development

Development, from a communication perspective, is defined as a process that enables all people to improve their quality of life (Du Plooy 1997:345). It is referred to as a process because emphasis is placed on continual change and continued improvement on a lifelong basis. In the South African context, development would, amongst others, involve the provision of education, housing, increasing access to health facilities, and job creation. This should be dealt with against the background of apartheid from which the country has emerged.

1.7.5 Development communication

Development communication is defined as the overall contribution of communication to the development of society (Bassette 1996:9). It also highlights the use of the media to deal with development themes. At the heart of the development communication concept is the need for an exchange of information to contribute towards the resolution of development problems and to improve the quality of life of a specific target group (Bassette 1996:11).

1.7.6 Participation

Participation refers to social and planning processes occurring in different contexts. On the one hand, participation is a means to reach a certain goal. For example, on the one hand participation may mean that all stakeholders are equally involved in the decision-making process to achieve a particular goal or solve a problem. On the other hand participation can be referred to as a goal in itself. In this case, people might be resistant to participate. As a result, getting them to participate could be the main goal of a particular participation process. Broadly, a participatory approach incorporates concepts in the emerging framework of multiplicity development, which places emphasis on the recognition of the role that the local people can play in decision-making on issues that affect their lives.

1.7.7 Imbizo

Imbizo refers to a traditional gathering convened by an Inkosi (a traditional leader). It is normally convened when there is an issue to be discussed or when an Inkosi wants to discuss a particular issue with his subjects, or to address problems within the community.

Imbizo serves as a platform where people discuss issues that affect them in the community such as amongst others, major crisis like drought, and a threat from outside, when there is a need for resources. Traditional leaders use Imbizo gatherings to get suggestions from their subjects and possibly respond to the

issues raised during the discussions. As a result, community members are given the chance to participate in decision-making processes.

1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Background and need for the study

This chapter provides the background to this study. This includes the need for the study, research problem, the key concepts used in the study, and a summary of the research methodology.

Chapter 2: Participatory development communication: theoretical perspectives

The focus of this chapter is on the interpretation of participatory development communication as applied to this study

Chapter 3: Strategic management of government communication: the role of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)

This chapter provides a background to the establishment of the GCIS, its mandate, and its approach to strategic management to government communication. Some literature on strategic management process will be cited in this chapter to provide more insight into the strategic management processes.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Imbizo as a communication strategy for government

This chapter will focus more on Imbizo as a strategy for government communication. The background to Imbizo will be provided. A comparative analysis of the communication strategy framework for Imbizo will be made with two other communication strategy frameworks for possible gaps and areas of improvement.

Chapter 5: Research design and methodology

This chapter provides a discussion of the research methodology used to collect data for this study. The discussion also deals with how the data will be collected and analysed.

Chapter 6: Results of the study

This chapter will present the research results which were collected using the research methodology discussed in Chapter 5. Summary of the main findings will be presented.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

The conclusion and recommendations of this study will be presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2 PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical framework of the concept participatory development communication which forms the basis of this study. In order to achieve this objective, the historical background of development and development communication will be discussed. The main theoretical paradigms which have been developed to explain the concept development communication will also will be discussed. Their implications on participatory development communication will also form part of the discussions in this chapter.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CONCEPT “DEVELOPMENT”

According to Mowlana (1998:185), the widespread use of the concept “development” as a conceptual framework for a number of individual, institutional, national and international changes as well as for “progress” is a post-World War II

phenomenon. Between the 1940s and the 1960s, the term “development” became synonymous with growth, modernization, change, democracy, productivity, industrialization and other related Western historical and evolutionary changes. Initially, it was popularized by American scholars and policy makers, and it was soon introduced to Europe and especially the less industrialized countries of the world. The term “development” became a major issue in international organisations, despite its ill defined and less than universally recognised meaning (Mowlana, 1998:184).

During the post-World War II period, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, from the economic and technological perspectives, development was viewed as synonymous with economic and growth measured in aggregate terms (Mowlana, 1998: 188). The strategy used during this period was that of direct economic investment in developing countries, which later became the backbone of the Marshall Plan which was related to development programmes (Mowlana, 1998:188).

This dominant capitalist model of development as it relates to developing countries comprised the following main elements: economic growth through industrialization and accompanying urbanisation, capital-intensive technology mainly imported from the more developed nations, centralized planning, mainly by economists and financial experts, to guide and speed up the process of development. In this

context, the assertion was that the causes of underdevelopment are mainly within developing countries themselves (Mowlana, 1998:188). The challenge with this approach was that the conditions in the third world countries were different from those of the developed world, resulting in incompatibility of the Western designed development approaches.

The term development was popular among American scholars and policy makers mainly because of the following reasons as outlined in Mowlana (1998:186):

- The United States (US) was the hegemonic power at the end of World War II, and its government attempted to transform defeated countries and emerging non-Western and less industrialized countries of Asia. They wanted to transform Latin America and Africa into “Western-style” democracies through gradual reforms and reconstruction. The implication of the US approach was that less industrialized countries had to be incorporated into the dominant model of the capitalist economic and social system. This was done without consideration of the material conditions of those countries and the needs of the local people.
- The Marshall Plan was developed to assist in the reconstruction of Western European countries. This led to an increase in the amount of foreign aid to many countries which were on the path of modernization. This move also

led to the establishment of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), with its various programmes and activities. This initiative has since spread to African countries as well. The term development then acquired a special meaning from the viewpoint of the United States as a donor country and developing countries as recipients of funding. The implication was that development was defined from the point of view of the United States and not of the local people.

- The establishment of the United Nations' system and its affiliated agencies involved with aspects of national, regional and international activities of an economic, monetary, financial, technical, educational, scientific, cultural and political nature further helped to enhance the concept of development. This was largely the case especially in the context of the political and economic modernization and growth of less industrialized countries and emerging nations.

As a result, the 1950s and 1960s became known as the decade of development, after many African, Asian, and Latin American countries became independent. The newly independent countries therefore envisaged that they were within reach of the development models which would help to improve their standards of living, establish economic and political infrastructure, and help them to join the community of nations as

participants and equal partners. In this case, they needed to be independent, but the problem was that they did not have economic resources to fund their development initiatives. Thus the US was able to influence development programmes in developing countries.

- During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union and later European countries were keen to study non-Western countries under the rubric of “developing” countries and this contributed to the popularity of the term development. In this context, what was perceived to be development was done not in the interest of the developing countries. But it was rather a way in which developed countries were indirectly fighting against each other.

According to Mowlana (1998:186), during the 1950s and 1960s, modernization, nationalism and political development were the dominant approaches to development and nation building. However, the end of the 1970s was challenging not only on the theoretical but also on empirical levels of the models of modernization and political development. This resulted from Third World countries gaining independence and started to develop their own notions of what constitutes development.

Huesca (2000:73) in this case indicated that, development communication evolved through three major phases, namely, the dominant paradigm of modernization, the

Third World critique of the dominant paradigm, also known as the dependency paradigm, and various initiatives to create alternative approaches to communication for development, also known as the multiplicity paradigm. These will be dealt with in more detail in the discussion that follows.

2.3 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

2.3.1 Modernisation paradigm

When the modernization approach started in the 1940s and 1950s, development thinkers thought that the problem of underdevelopment could be solved by a mechanical application of economic and political systems of the West to countries in the Third World. This view was characterized by development approaches of the West imposed on the Third world countries, and it ultimately resulted in the modernization and growth theory. In this regard, development was perceived as a unilinear, evolutionary process which defined the state of underdevelopment in terms of observable quantitative differences between the so-called poor and rich

countries on the one hand, and traditional and modern societies on the other hand (Servaes, 1996:31).

The communication models during this period (1940s-1950s) placed emphasis on political persuasion and propaganda. This was mainly because the United States was involved in the First and Second World Wars, where the mass media were used to gain the support of the American people and for propaganda against the “enemy”. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the modernisation communication models were exported to the Third World nations. This resulted in a mismatch because they were not well suited for the Third World conditions (Melkote, 1991:147). Melkote (1991:53) further states that the dominant paradigm was mainly concerned with economic growth as measured by the rate of growth output. The theory of development in this orthodox economic approach was simply that there are two main factors which were important, namely, productive resources a society had, and economic institutions to utilise and guide the use of these resources.

These early theories of communication and modernization stemmed from the models developed in the United States during studies of political campaign situations. These led to the idea of a population divided into “active” and “passive” participants, or “opinion leaders” and “followers”, according to interest and activity in relation to media and their messages. The notion of a two-step-flow influence rather than a direct contact between stimulus and respondent; the so-called bullet

or hypodermic theory was predominant during this period (Servaes, 1996: 33). The causal effect, communication effects and the diffusion of innovations theories were also developed within the modernisation paradigm to explain the role of communication in development.

According to Nwosu (1995:13), the evolutionary modernisation paradigm viewed development and communication as a set of interdependent processes through which a traditional social structure is transformed into a modern social structure. The implication is that for a traditional person within a traditional society to become modernized, they must be moved from their present state of being to another stage.

In this regard, access to the mass media becomes a precondition for participation in modern society and that mass media directly affect personal attitudes and behaviour. According to Nwosu (1995:21), one of the important elements is that modernisation in traditional societies must follow the patterns of economic growth as established in Western societies. The Western model of development in this regard encompasses four sequential stages, namely, urbanisation, literacy, media exposure, and participation in economic and political activities; a model that has global implications (Nwosu 1995:21).

The communication effects approach also dominated studies on the role of communication in development. This approach conceptualised the media effects as direct, powerful and uniform on individuals. According to Melkote (1991:90), the bullet and hypodermic needle theories were the terms used to describe the concept of powerful media effects. Melkote (1991:90) further states that these models were developed by among others, Lasswell, Shanon and Weaver, Berlo and Schramm and they conceptualized communication as a one-way process flowing from a powerful source to a passive receiver (Melkote, 1991:90). For example, Harold Lasswell came up with an innovative conceptualization of mass media effects. His model suggested the following questions: WHO says WHAT in WHICH channel to WHOM and with what EFFECT (Melkote, 1991:65)? The other theory which has links with the communication effects is the diffusion of innovations model.

This communication-development model was developed by Everett Rogers and became popular in the 1960s. According to Melkote (1991:75), the diffusion of innovations theory has important theoretical links with communication effects research. It also focuses on the ability of the media messages and opinion leaders to create knowledge of new practices and ideas and persuade the target group to adopt the exogenously introduced innovations.

Between the 1960s and the 1970s, there was a sharp increase in diffusion studies. According to Melkote (1991:77), the increase was mainly because of the technological determinism that reigned supreme during this period in developing nations. Nwosu (1995:23) further states that the diffusion of innovations model placed emphasis on the role of the media in bringing into the community the ideas and information from outside.

According to the diffusion of innovation model, change is understood to be a process by which new ideas are developed. Diffusion is also seen as the process by which the new ideas are communicated to the members of a given social system; and consequences, are the changes that occur within the social system as a result of the adoption or rejection of the innovation. Social change is seen as an effect of communication, and diffusion research is seen as a subset of communication research dealing with the transfer of ideas (Mowlana, 1998:192).

According to Mowlana (1998:192), the assumption of the diffusion of innovation model is that communication by itself can generate development regardless of the socio-economic and political conditions. Melkote (1991:91) further states that this model assumes that the necessary route to the development of an individual from a traditional to a modern person was the acceptance of new ideas from sources external to the social system.

Communication and diffusion research in the United States had found mass media channels to be relatively more important in the information and “knowledge” function, whereas interpersonal channels were relatively more important in the persuasion function of the decision-making process in general and in innovation (Mowlana, 1998:193). The modernisation paradigm was heavily criticized, especially in the 1960s when developing countries got their independence. This gave birth to the dependency paradigm.

2.3.2 Dependency paradigm

In the 1960s the modernisation paradigm with its ethnocentric perspective on development was challenged by Latin American social scientists, and a theory dealing with dependency and underdevelopment, the dependency paradigm, was born. This dependency approach formed part of a general structuralist orientation in the social sciences. The dependency theorists were primarily concerned with

the effects of dependency on peripheral countries. Implicit in their analysis was the idea that development and underdevelopment must be understood in the context of the world system (Servaes, 1996: 32).

According to Servaes (1989:19), the dependency approach emerged from Latin America. The dependency theorists set to unravel the effects of the relationship of the periphery and the centre. This relationship is often seen among dependency theorists as the main cause of backwardness in the periphery. According to Servaes (1989: 21), dominant countries have technological, commercial, capital and socio-political predominance over dependent countries.

According to M'bayo (1995:78), the dependency paradigm views the condition of dependency as not only an outcome but also as the effect upon the developing countries, and of the imperialistic expansion of the advanced capitalist states. The dependency relationship takes the form of political, economic, military, media and cultural imperialism. M'bayo (1995:79) further states that the penetration of Third World countries by multinational corporations, the political objectives and foreign aid policies of developed countries in the international market and credit systems are all seen as aspects of the dependency phenomenon.

Most studies that consider the impact of the cultural aspects of the Third World countries do not go beyond quantitative aspects. They mainly show how much information, entertainment, advertising, capital and hardware flows between societies and media institutions. These flows cause imbalances between the centre and the periphery nations, regions and countries, between rural and urban

and between rural and poor (Servaes, 1996: 34). The process of development is therefore analysed in terms of relations between regions, central and peripheral.

The dependency paradigm stresses that the most important obstacles to development are external to the underdeveloped nations. They also believed that due to the fact that the periphery is deprived of its surplus, development in the centre implies under development in the periphery. The dependency theorists also place emphasis on that it is necessary for a peripheral country to dissociate itself from the world market and strive for self-reliance (Servaes, 1996:84). The practicality of peripheral countries' dissociation from developed countries is questionable when one considers that Third World countries do not have most of the resources which are central to their development and transformation.

The peripheral countries' dependence is therefore based upon the international division of labour that allows industrial development to take place in some countries while restricting it in others. The dependency theorists thus maintain that the most important hindrances to development are not the shortage of capital or management, as the modernisation theorists contend, but must be sought in the present international system (Servaes, 1989:21). The obstacles for development are therefore not internal, but external. This also means that the development in the centre maintains underdevelopment in the periphery.

The debates around the dependency paradigm also led to calls from developing nations for the establishment of the New International Information and Communication Order (NIICO). According to M'Bayo (1995:82), there was therefore the desire to counteract, adapt and minimise external influences. These attempts were seen as one of the ways to break the cycle of dependency. Some of the proposals to be used as means of breaking from the dependency cycle involved a cultural dissociation from the advanced capitalist nations.

According to Melkote (1991:143), the dependency paradigm theorists criticized the modernisation models of communication because they use an individual as the unit of response and analysis, which has led to the use of the individual as the unit of change and consequently, the unit of blame. The limitation of this assertion is that it assumes that Third World countries are homogenous, thus ignoring the differences that exist within and among them.

The communication effects theorists place emphasis on the role that the media has in development communication. The main limitation in this regard is that most people in the Third World countries do not have access to the media and other related sources of information. Communication effects models such as that developed by Lasswell were obsessed with persuasion of the receiver to the objective of the source. The social context in this model was irrelevant. With continued debates by development communication scholars, the late 1970s and

early 1980s saw the emergence of the new paradigm, called the multiplicity paradigm.

2.3.3 Multiplicity paradigm

Contrary to modernization and dependency theories, the third paradigm emerged, the multiplicity paradigm. It emphasized that there is no universal path to development, and that development must be conceived of as an integral part, multi-dimensional process that can differ from one country to another. It also implies that the problem of development is a relative one and no part of the world can claim to be developed in all aspects. This paradigm defined development as a need-oriented, endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound and based on participatory democracy and structural transformation (Servaes, 1996: 32). It therefore encourages the involvement and participation of the recipients in the conception of development messages, and implementation of development policies and projects.

This new approach to development has emerged from the criticism of the modernization and dependency paradigms. The main starting point of the multiplicity paradigm is an examination of the changes from a bottom-up perspective and from the perspective of self-development of the local community. The basic assumption is that no nation functions completely autonomously and is

completely self-sufficient, nor is there any nation whose development is exclusively determined by external factors. It can therefore be concluded that every community is in one way or another dependent (Servaes, 1996:86). According to Servaes (1989:31), the starting point of this paradigm is the examination of the changes from “bottom up”, that is, from the self-development of the local community.

According to Gooch (1995:90), since independence, emerging African nations have viewed the adoption of modern communication technology as a vital development to social development. The early efforts to develop media systems in newly independent African countries were widely based on the Western diffusionist or modernisation models of development that presents communication technology as the main mechanism to enhance socio-economic development.

The problem with diffusionist approach was that Western-based media strategies that disparage the very social institutions that strengthen traditional channels of communication have not yet yielded meaningful results for African development (Gooch, 1995:93). As a result of such limitations, calls have been made to place emphasis on the integration of diverse national development objectives and active participation of multi-sectoral groups in communication policy and planning (Gooch, 1996:96).

According to Servaes (1989:49), in contrast to the more economical and politically oriented approach in the modernisation and dependency paradigms, the central idea here is that there is no universal development model, that development is an integral part, multidimensional, and dialectic process that can differ from society to society (Servaes 1989:32). Each society is therefore required to develop its own strategy of development. This approach also contends that the development problem is relative and that no one country can contend that it has developed in every respect (Servaes 1989:32).

The multiplicity paradigm also places emphasis on the importance of self-reliance. Self reliance in this case is rooted at the local level; which implies the equitable access to resources by all the people. It also involves structural changes that are necessary in the power structure in order to create conditions for self-management and participation in decision making by all the people from the rural or urban communities and to the world as a whole.

The multiplicity paradigm encouraged participation of the recipients of development initiatives. According to Servaes (1989:54), it is more horizontal, participative, and receiver-oriented. It is fundamentally based on interactive, participatory, two-way communication on all levels of the society.

According to Servaes (1989:57), the multiplicity paradigm rejects the necessity of uniform, centralized, expensive, professional, and institutionalized media, and argues for multidimensionality, horizontality and diachronic communication exchange. This approach implies a more dialectic and active participation by the public. It also takes into consideration the relation with overall societal emancipation processes at local, national as well international levels.

According to Melkote (1991:194), this alternative approach to development places emphasis on the poorest people, active participation of the people at grassroots level, independence of local communities to tailor development projects to their own objectives and the integration of the old and new ideas, the traditional and modern systems, the endogenous and exogenous elements to constitute a unique blend suited to the needs of a particular community. The other important factor in this regard is that reliance in these instances would be on local human skills and material resources, thus fostering greater self-reliance on development and, importantly, leading to freedom from external dependence.

According to Mowlana (1998:195), the Third World response to the modernization paradigm was a critique of them rather than a well defined, coherently identified, and clearly mapped-out approach constituting a model in its own right. Discourses such as the dependency theories, self-sufficiency, and cultural autonomy and dissociation were all responses to the dysfunctioning of the two dominant

approaches rather than a coherent set of alternative proposals for development and communication.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the dependency paradigm in general and its sub-sector of communication is characterized by a global approach, with an emphasis on external factors and regional contradictions, a polarization between development and underdevelopment, and a primarily economically oriented analytical method. The multiplicity paradigm on the other hand stresses that development communication must be approached from the perspective of the poor to whom it is intended. The participation of the community in this regard is central to participatory development communication.

2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

2.4.1 Background

For the development dialogue to proceed, the development support communication (DSC) experts suggest that popular participation should involve sensitizing local people to become more respectful and responsive to development programmes (Sonderling 1996:36). The role of face-to-face interaction therefore becomes necessary. Participation of the community in the identification of development

needs and the conceptualization of development communication strategies should become central to development initiatives.

The main problem with development communication is that messages are created by a community developer and are sometimes not relevant to a specific community. These messages are often diffused to the community with the specific aim of creating a climate of acceptance by beneficiaries. More often, these messages focus on international or national development and are not community specific (Burger, 1999:89). According to Kasongo, (1997:87), unless people are involved, appropriate media are used and the messages reflect the relevant variety of realities, development through communication will still remain a pipe dream.

There is an increased need to develop communication strategies that acknowledge the fact that the beneficiaries of development are people who know what is good for themselves. This should therefore be the basis upon which the policies and development projects should be based. This paradigm puts the audience in the lead because they assume increased control and access to communication rather than information. It is also able to deal with practical diversities because it recognizes and accommodates the social, cultural and need diversities as opposed to the homogenized diet which mass communication offers (Kasongo, 1997:87).

Given that most of the projects are imposed on the people, they do not take into consideration the context, culture, belief systems and practices of the local communities. This often results in misunderstanding and failure of such projects. According to Robinson (1996:42-43), the following questions relating to context of development should be dealt with in dealing with development issues: from whose cultural standpoint does development start? Whose culture is promoted by the particular development undertaken? Whose cultural norms are respected in the way development is executed? Who is crossing into whose culture?

2.4.2 Participation defined

According to Makumbe (1996:7), popular participation is viewed both as a goal of development which requires that national resources and opportunities be equitably distributed. It is also perceived of and as a way of facilitating and energizing the development effort by means of popular involvement in developmental decision-making. In the African context, it should be noted that the socio-economic development has largely been characterized by an over-centralisation of power and by various impediments to meaningful and effective participation of the majority of the people (Makumbe 1996:3). This has often resulted in limited exposure to the required skills, which ultimately limits people's participation in projects.

According to Roodt (1996:323), a number of paradigms from conservative, to radical, have incorporated the term “participation” into their own discourse in different ways. The use of the term “participation” ranges from a legitimizing exercise to a transformative one both at a personal level and at a global level.

Participation implies a higher level of public involvement in communication systems. It also includes the involvement of the public in the production processes and also in the management and planning of communication systems. It is also a term used to refer to a number of social and planning processes occurring in many different places in many different contexts.

To some people participation is a means to reach a certain goal; to others, participation is an end in itself. Broadly speaking, the participatory approach incorporates such concepts in the emerging framework of multiplicity development. It stresses the importance of cultural identity of local communities and of democratization and participation at all levels, that is, international, national, local and individual. Paolo Freire (1983) refers to this as the right of every man (Servaes, 1996:15).

When dealing with issues around participation, the following aspects need to be taken into consideration: what do we mean by participatory development in South

Africa? Is it a legitimizing exercise for top-down implementation? Is it a transformative exercise? At what level should it occur?

Over the last two decades, the concept of participation has become prominent in the theories of development. Modernisation-based approaches to development postulated a top-down, economically driven view of development as growth and tended to be implemented with little regard for local context or culture (Waters 2000:90).

Participatory models of development are generally considered as being more responsive to the circumstances of the people and communities to whom development is suppose to bring the most benefits. It should however be noted that the relationship between development and communication demonstrates that adherence to participatory ideals and practices has not necessarily brought us any closer to either affecting or understanding communicative praxis or power in development processes.

The participatory approach stresses the need to construct theory from practice, positing the researcher and his or her subjects as equally and collaboratively engaged in development processes. It stresses the need to develop the link between theory and practice in a contextual framework of social transformation (Waters, 2000:90).

In the 1950s modernists worked vigorously to produce development programmes that would solve problems of poverty, health, land and low agricultural production. These programmes attracted a lot of money which was filtered into the target area and its people. In the final analysis, when the money was spent and the problem solvers retreated from the community, they left the people destitute largely because they did not impart their skills on the community. This was questioned in the 1970s and was perceived as exploitation that resulted in poverty (White, 1994:21).

One of the most important questions to be answered is that if the failure rate of participatory initiatives is so high around the world, and in Africa in particular, what makes South Africa different enough, if, anything, to ensure its success here (Roodt, 1996:323).

2.4.3 Different perspectives on participation

2.4.3.1 Distortion of participation

Distortion of participation is where the control of the project and decision-making powers rest with planners, administrators and the community's elite. This practice is often referred to as pseudo-participation. In this case, the level of people's participation is that of being present to listen to what is being planned for them and what would be done unto them (White 1994:16). On the other hand, genuine

participation involves working co-operatively throughout the decision-making process and when the people are empowered to control the action to be taken.

Participatory development communication is not free from distortions that sometimes neutralise the people's contribution to building a participative society. One of the frequent distortions is manipulated participation. In the Third World, people are frequently invited to participate in government projects. In most of these cases people's co-operation is manipulated in such a way that they have the illusion of participating of their own accord when all they are doing is in fact giving free help to carry out government projects designed without consulting the population (Bordenave, 1994:45).

According to Melkote (2000:41), the term participatory development communication has been misunderstood and misused. Participation has been defined and operationalised in many ways: from pseudo-participation to genuine efforts at generating participatory decision-making. While the practice of participatory development communication stresses collaboration between the people and experts, knowledge sharing between the people and experts on a coequal basis, it has not been true empowerment of the people, but the attainment of some indicator of development as articulated in the modernization paradigm.

Participatory approaches have been encouraged, though the design and control of messages and the development agenda have remained with the experts (Melkote,

2000:42). The reality of the social and political situation in most developing countries is such that the urban and rural poor, women, and other people at the grassroots are entrapped in a dependency situation in a highly stratified and unequal social and economic structures (Melkote, 2000: 42).

One of the problems in the practice of development communication is that the concept participation is often not clearly defined. This situation makes participation vulnerable to manipulation. There is therefore the need to define this concept and to determine the levels of participation by all the stakeholders. In dealing with this problem, this study will take into consideration that participation must be contextual. This is because as White, 1994:16) indicated, even at a local level, participation varies in type, level of intensity, extent and frequency. It is therefore important to note that even in one community there are divisions and different interest groups. In order to ensure that development orientated communication attains the desired impact; the diversity that exists in a particular community must be well understood in the development of the communication strategy.

In this regard, Bordenave (1994:40) further states that if a participative society is to be established, there must be a paradigm shift with regard to power relations between all the stakeholders, including the state. This would help to ensure that all affected parties are able to participate in the decision-making processes.

2.4.3.2 Participatory decision-making

Participatory decision-making in development communication requires knowledge sharing between the “experts” and the “beneficiaries’ of development projects (Melkote, 2000:41). However, this strategy has never really taken root among development agencies, partly due to the unwillingness of the experts to give up control over the process and partly due to the inability of development workers to appreciate and operationalise true participatory communication approaches at the grassroots level.

It is also important for development practitioners to note that people need to be involved in the conception of messages. This encourages and persuades them even more effectively to accept the given information. According to Kasongo, (1998: 87), unless people are involved, appropriate media are used, and the messages reflect the relevant variety of realities, the much talked about development through communication will still remain a pipe dream.

In order to realise a participatory approach to development that is inclusive and sustainable, and avoids the pitfalls in the South African context, the following key analytic problems need to be investigated: What factors in other countries in Africa have inhibited genuine participation by groupings outside of a small elite? To what

extent do similar conditions exist in South Africa? What makes South Africa unique in ways that could contribute to a different outcome?

In dealing with these issues, it is important to note that apart from the obvious objective of job creation, either through employment or entrepreneurship, a real need exists to integrate the previously disenfranchised into decision-making structures in a meaningful way (Roodt, 1996:321).

At the same time it is important for the organs of civil society, such as civics, development forums, committees, and political parties, to establish working relationships with formal government structures. These should move beyond mere demands of protest politics to playing both a watchdog role and a development one, especially in terms of genuinely representing people's needs and wants (Roodt, 1996:322).

In dealing with participatory decision-making, the following questions need to be answered: Who are the significant decision-makers and influential people in a particular area? Whose interests do these influential decision-makers serve? How do these members of the population, generally excluded from the decision-making processes try to hold these decision makers in check, exert their own influence on the political process? To what extent do present structures of production,

particularly land ownership and agricultural production, affect local participation in decision making?

It is relatively simple to say that participation is an important component of development and that involving the poor is fundamental to development, which leads to the eradication of poverty and injustice. But mobilizing people at grassroots to participate is not a small task. As White (1994:16) states, participation varies in terms of type, level of intensity, and frequency. However, it is important because it helps people in raising their awareness and consciousness of what they need to do to improve their living conditions.

2.4.3.3 Participation and conscientisation

If people are given the opportunity to acquire appropriate knowledge, they will be in a better position to develop their own strategies to determine the course of their own lives. The concept of conscientisation is therefore central to the theme of participation. In order to activate consciousness and critical awareness of one's own situation and environment, one's identity, talents, and alternatives for freedom of action is imperative to participatory action. The consciousness can be enhanced through participatory processes that increase understanding and a sense of control necessary for making contribution to development decisions (White, 1994:24-25).

2.4.3.4 Participation and the role of the state

According to Midgley (1986:146), the role of the state in the community's social development initiatives has not yet been fully explored. The existing view is that state sponsorship of community participation stifles initiative, thus weakens local self-reliance and subverts local authority. The other concern raised by the proponents of community participation approach is that the state may attempt to use community participation for ulterior motives and seek to manipulate these programmes for its own political ends (Midgley, 1986:147).

Governments have in the past declared their support for community participation and in a number of cases, provided finance, staff and other resources. According to Midgley (1986:148), the support was conditional or externally imposed and did not include the ideals of self-determination and participation.

Poor communities were thus not involved in decision-making processes and they did not have the final say on matters that affect their lives. Community participation in most developing countries has been haphazard and with a few exceptions state resource allocations to participatory projects have been lost in the administrative inefficiencies of government administration. Bureaucratic indifference, procedural delays and many other administrative problems have effectively blocked the realization of authentic forms of community participation.

Proponents of community participation place emphasis on the strengthening of the community's capacity to deal with its own problems through its initiative and effort (Midgley, 1986: 146). The critique of the community participation approach is that it ignores the fact that the state is the major provider of social developmental services, and as a policy maker, determines how social development programmes should be implemented.

According to Midgley (1986:151), there are several alternatives that can be explored to deal with the role of the state in ensuring community participation in development initiatives. Firstly, the possibility of abandoning the concept of authentic participation. In this case, a more limited definition which recognises the realities of modern societies and the difficulty of achieving absolute popular control over local affairs and the total involvement of all members of the community could be adopted. Emphasis could thus be placed on obtaining maximum resources and services from government agencies in order to improve social conditions.

Secondly, to completely do away with the state involvement of any kind. The proponents of non-participation by the state argue that all anti-participatory tendencies by the state will have been completely done away with. According to Midgley (1986:156), a major drawback in advocating the use of non-government

rather statutory organisations in community participation is the inability of the voluntary sector to redistribute resources. While the state on the other hand has resources and power to mobilize and redistribute resources, voluntary agencies are dependent on charity.

2.4.3.5 Participation as donation of labour

In South Africa, government often calls for people to volunteer in campaigns that are supposed to uplift their lives. In most of these instances, people volunteer with the hope that this might provide employment opportunities for them. For example, Imbizo amongst other initiatives calls and encourages people to volunteer their labour in government projects. In this regard as Cohen (1996:114) states, in some projects, community participation is equated with free unskilled labour and donations of local raw materials by the community. This is often done in the “spirit of self-help”.

The community members are invited to perform manual tasks such as carrying pipes, dig holes, and perform unskilled construction work and maintenance tasks at no cost to government. However, they are not involved in the planning process. This is because in this approach planning is done by professionals who do not stay in the same or similar environment as the beneficiaries of development efforts. The

community only provides labour to carry out the plan, which has been designed by a team of external specialists.

The immediate benefit in using this approach is that it lowers the costs that developers could incur. However, it can also be argued that labour contribution may increase the people's identification with the project, which is one of the objectives of participatory development communication. In this instance, people may have a sense of ownership because they would have made a contribution in the conceptualisation of a particular community development initiative.

Although there are some advantages in the perception of participation as the donation of labour, there are also some disadvantages. Firstly, the problem could be that those in higher positions in the community assign the tasks and the people who should do the work do not choose such tasks voluntarily. This could result in resentment towards the project, even though it could have been beneficial to the community.

Secondly, the other problem is that of top-down, economically driven approach to development where development strategies are implemented with little or no regard for local context and culture (Waters, 2000:90). The danger of ignoring the local context is that it could result in inaccurate solutions provided to deal with

particular problems in the community. This could to a large extent be counter-productive.

Thirdly, in some instances, assumptions, which are not always applicable to the situation, are made in the choice of target groups, solutions, effects and costs. The problem with making such assumptions could be that in some instances the external experts do not understand the local circumstances. As a result, some of the strategies that are employed could be incompatible with the local community, which might ultimately lead to their failure. It therefore becomes important for a needs analysis research to be conducted to determine what a particular community needs and the appropriate channels that can be used to communicate the goals and objectives of the initiative to the community.

Fourthly, other problem with the top-down approach is that Western countries provide solutions to problems, which are not perceived as problems by the intended beneficiaries. In order to ensure the success of participatory development communication, it is therefore important to shift from the top-down modernisation paradigm to a multiplicity approach, which is needs oriented, self-reliant, and based on participatory democracy and the sharing of resources.

Looking at government Imbizo from this interpretation of participatory development communication, it could be argued that enabling people to take part in decision-

making could enhance its impact, whilst on the other hand imposing decisions on the local people could lead to resentment towards Imbizo. However, it is important to note that in actual practice, Imbizo is a highly centralised project, with limited or no involvement of the local people who are meant to be its beneficiaries.

2.4.3.6 Participation as sharing of costs

The focus of this approach is on the sharing of costs between the community and the community developers. The costs in this regard, among others, may include labour, finance, time and raw materials. The project leaders in this approach are not only concerned with cost reduction, but also with cost recovery. In order to achieve this objective, community members are invited to make cash contributions towards the maintenance of services (Cohen (1996:225)). The willingness of the community to contribute towards the costs of a particular community initiative is often taken as an indication that that community values the services provided to them. The assumption is also that they are committed to help to ensure that such services are sustained.

The limitation of this approach could be that not all community members may be in a position to make cash donations if required to do so. This might lead to problems of money collection and access to the services, especially to those who cannot make donations. In cases where this approach is adopted, proper consultation

must take place. Efforts must also be made to make sure that people agree on the nature of such donations, and whether this is a viable option or not. Otherwise, it could divide the community, and as a result, it might fail to achieve the desired results.

As Cohen (1996:225) argues, the willingness to contribute to a community development initiative may not always be a reliable indicator to measure the community's potential for a partnership. It is therefore important that any participatory development communication initiative, such as Imbizo aiming to develop a partnership with the community takes into consideration among others, the local context, that is, community organisations, available infrastructure and the community's economic circumstances. This is important because all these factors play a major role in the effectiveness of any participatory development communication initiative.

The implication for this approach is that a needs analysis must be conducted to determine the nature of cost sharing and how it will be managed, and the nature of community involvement in decision-making processes. The implication for Imbizo as used in the South African government context is that the planning process should be preceded by a needs analysis which would provide a clear picture of the issues that need government attention. This should be done in consultation with all the stakeholders.

2.4.3.7 Participation as taking part in decision-making

Participation in decision-making in development communication requires amongst other things, as (Melkote, 2000:41) states, knowledge sharing between “experts” and the “beneficiaries” of development projects. However, this strategy has never really taken root among development agencies. This is partly because of the unwillingness of the experts to give up control over the process. It is also because of the inability of development workers to appreciate and operationalise true participatory communication approaches at the grassroots level. This could be accounted for by participatory development practitioners’ lack of understanding of the community and the resources that exist in that particular community.

This is also the problem with the current government adaptation of Imbizo because there is limited usage of existing traditional communication channels (word of mouth, community meetings, etc.) in the communities. Instead, the focus is on the generation of extensive media coverage.

Participation in decision-making is important because it helps in creating a community’s pride of ownership through regular involvement (Cohen 1996:226). The involvement of the community is important because it would help the community and experts to determine the costs, management processes,

monitoring and evaluation. This could also have a bearing on the success or failure of the project.

It is therefore important to recognise the relationship between participation and power as it has implications on the nature of community participation. The participatory approach also implies that all the affected people must share the power to be active participants in all stages of planning, resource mobilisation and allocation, and maintenance of the project. This is important because these aspects demonstrate the power relations in the community, which would ultimately have a bearing on community participation.

In order for participatory decision making to succeed, communities should be invited, and have more decision making powers on goal setting, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of the project. It is therefore important that greater flexibility in planning and implementation be exercised (Cohen, 1996:227). With regard to Imbizo, power relations are biased towards government as it decides on the targets, resources, maintenance, and areas to be visited for the purposes of the campaign.

One of the problems which affect participatory decision-making is that a centralised system, which places emphasis on fewer people taking decisions, reduces the chance for authentic participation to take place (Cohen (1996:227). It

is in this case that Cohen (1996:227) further argues that in centralised governments, most development planning takes place in urban-based government departments and pays only lip service to community participation. This describes what is happening with regard to government's Imbizo programme as the process is highly centralised, with limited or no involvement of the affected stakeholders.

It is also important for development practitioners to note that communities need to be involved in the planning of projects that affect their lives. This is because participation encourages and persuades them even more effectively to heed the given information and to support the development initiative.

In dealing with participatory decision-making processes, it is important to ask questions around the implementation of commitments that government had made. In this regard, questions arise on how the communities will hold the decision makers in check and exert their own influence on the implementation processes. The other aspect to be considered is that as far as Imbizo is concerned, there is no mechanism to keep government in check and to make sure that the promises that have been made are fulfilled.

2.4.3.8 Participation as power to create contractual obligation

In this approach, community involvement does not focus on costs alone. It is defined as a process of establishing a minimal institutional infrastructure to manage and maintain the project. According to Cohen (1996:225), project managers focus on getting local leaders to legitimise the project, forming committees to promote, manage and to monitor local contributions. The focus is also on the usage of services and infrastructure, and the transference of technology through training of volunteers and other technical aides.

In this approach, a contract, which spells out the roles and responsibilities of all affected parties is often drawn up. This procedure provides the community with an opportunity to either accept or reject the contract and to negotiate some changes through the formal power structures of the community (Cohen 1996:226). According to Thomas (2002:52), this approach can be described as a dialogue between all affected parties, which is underlined by mutual respect. A major advantage of this approach for the community is that they are able to negotiate terms that suite their conditions.

This approach is important because there is often a lack of skills transfer in most development projects, which is ultimately to the detriment of the community. In the 1950s, for example, modernists worked vigorously to produce development programmes that would solve problems of poverty, health, land and low agricultural production. These programmes attracted a lot of money, which was filtered into the

targeted communities. In the final analysis, when the money was spent and the problem solvers retreated from the community, they left the people destitute largely because they did not impart skills to the local people.

This tendency was questioned by most development scholars in the 1970s and was labelled as exploitation that resulted in poverty (White, 1994:21). The approach which emphasises contractual obligations is therefore important because it attempts to deal with concerns around skills transfer and the prevention of exploitation of the local community.

The other problem is that in the African context, the socio-economic development has largely been characterized by an over-centralisation of power and by various impediments to meaningful and effective participation of the majority of the people (Makumbe, 1996:3). This has often resulted in limited skills transfer, which ultimately limits people's participation in projects.

It can therefore be concluded that for sustainability of development projects, any attempt at ensuring community participation should take into consideration the importance of skills transference. This would in the long run help in ensuring that poor communities are self-reliant once the development practitioners have left the community.

The main problem with the creation of contractual obligations could be that the negotiations involve local leaders and committees, and may not always be representative of all community members. It is therefore important that community leaders who are involved in contractual discussions consult with community members and that they take their circumstances into consideration when they become involved in such negotiations.

2.4.3.9 Acknowledgement of the beneficiaries

There is a need to develop communication strategies that acknowledge that the beneficiaries of development are people who know what is good for themselves. This should therefore be the basis upon which the policies and development projects should be based.

It is important to note that in order for genuine participatory development communication to take place, the beneficiaries must take the lead because they understand their circumstances better, and that they are in a better position to articulate them. This will enable the participatory development communication

approach to deal with practical diversities because it will be able to recognise and accommodate the social, cultural and need diversities as opposed to the homogenised approach offered by mass communication (Kasongo, 1997:87). This can be seen as a bottom-up approach, which is central to genuine participatory development communication.

As Cohen (1996:230) argues, there is growing evidence that top-down strategies in development have failed to make any substantial impact on the lives of poor people. There is also recognition of the move towards a bottom-up approach.

2.4.3.10 Beneficiaries should also take responsibility for the project

People's participation is important because their responsibility in the project will be an assurance that the local resources will be mobilised and that they are preferred to costly outside resources. According to Cohen (1996:230), participation allows people to determine the objectives of the project, to support project management and to use their local knowledge, resources and skills. This should normally result in more effective and better run projects. In this context, community participation should be seen as a managerial contribution and not merely implementing what has been planned by experts who do not live in a particular community.

Participation is therefore seen as a way of extending provision of services to all community members, including those who are traditionally excluded, mainly women, the rural and urban poor.

Participatory development communication in this case can be seen from two perspectives, namely, as a means or as an end in itself. As a means, participation is seen as a way of harnessing community resources to help in the achievement of pre-determined goals and objectives. The results of participation are therefore more important than the act of participation itself. On the other hand, participation as an end implies that the process of people's involvement is seen as strengthening the capacities of the poor to intervene more directly in community development initiatives.

2.4.3.11 Participation should encourage self-reliance

The goal of participation is often seen as self-reliance. The concept of self-reliance therefore becomes an integral part of participation, both as an outcome and as a process. Participation is in fact an act of self-reliance that is often accompanied by self-confidence. It is an important concept for development and for participatory communication, but it can be interpreted and operationalised from a number of different perspectives (White, 1994:25). Genuine participation is driven by human compassion, unselfish motives, sensitivity to the feelings and worth of others,

supportive communication, openness to change and the shifting of responsibility and power (White, 1994:30).

The concept of self-reliance in development gained popularity when user initiated activities at the local level were considered absolutely essential for successful development at the village level. People had to discuss together, identify their needs and problems, decide on a plan of action, and then use a specific medium of communication and information database most appropriate to their needs (Melkote, 1991:206).

It is also important to note that for people to be self reliant, the critical elements of this empowering process are, to enhance awareness, to strengthen local organisations, and to create pressures from below to bring about changes in existing arrangements (Cohen 1996:231-232). It is therefore important that projects that seek to promote participation must be clear as to the nature of the participation that they aim to promote. This is important because it would help to determine the appropriate methodology for mobilization (Cohen, 1996:232).

In dealing with participatory development communication, it is important to take into consideration the fact that there are aspects which may inhibit participatory development communication.

2.5 FACTORS THAT AFFECT PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

The following factors that are perceived in this study as obstacles to participatory development communication will be discussed: people's participation and power relations, participation and vested interests, self-depreciation and participation, the role of the state and participation.

2.5.1 People's participation and power relations

The extent and nature of people's participation in a development initiative to a large extent defines the power relations amongst the affected people. Therefore, the roles that participants play in any development project may demonstrate their status in society. For example, government employees plan for Imbizo activities with limited or no participation from the intended beneficiaries. The people's involvement is largely limited to asking questions during Imbizo meetings. This level of participation can therefore not be defined as authentic participation. This is because as Servaes (1999: 197) indicated, authentic participation directly addresses power and its distribution in society.

The implication is therefore that the beneficiaries of development communication should be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of an Imbizo campaign. The main challenge in this regard could be that development

practitioners, in this case government officials, who want the status quo to be retained, may resist efforts to share power with the people, and this could inhibit authentic participation.

The other limitation to authentic participation is that the dominant classes are in most instances not interested in the implementation of policies and plans that would substantially improve the conditions of the lower classes. This is largely because, as Servaes (1999:198) argues, every centre needs its periphery to sustain itself. This is a modernisation understanding, which as Melkote (1991:90) argues, conceptualises communication as a one-way process flowing from a powerful source to a passive receiver.

The implication of this approach for communication is that people are seen as objects that need to be influenced and changed. It is also a top-down approach, which implies that messages are developed by opinion makers and thereafter filtered down to the people. The problem with this approach is that it ignores the context within which development takes place and the needs of a particular community.

It therefore means that if these power relations are not addressed, they could compromise the authenticity of participatory development communication efforts. When dealing with the issue of participation, it is also important to note that the

issue of power has close relations with the affected parties protecting their vested interests in community development initiatives.

2.5.2 Participation and vested interests

There is no community that is homogenous in all respects. This is largely because communities are characterised by different interest groups with their varied aspirations; and this has implications on development initiatives. For example, the government, may want to use Imbizo as a platform, among other things, to explain its policies, its projects, programme of action and to explain progress in policy implementation, but also as a public relations exercise activity (a perception that is often attached to Imbizo).

The government's interests could therefore largely be political because it would want to be in contact with the people it is suppose to serve. Government would also like to create a positive perception in the community and among opinion makers. To this end, it can be argued that government has been using Imbizo as a public relations exercise.

On the other hand, the community representatives might have varied interests ranging from wanting to genuinely help the community, to gaining power for themselves and to advance their careers. These varied vested interests could have

an impact on the nature and level of community participation. Depending on how they are managed, they could inhibit or enhance genuine community participation in community development initiatives.

As articulated by Servaes (1999:201), more powerful community members take advantage of any available opportunity for influence, thus corrupting the purpose of the participatory approach and destroying the spirit of a co-operative effort. It is therefore important to note that in all communities there are sub-communities or factions, which have interests that they would want to protect. Any development initiative should therefore take into consideration the different interest groups in the community and develop strategies to effectively manage them.

The implication for Imbizo could be that its status as a genuinely participatory development communication strategy could be compromised if the varied vested interests are not addressed. It is therefore important for all affected parties to be extensively consulted with the view to harmonise their interests for the benefit of the community at large. It should be noted that although the vested interests could be harmonised, one of the challenges that remain is that of self-depreciation that exists in the community.

2.5.3 Self-depreciation and participation

Servaes (1999:202) defines self-depreciation as a process that stems from the background of dependency. In this regard, M'bayo (1995:79) states that the penetration of Third World countries by multinational corporations, the political objectives and foreign aid policies of developed countries in the international market and credit systems are all seen as aspects of the dependency phenomenon. This is largely because multinationals would want to make profits, and the assistance that they provide to Third World countries has conditions that are meant to benefit them (multinationals). As a result, the Third World countries are indebted to the multinationals, which leads to the continuation of the cycle of dependency, which often result in self-depreciation.

As a result of the influence of multinationals, people lose the power to take decisions that affect their lives. They therefore expect solutions to come from outside their community. In the South African context, the background of apartheid and disempowerment, has led to forced dependency to such an extent that even when people are given a chance participate in forums such as Imbizos, there is still reluctance to participate and to express their views. This has however led to the entitlement tendency where people for example, attend Imbizo meetings not to contribute constructively, but to complain and demand that government gives them handouts.

In this regard, (Melkote 2000: 42) argues that the reality of the social and political situation in most developing countries is such that urban and rural poor and other people at the grassroots level are trapped in a dependency situation where the social and economic structures are unequal. As a result, their ability to participate in decision-making is inhibited. In as far as Imbizo is concerned, the fact that the people are not given the chance to participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation disempowers them, further encouraging dependency.

The challenge for Imbizo is therefore that efforts should be made to ensure that the problem of self-depreciation and dependency in the communities is dealt with. This is important because it would help the people to actively participate in Imbizo, thus making the programme much more effective.

2.6 WHAT IS NEEDED FOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION TO SUCCEED

2.6.1 Research

According to Arnst (1996:116), while quantitatively oriented research methods seek insight through objectivity, detachment and exclusivity, more qualitative approaches pursue involvement. The basic tenet of participatory research is that the process must be accessible to those among whom the enquiry is conducted. Arnst (1996:119) further states that the most important questions that should be

addressed by the enquiry must focus on the immediate benefits to those involved rather than on a pre-formulated agenda established by the researcher.

According to Tandon (1985: 21), participatory research is partisan, ideologically biased and explicitly non-neutral. Arnst (1996:120), further states that as it possesses a grassroots bias, participatory research is akin to the process of empowerment and conscientisation. The premise in this regard is that people are not objects to be controlled by the researcher but they are individuals who control their own destiny in the research process.

Rather than agendas being set by an academic elite and programmes enacted by bureaucratic elite for the benefit of an economic elite, participatory research involves people themselves in analysing their situation as well as gaining the confidence and understanding to address such a situation. The researcher in this case is consciously committed to the cause of the community involved in the research. This approach challenges the traditional principle of scientific neutrality and rejects the position of the scientist as a social engineer (Arnst, 1996:123). In order for participatory research to play a more meaningful role in participatory development, it is important to consider the usage of language as it (language) has the potential to either enhance or inhibit community participation.

2.6.2 Language use and community participation

Another problem regarding participatory development communication in South Africa is the language factor. The language that is used in development communication plays an important role in the recipients' understanding of such communication. The present language situation is however a barrier to meaningful social, political and economic transformation. This issue should therefore be dealt with taking into consideration the fact that in most instances development messages are communicated through the medium of English, with insignificant efforts made to translate the information into indigenous languages.

The problem with the continuous use of English is that the majority of people to whom development is meant do not understand it. It also minimises the contribution that the recipients could make in the effectiveness of such communication. Therefore, in order for transformation to take place, there is a need for indigenous languages to play a far greater public role than before (in line with Constitutional provisions).

2.7 CONCLUSION

It is clear from the discussion in this chapter that the historical developments in political and economic terms had a major impact on the understanding of

development communication and the involvement of the beneficiaries of development initiatives. The First and Second World wars, the attainment of independence by Third World countries, and the political developments in the late 1970s and early 1980s all had an impact on the understanding of development communication.

It is also evident that participation is a contestable concept. It is therefore important to clearly define what participation means in the context within which it is used in order to prevent ambiguity.

Against the discussion in this chapter, this study has adopted the multiplicity paradigm to the interpretation of participatory development communication. This paradigm emphasises that there is no universal path to development, and that development is a multi-dimensional process that differs from one country to another. It also implies that the problem of development is relative and no part of the world can claim to be developed in all aspects. This means that both the poor and the rich need each other for their survival.

The basic assumption of the multiplicity paradigm is that no community functions completely autonomously and is completely self-sufficient, nor is there any community whose development is exclusively determined by external factors. This paradigm also defines development as a need-oriented, endogenous, self-reliant,

ecologically sound and based on participatory democracy and structural transformation (Servaes 1996: 32). Every community is in one way or another dependent on communities (Servaes 1996:86). It therefore encourages the participation of the recipients in the conception of development messages, and the implementation of development policies and projects.

As Jacobson (2002:67) indicates, this paradigm places an individual and social self-determination amongst its central goals, and in turn makes participation itself of central importance in the development process. The route to individual and social development is seen precisely as being the route to increased participation, to a great extent enabled through individual and group communication.

According to Gooch (1995:90), since independence, emerging African nations have viewed the adoption of modern communication technology as a vital development to social development.

The early efforts to develop media systems in newly independent African countries were widely based on the Western diffusionist, or modernisation model of development. The understanding was that communication technology could greatly enhance socio-economic development. This could largely be because of a long history of dependence, characterised by ignorance of local traditional approaches to development.

The problem with the diffusionist approach was that Western-based media strategies that disparage the very social institutions that strengthen traditional channels of communication have not yet yielded meaningful results for African development (Gooch, 1995:93). As a result of such limitations, calls have been made to place emphasis on the integration of diverse national development objectives and active participation of multi-sectoral groups in communication policy and planning (Gooch, 1996:96). The different groups in the community need to be enabled to participate in the communication policy and planning processes.

The multiplicity paradigm is relevant in this regard because it places emphasis on the importance of self-reliance, which is rooted at the local level. It also implies that there must be equitable access to resources by all the people and the use of relevant communication channels.

According to Servaes (1989:54), the multiplicity paradigm is more horizontal, participative, and recipient-oriented. It is fundamentally based on interactive, participatory, and two-way communication at all levels of society. Servaes (1989:57) states that the multiplicity paradigm rejects the necessity of uniform, centralised, expensive, professional, and institutionalised media. It argues for multidimensionality, horizontality and diachronic communication exchange. This approach implies a more dialectic and active participation by the public, which has

to take place in relation with overall societal emancipation processes at local, national as well as international levels.

According to Melkote (1991:194), this alternative approach to development places emphasis on the poorest people, active participation of the people at grassroots level. It also places emphasis on the independence of local communities to tailor development projects to their own needs. The integration of the old and new ideas, the traditional and modern systems, the endogenous and exogenous elements to constitute a unique blend suited to the needs of a particular community is also central to this paradigm.

The other important factor in this regard is that reliance on local human skills and material resources is considered to be of great importance. This would help to foster greater self-reliance on development and, importantly, leading to freedom from external dependence.

In as far as Imbizo is concerned, the challenge is to develop a framework within which participation should be understood. The nature of involvement by the different stakeholders should also be clearly defined in order for them to understand their roles and responsibilities.