

Coverage of Development News in Print Media (A content analysis)

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Knowledge and information are essential for people to successfully respond to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic and technological changes. But to be useful, knowledge and information must be effectively communicated to people.¹ Development communication is a very well familiar terminology in academic as well as practical field of journalism and mass communication subject. The practice of development communication can be traced back to efforts undertaken in various parts of the world during the 1940s, but the widespread application of the concept came about because of the problems that arose in the repurcussion of World War II . The rise of the communication sciences in the 1950s saw recognition of the field as an academic discipline. The term "Development Communication" was first coined in 1972 by Nora C. Quebral, who defines the field as-

"the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential."²

Development communication is the integration of strategic communication in development projects. Strategic communication is a powerful tool that can improve the chances of success of development projects.³ It has also been defined as organized efforts to use communications processes and media to bring social and economic improvements, generally in developing countries.⁴

Dissemination of information about various programme is one important aspect for bringing uniformity in society. The Information for All Programme provides a framework for international co-operation and international and regional partnerships. It supports the development of common strategies, methods and tools for building a just and free information society and for narrowing the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor.⁵

The need of development and development communication will remain as long as the existence of this society. Communication is an integral part of development process. Keeping in view to this fact, the importance of communication was recognized in our society years before. Several organizations are working in this area at national and international level.

For example Aidcom is an independent regional and non-profit organization accredited to the United Nations, mandated to promote the role of mass media and communication with a view to strengthening the development process in a civil society.⁶ .New books are discussing various aspects of development communication.⁷ The coverage of government programmes certainly increases the public awareness about them.⁸

During the past two decades, the purposeful application of media and communication support has assumed an increasingly important role in many facets of rural development. Much of it has been subsumed under the larger movement normally referred to as Development Support Communication (DSC), or more recently, Development Communication. Broadly defined by the U.S. AID, the process refers to "The application of existing communication technologies and media to the problems of development" (AID, 1984, p. i).⁹

The earlier literature suggest, that development communication has been one very important area of study in mass media. The Denial Lerner,¹⁰ Roger Everett¹¹, Wilbur Schramm¹² Pye Lucian¹³ have done remarkable work in this field. The research work by this writer has given a detail description in his research work.¹⁴

Today, with increasing various social activities, people's dependency on mass media (including new information technology¹⁵) has become more than before. Similarly, the number and area of development programme has significantly increased. In this way, the success of any programme depends on the strategic use of mass media . Are mass media playing their role in an effective manner. Are mass media informing people about various schemes going on for them ? How are newspapers giving information about those development programmes which are conducted in different areas of our social life. These are some such questions which are always relevant and needed to be analyzed . Keeping in view the above fact, present study is a small attempt in this direction.

Literature review:

Several kinds of studies and opinion have been expressed in reference to development communication at national and international level .

National status:

The review of journal related to mass media and communication suggests that there is not any remarkable study about the coverage of development programmes in recent years. Most of the study describe unsatisfactory coverage by print media. At the same time, it is also a fact that some small newspapers have done remarkable jobs in the field of development communication. Khabar Lahariya is a weekly rural newspaper written, edited, illustrated, produced and marketed by a group of around 20 women - most of them from marginalised Dalit, Kol and Muslim communities - in Chitrakoot and Banda districts of Uttar Pradesh. It has played a very important role in the coverage of development news.¹⁶

Vilanilam, J.V. (2009) says that development issues in the media, which needs to be addressed, is not enough . Reviewing recent concepts on poverty measurement and the MDGs set forth by global scholars such as Jagdish Bhagwati, Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz, he acknowledges the importance of information technology, literacy and education in the process of development.¹⁷

International level:

The development communication has become an important area of study at world level. In the relatively short time since its conception, the Communication and Development Studies program at Ohio University is devoted to multidisciplinary teaching of, and research on, the utilization of information and communication systems and processes to promote national and regional development, to support specific development projects, and to facilitate social change.¹⁸

The review of literature at international level suggest that the research has different approach. Readership survey for development has also been done in a study. It suggests that Government and development agencies/ non-governmental organizations should consider the promotion of a reading culture, especially in indigenous languages, as a development programme that should be pursued vigorously. Media campaigns should be mounted, among other things, while encouragement should be given to creative writing and publishing in indigenous languages.¹⁹

The study of the coverage of development news is done in western countries also. A research was carried out by the journalism department at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in partnership with IPS and the Spanish Agency for International Development Co-operation, AECID. The study of nine mainstream Spanish, French and British newspapers released on 6 May 2010 reveals that only 3.5 % of their content is devoted to news about development.²⁰

Arjun Banjade (2000) in his Content Analysis of three newspapers the Kathmandu Post, the Hindustan Times and the Daily Star concludes that newspapers in developing countries devote a higher proportion space for development news. The present study did not conform past findings that media in developing countries heavily depends on government sources when covering development news than non-development news.²¹

In his essay, the role of newspapers in the development communication Emilie Holmstrand; Natalie Caballero; [2009] concludes that articles in the newspapers, The Namibian, New Era, Windhoek Observer and Informanté, on HIV and AIDS are common in the daily range of news but that HIV/AIDS is generally not the main subject in the text. According to the journalists, the reason for this is that by isolating the subject it can enhance the risk of stigmatizing the people with HIV/AIDS. None of the newspapers have a policy on how to address HIV and AIDS, New Era is, however, in the progress of implementing one. All newspapers have had discussions on how to report on HIV/AIDS.²²

Another study has suggested, that from the perspective of poverty reduction, the major long-term benefits of mobile telephony were more likely to be derived from its use as a livelihood resource (that is, as a communication tool for all activities) than from its use as a source of livelihood i.e, as a direct means of generating revenue ²³ In their study Communication strategy for community development: a case study of the Heifer project in South Africa , Benita Steyn and Monica Nunes found that the existing model for developing corporate communication strategy might also be applied in another context (with slight adaptations in terminology), namely to formulate

'corporate' communication strategy for the community/action group involved in the development project - more aptly to be called 'development' communication strategy. Such a strategy would make the participatory approach to development, and especially the participatory communication approach, even more 'participatory'²⁴

We can conclude from all above review that the work in the field of development communication is not enough.

Objective of the study:

The main objective of present study is to find the trend of coverage of Government development programme in newspapers in certain areas . Following points have mainly been taken for in it-

What is the coverage of development programme in the newspaper?

How is development programme being given priority on the front page of newspaper.

What is the coverage of development programme on editorial page.

What is the reaction of people about development programme ?

Methodology of the study:

It is a content analysis which has been done mainly in a qualitative manner through observation method. This study has been done taking Hindustan Hindi newspaper. 10 samples of this newspaper(from June and July 2010 months) have randomly been selected . Irregular marking method has been applied for random sampling. All pages except sports, business and economics have been taken for the study purpose. Keeping in view the size of the newspaper, the number of issues are enough for content analysis. All the stories of the selected issues have been analyzed to know the content of the material.

Following subjects have been taken for analysis:

Health ,Education, Agriculture and Rural development, Urban development and Environment.

The study has been done in a qualitative manner to get a more clear idea about the exact nature of the coverage of development programmes. The pilot study suggested, that the qualitative study would be more appropriate than quantitative one.

Analysis and discussion of the data:

The observation of contents of newspapers gives a very gloomy picture of the coverage of development program in the newspapers. Crime, accidents , forgery, strikes and politics are covered in a maximum parts of newspaper. The news of complains against various government offices and agencies have also been given in details. Even the problems of various section of the society at individual level have been highlighted in a very comprehensive manner. But the information about various Government schemes and development programme is very rare. Generally a newspaper gives coverage to those development stories which came in controversy in any way.

There is hardly any story about development programme on the front page of the newspaper. There is no question on giving follow up of any development programme.

Following is subject wise brief analytical report of coverage of development news in the newspaper .

Health:

Health is one very important area of development issue where a large number of programmes are being conducted both in rural and urban areas for different group of society. Health communication encompasses the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health ²⁵. If we see the list in detail , there are several health programme for almost all sections of society . However, the report of such programme in news form is rare. There is a weekly page on health related issue. It is given on Wednesday with the editorial page. But it does not inform anything about those development programmes which are being conducted in the health area by state or central government .The samples of newspaper of June 16,24, 27 give no information about health programme. There is a four column news of spreading of infectious disease . The editorial page of 6th July has given one very important article by Bharat Dogra, which is related with hazardous impact of uranium on the health of children .But it is an analytical scientific article. The issue of 7th July of the newspaper gives news about the national health insurance smart card scheme which have several drawback in it. This card is meant for those persons whose income is below poverty line. It is the news related with health programme. However, this news has been published in reference to a problem faced by a person having BPL cards. Another news is related with population control which

describes a gloomy picture of population control scheme.

There are several news related with population published on 12th July. All these news and articles have been given in reference to the various programme organized on the occasion of population day which is observed on July 11 every year.

There is not any news about those health programmes which have been launched to control the population. There is not even any report about increasing population. Strangely enough, the newspaper has given the news of a seminar with headline which states that population is not obstacle in the process of development. It is the opinion of an educationist which is quite contradictory to the general observation. The health issue is touched only if there is any programme organized by any agency of health department. The programme of organizing health camp for family planning has been given in the issue of 13th July. Similarly, the news of prohibition of tobacco in the offices has been given in a single column in the same issue.

The death of a patient suffering from swine flu has been given on the front page on July 20, but no information is given about any health programme. A related report of the same issue has been given on page 14 which is about the announcement of high alert in the state in reference to this disease. However, the information about the activity has been given in a very brief in single column news. The news of health surgery has been given as a small information item. Normally, no news has been given on the front page about health development programme.

The newspaper does not take initiative on their behalf to know in detail about the health programme.

There is not any feedback in the letter column on behalf of readers in which they would have expressed their opinion about the health program. All other samples of newspapers have not given any story about health programme.

In this way, the selected samples of the newspaper have not given any news of health programme.

Education:

Education is the only area where regular news is given on the city page of the newspaper. It shows that education has become a very important dimension of news reporting. But news has the content of routine activities of universities and colleges which are normally related with admission and other such subjects which happen in the month of July and August.

The news of several educational programme for various group of the society could not get any place in the news paper. The news of distribution of government scholarship has been given in a single column news in the issue of 13th July on page no.11 It is a news based on press release. The issue of 14th July has widely covered a detail news about various aspects of education.

Two stories related with government educational programme have been given on the page named as Nai Deshaye on July 14. It include beginning of pre-primary classes for poor children and information about scholarship form and fee refund form.

The issue of 20th July, gives information about various aspects of admission of school and college. There is one important article of a Journalist (Govind Singh) in which he has given a detail report about the bad condition of education in India. All other samples taken for the study have given nothing about the programme going on in the field of education. The sample taken for the study suggests that the development programme in the area of education is totally neglected by the newspaper.

Agriculture and Rural development:

Above 100 agriculture programme are going on in India²⁶. Mahatma Gandhi National rural employment Guarantee Scheme is a very big program of the country. The news about this program is often related with various corruptions and irregularities in its implementation. News about late payment of money to labours is published by the reporter on page 15 of June 16. Agriculture content contains the problems of farmers. It has been given on the 10 page of 24th June.

The issue of 6th July 2010, has given a news related with water management. It is based on the interview. Similarly the issue of 7th July 2010 has also given a news related with water management. It is a suggestive news. But these stories are not directly related with agriculture and rural development programmes.

The issue of 7th July has also given an informative news of visit of DM of Lucknow to Ambedkar village to inquire about development programme. It is a very small news and has not given any information about development programme.

The news of establishing of biogas plant at Samera village in Ambedkar Districts

is one very surprising information given on the state page of 10 on July 6th . The newspaper of 12th July have given nothing about agriculture and rural development. The opening of call centre for farmers have been given as a small news in the issue of 13th July on page no.4. Though this news would have been highlighted in the newspaper through taking various aspects of this programme.

However, with one exception, no issues, taken for the observation, has covered any story about conducting development programme in the area of agriculture and rural development. Nabard will provide 135 crore rupees for rural development. This news has been given on page 8 of 14th July issues. This is a small news which gives on allocation of money to different categories . There is no news about programme of agriculture and rural development in the newspaper of July 17,27,2010. The issue of 20 July have a very small single column news on page 9, which describes the underdevelopment condition of a village. Such news was ever given on a very priority basis by Hindustan Times(New Delhi) newspaper in the decade of 70s of twentieth century. But it has not given any programme of rural development.

All other issues contain nothing about development programme. Similarly the letter column gives nothing about development programme.

Environment news:

Conservation and Protection of environment is an essential part of development. It has various dimensions. Government has launched several programme in area of environment ²⁷ . But even in this areas, the newspaper has adopted same approach. The news of processing plant under solid waste management scheme has been given page 10 on June 16. But is given due to development of controversy and questions being raised about it. There is some occasional news which is related with small tree plantation programme. It was organized by some social group. But there is not any report about the tree plantation which have been a major part of government programme. With this exception, there is not any news about the environment programme. However the social activities of water conservation and tree plantation have widely been covered on page 10 in the issues of 12th July. The newspapers of other dates give nothing about the any activities of government development programme in the field of environment. The editorial page also give nothing about the environment programme. Similarly in the letter column, the readers do not make any references of environment issues.

Urban development:

The ministry of urban development has launched several programme for urban development.²⁸ The city pages contain news about several activities including news about crime, accidents and other problems. However, the news of development activities of urban areas have not been given. The news of corruption in development is one very common thing. It is given only when some thing comes related with wrong practice in the process of development. One such news has been given on the front page of the Hindustan newspaper. There is hardly any news related with the urban development programme in all the issues taken for the study. The city page is full with the news of crime, accident and various kinds of problems. It is very difficult to know through newspaper about the beginning and progress of any urban development programme. There is not any such discussion in the newspaper . The editorial page has not given any article about the urban development programme. Similarly there is no feedback of readers about these programmes. Though they have given news about several other important issues.

If there is no news about urban development programme ,it doesn't mean that all other news are worthless. However, the importance of information can never be denied . There is not a single story related with development activities in urban areas.

Important Findings and Conclusions:

The newspaper is covering various important news in all areas of human life to a great extent. However, maximum number of stories come from crime, accidents politics, agitation , education, film art and culture areas. News about sports and business subjects have been given on separate pages in the newspaper. The problems related with road, electricity ,water health have widely been covered. Similarly, the news of strikes, processions have also been widely covered. But the news about development programme which are being conducted by different agencies and organization of the government is hardly given in by the newspaper.

-The coverage of development programme is very small. It is almost negligible in the newspaper.

-The news is not informative about different development programme going on in various areas.

-There is not any regular column regarding reviewing the progress, success and failure of development programme.

-There is not any coordination among development agencies and media for successful implementation of the programme.

-The editorial page of the newspapers also does not give any articles about development programme.

-There is not any news of development programme on the front page of newspaper.

-The opinion of the people for whom such development programmes are being conducted is hardly given.

-The letter column of newspaper do not contain any content about feedback for development news.

-The development issues are given coverage whenever there is any specific day related with it or there is any official inauguration of such programme. Even on such occasion, there is not any detail information about development programme.

-The readers of newspapers also do not give their feedback in reference to development programme.

-There is not any trend in the newspaper to keep such reporter who can keep a watch on the activities of various development programmes and collect data for reporting.

-Programme of Development activity is not considered a news unless there is any big corruption any other kinds of anomalies.

-People's opinion about the benefit of development activities are not given at all.

-The interview of officer related with development programme is not given.

In this way, the awareness of mass media in reference to development programme is far away from satisfactory stage. The newspaper does not consider news value of those development programme which are going on in various areas in a routine way. The role of mass media to motivate and mobilize people in the process of development is merely an imagination. Similarly, mass media is also not playing the participatory role in reference to development programme. The dissemination of information about development programme is even today considered a part of government advertisement. It has resulted in poor knowledge of development programme in mass. Large number of people remain unknown with such types of programme and officer and non-deserving people take benefits of their ignorance. Even various development agencies also tries to hide their programmes.

Suggestions:

-Newspapers should be made an integral part in the process of development.

-The development stories about various programme should be increased in newspapers for more publicity.

-The feedback of common people about the implementation success and failure of development programme should be continuously given.

-The newspapers may take any particular programme for case study in reference to its success and failures.

-There must be some regularity in giving news related with development programme.

-The public opinion about development programme should be given as a part of the story coverage. Newspaper should invite the opinion of common people about development programme.

-There should be continuous review of the development programme on editorial pages.

-The participation of all person associated with the process of development be taken.

Suggestion for further study:

-This types of study can be done about the coverage of any particular type of development programme in any area.

-A comparative study can be done between the coverage of development programme in a qualitative manner.

-The opinion of media people can also be taken in reference to the coverage of development programme.

Limitations of the study:

-This study has taken the coverage of only those programmes which are directly related with development programmes conducted by state or central government.

-This study is based on the coverage of only those stories and other things which are related with development programmes.

- Development programme in the area of Health, Education and literacy ,Agriculture and rural development.Environment have mainly been taken for the study purpose.

-It is based on the coverage of news and other materials of Hindustan29 Hindi daily newspaper published from Lucknow.

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