

**Communication**  
**Volume 1, Issue 2, Jul-Dec 2024, pp. 123-134**

## **Genealogy of Development Communication on Participatory Approach-1950 to 2020**

**Sayantika Bera**

Department of Mass Communication  
University of Burdwan, West Bengal,  
India

E-mail: [berasavantika1@gmail.com](mailto:berasavantika1@gmail.com)

Received on: October 05, 2024 | Accepted on: November 21, 2024 | Published on: December 30, 2024

---

### **Abstract**

*Development communication is a concept that states to proceed development by using communication more appropriately using media. Since World War II, the concept has risen worldwide and with the flow of time, it has developed. Several approaches have been evolved. The journey starts from modernisation to the participatory approach. This paper narrates the genealogy of the participatory approach which includes the ending era of modernization theory and the evolution of the participatory approach. This paper also narrated the future of the participatory approach and raised some questions about the reality participatory approach. This paper methodologically followed an inductive research process and is based on secondary data analysis.*

### **Keywords:**

*Development communication, Modernization approach, Participatory approach*

## **1. Introduction**

The concept of the participatory approach starts from the challenges of communication domination or can be traced from the criticism of the dominant paradigm. During the 1950s there was a paradigm called the dominant paradigm that emerged in European countries. This paradigm was based on behaviourism, functionalism and persuasion. This Westernized thought seems impractical in the case of execution worldwide because this paradigm was focused on individual attitudes and effects and ignored country-based social, political, and economic structures. According to this approach, the development model is prioritized over the adoption and innovation model. The persuasion theory provokes the adoption of Westernization, which is considered the only way of development. It also supports capitalism and ignores the grassroots level of development and the mode of communication was vertical or top-down.

In that situation, there is a need for a development model that supports the grassroots level of development—during the 1970s various scholars started criticizing the top-down approach of development. And start thinking about a new approach called the participatory approach of development communication. This approach emphasizes the critical departure of the dominant paradigm and execution of the participatory paradigm which includes community involvement, empowerment, and grassroots participation. This paper traces the genealogy of development communication on a participatory approach from the 1950s to 2020 where the uses of ICTs and the effect of ICTs worldwide. This paper also traces the future perspectives of the participatory approach.

## **2. The era of modernization (1950 to 1970)**

From the 1950s to the 60s, a Westernized model called the modernization model emerged from Europe. This model states that developing countries should transform themselves from traditional to modern society by adopting their strategy of development. First, this model was proposed by Daniel Lerner. His book, *The Passing of Traditional Society* illustrated the transformation of traditional to modern society. According to this approach modern means urbanization, industrialization, increase of capital, growth of GDP, technological advancement, etc.

After Lerner, Everett M. Rogers gave his opinion on the modernization approach. According to him, diffusion of innovation is the only way of development. There are four parameters of adoption. First come the innovators who innovate new things, then come early adopters who can adopt innovation at first then comes the early majority who adopt new things after the early adopter adopts it, and then comes the late majority who adopt new things when maximum people already adopt it then comes the laggards who does not feel comfortable of adopting new things so they stick to their old things.

Then comes Wilbur Schramm, who talks about transformational development. He stresses the

use of mass media. According to him, countries who has high access to mass media are considered more developed and countries that have less access to mass media are considered less developed countries. He also talked about the use of radio or other mass media for development such as health and hygiene, societal improvement, and empowerment.

During the 1970's this approach was criticized by various scholars and social scientists due to its impractical execution. It has been seen that this approach does not apply to all countries. Because each country has its own political, social, economic, and cultural structure. Not everyone can adopt this approach. After several criticisms, a new approach comes called the participatory approach.

### **3. Participatory approach(1970s-2020s)**

This approach is also called the community engagement approach which ideally and normatively refers to how communication features in the grassroots development approaches (Willis,2005). This approach believes in the decentralization of organizations and participation of people through agencies, it may be governmental organizations (GOs) or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). This approach does not rely on the media but is more focused on interpersonal communication approaches in innovative, effective and also traditionalways. It talks about the grassroots level of development which not only includes the economic stability of people but also talks about liberation, empowerment, and sustainability.

The concept of participatory approach was first coined by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian social change theorist, practitioner, and activist. He innovated the concept of dialogic action and social change which is internally related to the participatory approach. According to him, participation is defined as a dynamic, international, and transformative process of dialogue between people, groups, and institutions that enables people both individually and collectively, to realize their full potential and be engaged in their welfare (Singhal,2001).

In his approach, he says that communication should be bilateral, and horizontal and should be presented as a dialogic and democratic participation. Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire,1970) argued that most development theories proposed by various scholars, theorists, or social scientists are based on individual thought and opinion which is impractical. That is why most political, educational, and economic interventions failed to execute. He stressed the communication process over interpersonal communication rather than the excessive use of mass media.

There are also other scholars and social scientists who gave their explosions on participatory approaches-

- Rogers (1976b:133) said, a widely participatory process of social change in society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater

equality, freedom, and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through gaining greater control over their environment.

- Singhal (2001) said participation is defined as a dynamic, international, and transformative process of dialogue between people, groups, and institutions that enables people both individually and collectively, to realize their full potential and be engaged in their welfare.

Despite scholars and social scientists, international organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank also promoted a participatory approach. They also stressed community leadership for grassroots development purposes. In that case, traditional methods of communication are more effective for them. Participatory approaches are effectively first executed in health communication. In India, family planning programs can be an example.

*Some practical approaches to the participatory approach include-*

### **The Site and Kheda Project in India**

SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment): It is one of the notable projects in India because it was the first time where technology was used to educate rural people. It is considered one of the greatest projects in Indian history. This project was launched in 1975, jointly ventured by NASA & ISRO (IndianSpaceResearchOrganization). It was run for one year in 2400 villages and 20 districts of these six states of India- Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Rajasthan. This project was produced by All India Radio with NASA's ATS-6 satellite stationed above India for the duration of the project. The objective of this project was to educate people about entertainment. The program was based on family planning, agriculture, empowerment, adult education, children's education, etc. Other objectives are-

- Enhance primary education in rural areas
- Offer training programs for teachers.
- Promote better agricultural practices, health, hygiene, and nutrition.
- Support family planning initiatives and foster national unity.

Kheda is another communication project launched in India from 1975 to 1990 in the Kheda district of Gujrat. The program was broadcast in Doordarshan. The programs were mainly based on dairying, agriculture, and health-related programs.

Though the actual effect of these projects is questionable, it was the first time in India using technology for the development of society and it was a massive success on paper.

### **Gandhian Model of Development and Participatory Approach**

The Gandhian model of development is considerably focused on rural development. According to his conception, Community development means the optimum production of Agriculture and allied activities in the Community, including the development of cooperatives and cottage industries. It gives more than employment opportunities in the Community especially for the weaker section of the sector to enable them to improve their socio-economic status. Gandhi wanted to bring about Community reconstruction with scientific and spiritual values. He had identified and successfully implemented an 18-point Program (Yesu&Muthupandi,2016) These 18-point programs include-(1)Communal Unity

(2) Removal of Untouchability (3) Prohibition (4) Khadi (5) Village Industries (6) Village Sanitation (7) Nai Talimor Basic Education (8) Adult Education (9) Women (10) Knowledge of Health and Hygiene (11) Provincial languages (12) National Language (13) Economic Inequality

(14) Kisans (15) Labour (16) Adivasis (17) Lepers (18) Students.

According to him, the above developmental point must be for the improvement of rural or grassroots people. and he truly believes in a participatory approach to development communication. So that he too communicates with people from the grassroots and believes in participation. As a social reformer, he believed that grassroots people are the base of society, and with their participation development is next to impossible.

### **E-Emodeland The Taru project in India**

This is an E-E-based radio program, launched in Lutsan village in north India. It is a soap opera. The tagline of this project is Tinka Tinka Sukh (happiness lies in small pleasures). It was broadcast for one year from 1996-97 by All India Radio (AIR). It promoted gender equality, family planning, and communal harmony to audiences. During this time air received a poster letter from Lutsaan village in India's Uttar Pradesh state, signed by 184 community members, pledging not to give or accept dowry and pledge to educate their daughters equally with their sons (Papa, Singhal, Law, Pant, Sood, Rogers & Hefner-rogers,2000).

This study strongly proved the effectiveness of participatory approaches to development communication.

### **Participatory approach to the construction of a new social structure and social change**

The beginning of the development in the frame of the participatory approach came from several discussions in international forums. It may be the MacBride Commission, it may be the NWICO movement or the transformation of international organizations from an institutional approach to an agency-based approach. According to Esteva, the concept of development comes from Darwinism where development means as an adult, more evolved, and superior. The participatory approach originates from the criticism of the theoretical orthodoxy of the

modernization theory which is impractical in general. This theory elucidates that for development, the media should inform, educate, and entertain people but in reality, it is used just to inform people. It is a kind of monologic action that disagrees with the dialogic action. Modernization approaches apply to economically developed countries. Through the lens of adaptation, it spread the McDonalidization effect over the economically poor countries economically, socially, and culturally causing a convergence of cultures. Then the social structure seems like a mix of capitalist society and traditional society.

#### *Participatory approach as non-metro-centric*

The participatory approach can be traced in two distinct ways- in the frame of new ethical consideration and development of grassroots people. The new ethical considerations talk about the haves and have not of the society though the term coined from the dependency paradigm of development but gets stressed in the participatory approach. The development of grassroots people is generally non-metro-centric. Which does not ignore the capitalistic development but strongly opposes the trickle-down effect. In this context, rural development gets the priority. It is nonmaterial, a stark contrast to earlier approaches to social change measurable in the material growth in capital, technology, infrastructure, and so on (Steeves;2001).

#### *Participatory approach and the new journalistic practice*

The participatory approach brings a new way of journalism. In this frame, journalism should oppose capitalist thought. Just to inform people is not the only job. It should be information, education, and entertainment. It should be clear to all, that grassroots people and marginalised people can understand easily. In this approach, “News is timely. It is a change in something; it can be dated and specified” (Ogan and Fair 1984, 174).

#### *New media technology and participatory approach*

New media technology comes from the concept of diffusion of innovation. In the modernization approach, western countries stated that developing countries should adopt technology from them for the development of their country. In the participatory approach, new media technology is used for the development of grassroots people. It can be theorized as Marshall McLuhan’s “medium is the message” where the medium is much more important than the message itself. Because the medium itself works as a message. In India, the launch of All India Radio (AIR) and DoorDarshan can be an example of this theory. Media has been used for several development projects. Programs like Krishi Darshan, adult education programs, and health and sanitation programs have been telecasted for the development of the common people. Television programs like Humlog, and Buniad also promote education in the frame of entertainment.

Digitization is another area that is important for development. After 2000, the internet has

spread massively but there is a huge gap between haves and have not. Because the Internet is costly not everyone can afford it and it causes a digital divide. In India, in the 21st century, the gap is getting compressed because technology has spread in rural areas as well. But technology is still a dream for some sections of people.

*Participatory Approach and Unification of Agency-Based Approach and Institutional Approach (1990s To Present)*

During this time the paradigm shifted from modernization to a participatory paradigm. where the participation of grassroots people got the frontline. The way of communication process changed. It was based on a bottom-up communication process followed by two-way communication. The interesting part is the audience is the active participator here. with the flow of time, the institutional approach converted to agency agency-based approach where NGOs are at the forefront of development. Even international institutions also support them. Later all paradigms are consolidated and the focus of development becomes need-based. Development is now considered a multifaceted process that includes government, nongovernmental organizations, and international institutions. The pivotal point is the decentralization of development policies and emphasis on local governance. National companies are also involved in development projects. and openness of FDI helps to collect the funding for the development project which leads to the rapidness of the national growth for developing countries.

In the time of 2000s information and communication technology emerged and got updated rapidly. The digital revolution started. The development of communication conception has got a new dimension in this era. Now the agencies started to use ICT for development agendas. Uses of digital tools, social media platforms, and active participation of the audience through social media show the future dimension of the development of communication now. In the present time, social media and mobile platforms give the communication process a more interactive space where feedback and opinions get faster. Another point was highlighted this time, that is sustainability and climate change. Now these two topics are the primary purpose of development communication. Now it is more or less termed “information and communication technologies for development”. Also known as the ICT4D paradigm.

Several international organizations give their support for the development of developing countries by using a participatory paradigm. Some organizations are-

World Bank, FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), ITU (International Telecommunication Union), Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) etc.

*Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)* is the primary focus followed by international organizations. It was established in 2015. It aims to achieve 17 sustainable goals and

emphasizes the role of communication in sustainable development.

The 17 sustainable goals are Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good health and well-being, Quality education, Gender equality, Clean water and sanitation, Affordable and clean energy, Decent work and economic growth, Industry, innovation, and infrastructure, Reduced inequalities, Sustainable cities and communities, Responsible consumption and production, Climate Action, Life below water, Life on land, Peace, justice, and strong institutions, Partnerships for the goals.

These goals are expected to be fulfilled within 2030 which will lead to a new dimension to the development of society economically, culturally, and environmentally.

The explosion of the participatory approach seems incomplete without coining Amartya Sen's approach. He leads us toward the appropriate solutions of the participatory approach. he explained-

*Participatory approach and Amartya Sen's communication for development(C4D) approach*

Amartya Sen's approach to development communication is not much different but a collective opinion and scientific analysis. According to him, development communication means freedom of choice and one can choose his developmental approach for his requirements. He preferred both national-level policy discussions and local or village-level policy discussions as well. According to his theoretical framework, there are several points including functioning, capabilities, agency, and freedom.

Functioning- it requires beyond wealth. Though wealth is a primary requirement of development but most important point is the distribution of wealth and resources.

The proper distribution should proceed to the grassroots people. their basic needs should be fulfilled, they should be free from avoidable diseases.

Capability- according to Sen, it means the enjoyment of functioning. There should be a choice whether a person wants to be a part of functioning or not. For example, enjoyment of material life. It should be one's personal choice not to be accepted forcefully even if he or she has the capability and chance to accept it. In the developmental approach, it should be the choice of an individual whether he wants to enjoy education, health, or food. There should be several choices to accept.

Agency, freedom, and development- according to Sen, the agency is related to the concept that builds on its future capabilities. Agencies can be governmental or non-governmental, they should not fix or create a better way of life. It should be the citizens who will create a better way of life. The combination of functioning, agency, and capabilities is collectively called freedom.

According to him, development is not wealth or specific enjoyment of resources such as health,

or education. Development is the freedom of choices of that particular enjoyment it can be health, education, or food.

*An extension of Sen's approach to communication for development(C4D)*

Sen gives stress to the public choice through the exercise of the agencies. It should be a choice whether an individual wants to accept it or not.

Participatory approaches are too often used to encourage development but it is decided by the nonlocal organizations.

In the social choice approach, researchers need to identify collective citizen preferences among development policy options.

The effect of dialogic action may vary in small and large-scale communities. It may be beyond the expectation or under the expectation.

There is a similarity between the Amartya Sen and the participatory approach. That is both talk about the grassroots people. Both talk about the communication process which should be for the developmental purpose and the role of governmental and non-governmental agencies.

### **Future perspectives of the participatory approach**

The concept of the participatory approach has changed with the flow of time. In the present time development and participatory approach is more complex. With the invention of the internet, each section of people can access the internet though the ratio is still questionable. Now it can be said that the creator is the audience and the audience is the creator. Different social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc are more popular than other mass mediums and it has been seen that it is more effective than other mediums as the instant feedback process have made it possible to understand the audience's perspective.

In the age of information superhighway, ICTs have revolutionized the way of development and development communication. Now everything has got easier and expanded such as

- The distribution system has been developed and expanded.
- The agricultural sector, corporate sectors, etc are getting advanced.
- Accessing education is getting easier.
- Economic facilities have increased.

The whole system getting techno biased and it has spread and is being used by each section of society. but a few questions need to be researched-

- Do ICTs benefit over 80% of people throughout the world?

- How far ICTs reach through the rural area?
- Can ICTs be understood by grassroots people? do they have enough digital education to access the benefits of it?
- How far do the world's worldwide governance and local governance help people for their development?
- Can sustainable development goals be developed worldwide? Are maximum people benefit from it?

These are some contemporary questions that need to be measured and satisfying answers can be through the proper execution of governmental and non-governmental policies and participatory framework.

### **Conclusion**

The participatory approach to development communication is a broad concept. It cannot be studied in a single dimension. This is divided into various sections such as political, social, economic, and cultural. Despite that concept, the practical approach needs to be measured from a broader perspective. The participatory approach is a collective opinion and ideas based on the grassroots section, not individual opinion and thought-based. This approach is more practical than other developmental perspectives. The future of participatory approach and development is based on technology, sustainability, and proper usage of resources.

## References

Galloway, H. L. (1976). Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE): Reports from the NASA resident representative in India. *STIN*, 76, 31378.

<https://ntrs.nasa.gov/api/citations/19760024290/downloads/19760024290.pdf>

*Electronic Journalism: Kheda Communication Project*. (n.d.).

<http://ecoursesonline.iasri.res.in/mod/page/view.php?id=116100>

Rogers, E. M., & Singhal, A. (2003). Empowerment and Communication: Lessons learned from Organizing for Social Change. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 27(1), 67–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2003.11679022>

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION. (2017). *COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION*, Vol. No.

1 (Issue No. 1). <https://www.bharatpublication.com/>

*Organizing for social change: A dialectic journey of theory and praxis* (1st ed.). (2006). [English]. sage publication India private limited.

Badal, B. P. (2020). Gandhian model of community development. *Research Nepal Journal of Development Studies*, 3(2), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.3126/rnjds.v3i2.34455>

*Gandhiji's Constructive Programme | Gandhi's Inspiring Short Stories | Students' Projects*. (n.d.). [https://www.mkgandhi.org/short/ev28.php#:~:text=The%20original%20thirteen%20items%20were.%20National%20Language%20\(13\)%20Economic](https://www.mkgandhi.org/short/ev28.php#:~:text=The%20original%20thirteen%20items%20were.%20National%20Language%20(13)%20Economic)

Sen Choudhury, P. (2011). Media in Development Communication. *Global Media Journal – Indian Edition*, Vol. 2/No.2.

Servaes, J. (2008). Communication for Development and Social Change. In *SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9788132108474>

World Bank Group - International Development, Poverty, & Sustainability. (n.d.). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/home>

*About FAO | FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*. (n.d.). AboutFAO. <https://www.fao.org/about/about-fao/en/>

*About us*. (n.d.). UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/about-us>

*About ITU*. (n.d.). ITU. <https://www.itu.int/en/about/Pages/default.aspx>

*THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development*. (n.d.).

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals> United Nations. (n.d.). *About us | United Nations*. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us>

*New frontiers in international communication Theory*. (n.d.). Google Books.

[https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=7EE3AgAAOBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA33&dq=ge nealogy+of+development+communication+on+participatory+approach&ots=f5zeOpq5M-&sig=fHobWnkK4oeif98a84Gj\\_Zj\\_hnw&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=7EE3AgAAOBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA33&dq=ge+nealogy+of+development+communication+on+participatory+approach&ots=f5zeOpq5M-&sig=fHobWnkK4oeif98a84Gj_Zj_hnw&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Macaulay, A.C. (2016b). Participatory research: What is the history? Has the purpose changed? *Family Practice*, cmw117. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/cmw117>

Manyozo, L. (2012). *Media, Communication, and Development: three approaches*. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB12180658>

Manyozo, L. (2017). *Communicating Development with Communities*. In *Routledge Books*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/97813180>