

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND FOLK-MEDIA: A COMMUNICATION MODEL FOR SRI LANKAN RURAL SOCIETY

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Abstract: *Traditional folk-media is a good wealth in effective communication. There are some aspects in traditional folk-media related to the communication for rural community development. They are the closeness to rural life, credibility, utilization of familiar signs and symbols, community participation, collective presentation, utilization of past experience, plot and the subjects from their own life and the minimum media literacy for folk-media. They can be used to prepare a good communication model in rural community development programme in Sri Lanka. Traditional folk media can be seen in every part of the Sri Lanka with regional specifications. This is a most benefit aspect for the various development programmes for various types of development communication implementation in development sector. Communicating a message through entertainment was the practices of this model. Folk songs, ritual performances, drumming and all other folk communication were used creatively. Interactive communication was between performances and the audience at the crucial moments. Finally we can analysis the effect or the influence of the communication using two methods as the live observation analysis and later impact analysis.*

Key words: *Traditional folk media, effective communication, rural community development, performing arts, entertainment*

Introduction

Today there is a new dimension on preparing communication strategies for community development programme from the traditional folk-Media. As for example in some of the South African and south Asian countries are good in those types of experiments. They have concerned much upon the folk-Media to be used as a most effective way of rural community development communication. In the case of using traditional folk-media we can observe the communication characteristics which can be used in the folk-Media. They can be used for the social mobilization. This has been disclosed its capacity and importance as far as possible. And there is a tendency in folk-Media as a way of Entertainment or as a way of Entertainment Education. The studies carried out on folk-Media in Sri Lanka so far have been covered only to the approaches of Dance and theatre studies. There are only few studies have come from sociological and communicational point of view for traditional folk-media. We are able to find a much suitable study in the communicational potentials within a deep searching on both structure and the content of the currently associated traditional folk-media for the development communication in this case.

This research paper has been written with the use of practical research experiment carried out at the Rasnayakapura divisional secretariat covering the 24 villages. The experiment was conducted since 1st Of August, 2004 to 31st July, 2005 for a one year period. This communicational model has used to be achieving social mobilization, social communication and community empowerment by using their own traditional folk-media. This programme was another part of the main programme of the community governance project at Rasnayakapura divisional secretariat conducted by the Intermediate Technology Development Group (I.T.D.G).

The most important objective of this communication model was to communicate the development messages and exclude the misinterpreted meanings of the ongoing

development project. The other objectives of this communication model could be mentioned as follows;

1. To coordinate the overall communication of the community governance project
2. To convey the current messages of the development project for community.
3. To disseminate the real understanding of the project and escape from misinterpretations and doubtnesses.
4. To widen the ability of entertaining of the various social groups as a way of entertainment.
5. To motivate for the community development
6. To make more participation and cooperation for the community development.

The new communication model has been experimented under above mentioned objectives as a way of grass-root level communication. The theoretical and practical perspective of this activity is presented in this article.

2.0 Problem formulation and problem solution.

2.1 What are the traditional folk-media? How can be defined it?

Traditional folk-media has been produced by the rural community with their prevalent social needs and issues. The folk-media has been coming from the past period of time. In other hands traditional folk-media can be defined as the ways of transferring the knowledge and the wisdom to new generation from the past generation.

Traditional folk-media have some peculiar characteristic features over the electronic and print mass media. Even in the technology and the expansion of the traditional folk-media covers the less, its potentials in effective communication have been more widespread and propounded.

Traditional folk-media can be categorized as follows;

1. Chattering, gossips, riddles, proverbs
2. folk lyrics and songs and singing styles
3. folk dramas, skits and role plays
4. Storytelling, folk tales, riddles, idioms.
5. drumming and folk-music
6. mask dance and puppet dance
7. folk dances
8. ceremonial occasions
9. rites and rituals

There are many traditional folk-media can be found in Sri Lanka in order to justify the above main categories.

1. Folk songs; *Pel kavi, Paru kavi, Patal kavi, Karatta kavi, Babara kavi, Nelum kavi, ..*
2. Folk singings; *Adaharapema, Teeka siupada, Viridu gee, lamentational songs, kavikolaya*
3. Drumming; *Adaberaya, Hevisi drumming, temple tevawa, Pin beraya, Mala beraya.* (There are some drums as *kandyan geta beraya(magul beraya), law country yak beraya(devol beraya), sabaragamu daula, tammettama, uddakkiya, bummediya, maddalaya, rabana, dolaya, dolkiya.*)
4. Folk dances; *Lee keliya, Pot dance, Kulu dance, Suvisi dance*
5. Folk tales and riddles, proverbs; tale of *Hotabuwa*, tale of *Andara, tun teeravili*
6. Rites and rituals; *kandyan Kohobayakkankariya, kandyan gammadu, kandyan sokari, Udarata baliya (aw country; Devolmaduwa, dahaatasanniya, Kolammaduwa, Mahasohon, samayama, Riddiyagaya/ratayakuma, Baliyagaya, Sun iyamsanthiya, Sabaragamwa; Kirimaduwa, Pahanmaduwa, Baliya, Uvewellasa Baliya, Nuwarakalaviya Baliya, Aluth sahal mangallaya, muttimangallaya.)*

In addition, there are many beliefs and religious performances, donations, offerings and sacrifices to demons and devils and all such activities are included to the rituals.

There are varieties of folk-media can be seen in contemporary Sri Lankan society. They have different objectives, goals, and stories by their inception. As an example in low country *Ratayakuma/Riddiyagaya*, there are mainly three goals to be achieved by its performance.

1. To produce children for sterile women
2. To make good protection to the pregnant mothers.
3. To take care both new born child and the mother from existing barriers.

There are some objectives in the low country *Kolam* folk drama, which is prepared with wearing various wood masks. The prominent objective in the *Kolam* drama is to criticize the injustice roles of the same folk society. And there are more humorous criticism can be found among the *Kolam* drama.

It is a must to study the traditional folk-media in a sociological and sociopsychological point of view or approach in order to disclose the aspects of effective communication. The rural beliefs, encouragements and donations, religious respectful and attaining ritual purification must be studied in such point of views. Traditional folk-media should have researched with the above phenomena.

2.2 How is the effective communication in traditional folk-media?

Traditional folk-media have particular aspects in effective Communication which is different to the mainstream Mass Media.

1. Folk-media has created from the rural surrounding. So they denote the rural socio-cultural milieu other than the Mass Media. Folk-media express the needs and the socio-economic dimension of the same society. Folk-media has the proximity with the community in both structure and content of the folk-media. This proximity would be more needed in preparing the receiver's place for a profound communication.
2. The signs and the symbols of the folk-media have not been alienated from their village. They are very closer to the rural community. This helps to understand the media and its process correctly. On the other hand the signs and the symbols denote the mass consciousness of the same society. The indigenous knowledge and the traditional wisdom pass through that of signs and symbols from one generation to another future generation
3. Folk-media needs only fewer media Literacy to understand it well than the mainstream Mass Media. This is very important in use of the traditional folk-media. The community can maintain better participation with folk-media as a result of this situation. There are some characteristics in folk-media literacy. They are the simplicity, devotion, religious worship, respectfulness, use for a many years, loyalty or commitment, familiar signs and symbols. These aspects have caused to understand the traditional folk-media very perspicuously.

4. The proximity between the community and the traditional folk-media. There is a critical issue regarding that the mainstream Mass Media express only urban centered ideas, thought, opinions, and social needs. And do not consider the rural community and their social situation well. In contrary to this critique folk-media always involves with the rural community and its positions. As an example when it happens to a disease to a rural member they convert it into as a devil's donation or to any other superficial creature.
5. Folk-media having with Interactive Communication skills. They are the participation, cooperativeness, enthusiasms, Interactive activities. These things caused to put it into a small-group working together rather than that of single activities. Even the presentation shows the small-group works. Folk-Media helps to re-establish those skills such as community participation, group working, encouragement, enthusiasms, working unity, in order to log on the development process well. As for example, there are some occasions which denotes the same situations such as *Attama, Kaiya, Pinkama* and Funeral occasions..
6. Changeable, creativity and liveliness of the traditional folk-media. Folk-media has not distanced with the community. It can be interactive communicated with signs, symbols, verbs, gestures, postures.... It consists of several procedures of reactions, responses and feedback. This caused to edit the message with good feedback in the same time. This would be treated to produce a most creative way of communication.

Traditional folk media comprise these features of effective communication.

2.3 Preparing the communication strategies for rural community development.

Today rural community development can be traced as a most practical field of inquiry. Rural development concerns several fields such as Health, Nutrition, Community Governance, Agricultural trends, natural resources...etc. It is much necessary to make good awareness programme of the on-going development project on behalf of the target community.

The awareness programme should have separated three spheres as follows;

1. Awareness programme before the field project.
2. Awareness programme along with the on-going project.
3. Awareness programme after the project to establish a long-term effect.

We can initiate some aspects of communication in rural development programmes as follows;

1. To distribute a good understanding of the development project for the target group/ community.
2. To provide the awareness programme by step by step when it is continuing the development programme.
3. To response and answer with corrections when it is arisen some social issues, problems and conflicts in the programming.
4. To take part the community and make understand the new trends and results of the on-going development projects.

We have already implemented participatory rural appraisal tools to identify the development issues, problems, and to evaluate them by need. There are the other tools of communication such as hand leafs, community based organizations, and meetings in addition to this. These communication tools have been using by both Government and Non government organization of development in the development fields for many decades. All these development communication tools have been bored and stereotyped and imitated as a result of this reason.

According to this reason we hope to build up an alternative communication mechanism which can be helped from the traditional folk-media in the same place. In this case we thoroughly concern upon the development communicational model which can be made of traditional folk- media for the rural community development programmes in Sri Lanka.

2.4 Experimented communicational model for the rural community development programme

2.4.1 What can be communicated?

The definite understanding should have had for the above question before the commencement of communication process. It is more important to be considered to the objectives of the project and the need of the communication for good communication. As an example, we can mention here the objectives of the communication related to the community governance programme at Rasnayakapura, Nikaweratiya.

They are as follows;

1. To simplify and make understand the content and its nature of the project for the community.
2. To use as a tool in making community for participation, group working, community unity, encouragement, enthusiasm...
3. To eradicate the misinterpreted meanings and myths related to the on-going project.
4. To use for the community empowerment in order to prevent from political misuse and make sure the lives of the community with independently without absorbing any bad political impacts.
5. To initiate good entertainment programmes for the young generation to be participated to the development programmes.

6. To socialize the marginalized groups instead of being isolated from the general society.
7. To disseminate the new projects and news of the overall programme.
8. To initiate new social trends in development.
9. To motivate for the rural development.

In this case, a major concern should have had on the four aspects of the communication. They are as the Education, Entertainment, Information, and Motivation.

2.4.2 How can be communicated?

In this, there are two major steps of communication.

1. Making the environment for the media communication
 2. Making the media communication
1. A group of youth members should have practiced the performing skills by a relevant communication specialist. Youth members are selected from the same place that of the development project based community.
 2. Youth members are for the building a cultural Troup to use as the grass-root level communication mode. So the selected members should possess some performing skills. The performing skills are as good voice, music skills, Theatre skills, Dance skills, expression skills, desire for the performing practices. (There are only 15-25 members can be selected to this cultural troop consisting both male and female who have performing skills.)
 3. Support of the Field officer, Grama Niladari , Samurdi Niladari, Krushi Paryeshaka Niladari and other volunteers can be used to collect the youth members from the field of project based area.
 4. The training of the performing practices should be from one month and half to two month's period of time. In this training, it contains the voice training, Rhythm training, expression skills and gestures, singing, acting, drumming, playing and dancing, presentation skills.(This training course should have contained the basic principles of performing practices and many practicable things.)
 5. Scripts of various programmes should be prepared along with the above practical training. The various scripts can be mentioned as the, short-drama script, comedy play script, creative ritual script, drum orchestra script, poem singing script and other creative narration scripts
 6. Discuss the scripts and its contents with the members of cultural troop along with the training in performing practices.

7. Every different script should have a separate objective of the development communication such as
 - short play 15minutes- to build the cooperative strengthening
 - Creative ritual performance- to eradicate the misinterpreted meanings and myths of the development project.

2.4.3 How should cultural show be organized well?

1. Commencing in the evening time (7.00-8.00 p.m) using traditional lamp.
2. Performing in an open theatre in a public ground, a threshold place or in front of a junction of a rural road .
3. Presenting in a period of 1 to 2 hours time frame.
4. Staging in an open circle theatre, which follows the traditional ritual's open air theatre.
5. Serially ordering the programme event by the important of the objectives.
6. Including a variety and multiplicity in performing events at the cultural programme
7. Using the service of rural community and the volunteers to make this success.

2.4.4. How should be started the package of communication?

We can use two methods to make a pre announcement of the evening cultural show. They are the posters and *Anaberaya*(Mobile drum player)

1. Posters can show about three days prior to the cultural show at a public place or at a place of more community gatherings
2. *Anaberara* is a traditional drum player of communicating royal messages to the general public. The drum sound spread through the village first. As a result of this sound communication, people try to grasp the real message immediately.

2.4.5. How could be assessed the effect or impact of the communication?

There are two major tools can be used to evaluate the impact or the influence of the communication for rural community.

1. Live observation can be used during the cultural play is performing at the same time. We can analyze the following aspects in this observation; the dialogue between actors and the community, dialogue between the communities, verbal and expressions, gestures and postures, participation, interactive communication, responses , reactions and feedbacks
2. Impact analysis can be conducted after the cultural show within a month or two months. This would have the following tools ; the Questionnaire to be presented to the field members , the direct Interview, assess the community participation, acquiring new knowledge, acquired new behaviors, New participation for the development programmes such as involvements

3.0 Conclusion

Several researches have been done on the traditional folk-media for the rural development communication in South Africa, South Asia, South India and Latin America. We can find some resources that folk media can use for the community empowerment, social mobilization, and social communication.

Traditional folk-media have some important aspects than the mainstream mass media in the Inquiry of rural community development communication. They are as the Folk Media has been created by the same field, similarity in signs and symbols, small media literacy for Folk-media, Interactive communication, creativeness, changeable and easy to editing, community participation, group working, proximity with the rural community, sustainable maintenances.

The traditional folk media based model of communication can reach many advantages than the prevalent conventional participatory rural appraisal methods, community based organization, posters, and hand leafs. The new model of communication which is derived from the folk media has been achieved to less the boring of conventional methods of communication.

Folk-media can be seen in regional variety. Different development project can use the different ways of regional folk-media in charge of the development project and its necessity. There are regionally oriented traditional folk-media in Sri Lanka. It helps to develop this concept well.

The entertainment of the youth could be shifted to a much advanced level using the performing arts. Marginalized groups can also be involved to the development process in this type of entertainment way of communication. In the other hand, we can end the boring of the conventional communication methods in presenting the message via the entertainment based communication.

The use of both content and structure of the folk media would be more important. The communicational perspective and the socio-psychological perspective of the folk media in the domain of performing arts have grounds to develop the concept development communication. Knowledge and wisdom can be transferred from one generation to another generation as the folk media containing the folk consciousness intrinsically. This helps to maintain a good socio-communication for the rural development.

Finally we can use both the live observation and later, impact analysis to evaluate the impact or the influence of the proposed communication model

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