

Implementing Gross National Happiness—A Participatory Development Communication Approach

KHAMPA

No one can be perfectly free till all are free; no one can be perfectly moral till all are moral; no one can be perfectly happy till all are happy.

—Herbert Spencer

“Bhutan has no economic or military might, only a special asset - the people. As long as we are motivated and committed we will not only realize our own individual aspirations, but it is assured that Bhutan will achieve anything she aspires to.”

—His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

Introduction

Today it is evident that the progress based on extensive economic activities alone is not bringing desired growth and satisfaction in societies and its peoples. The recent palpable global problems of financial crisis, food crisis and energy crisis are true telling of the failing systems of development that nations have adopted blindly, especially the capitalistic system. Some developing nations are struggling to draw upon better goals and policies to serve their people, yet the inherent economic and political systems they hinge upon deviates from getting to the people. There's a serious lack of connection between people's need and government's understanding posing greater challenge to the development. On the other hand, the classic idea of planning and executing development activities by the State *for* the people is turning out to be futile and obsolete.

Bhutan's late approach to modern development was perhaps blessing in disguise to stay away from ill-effects of modernization. The farsighted Kings and their dynamic leadership to look into the problems of their people have tried to adopt sustained and careful social policies. Giving little importance to their royal scepter, a sustained process of empowering people and methodologies for reaching their needs were in constant practice especially during the reign of the fourth hereditary King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The search for better ways to develop its people has obsessed the monarchy. It is by this impetus of quest for ideal development that the concept of Gross National Happiness was wisely propounded by HM the fourth King.

The current world's search for better ways to develop and Bhutan's timely concept of GNH tells us that the people's needs do not rest solely on materialistic pursuit but beyond that. Perhaps, the prevailing defect in development calls for an instrument not only to bridge the people and the government but also become important development system per se. Communication for development is the right tool and system that grabs the point here.

Despite the historic undermining of its significance, communication for development purposes and social change singles out itself as an important interface capable of making development programs effective. Communication can make development interventions more vernacular, and more sensible to specific local contexts (Inagaki, 2007). Further, communication can create a favorable ecology for development programs by re-linking and facilitating interactions between economically, politically and culturally disconnected groups and ideas—between indigenous knowledge and science, elite national policymakers and rural communities, donor agencies and local NGOs, men and women, and didactic pedagogy and participation (ibid).

This paper attempts to study both the human communication and the mass communication in the process of participatory development communication. By arguing the functional role of communication in implementing Gross National Happiness and offering the suggestion to institute such methods of communication is the main objective of this paper.

Theoretical underpinning and relationship of Communication and Gross National Happiness

Obviously, a curious question about this paper would be to ask, “How can communication lead to happiness?” Other way around, “can happiness be an end product of communication?” The answer to large extent is yes.

To begin with, what is communication? Definition of the term ‘communication’ is wide and varied. Richard Emanuel, in his comprehensive study of communication as the humanities’ core discipline, states that communication is the vehicle that allows us to recall the past, think in the present, and plan for the future (2007, p-2). It enables us to manage our relationships with others, and to interpret and interact with our environment (p-2). The intense focus on what, when, where, how, and why humans interact is what is so special about the Communication discipline (p-3).

Much like the communication caters to development of an individual being, Gross National Happiness (GNH) is aimed towards holistic development. An important paradox of the happiness literature is the apparent disconnect between economic growth and happiness, referred to as the “Easterlin Paradox.” In his groundbreaking study on whether the economic growth improves the human lot, Richard Easterlin concludes that economic growth does not raise a society to some ultimate state of plenty (1974). He adds, rather the growth process itself engenders ever-growing wants that lead it ever onward. This amounts to a rejection of the hypothesis that current income is the only argument in the utility function (Tella and MacCulloch, 2005). GNH simply precedes Gross National Product (GDP), herein there is inherent emphasis being placed on the intangible qualities that defines and gives meaning to our human life. Although the concept of happiness is abstract, one needs to know, as psychologists differentiate, between baseline happiness (life satisfaction) and moments or events of extreme emotional pleasure. So happiness is a state of being distinguishable from moments of excitement or joy or pleasure that are fleeting.

A human being creates the meaning of his/her life through communication. The theory of symbolic interaction and the development of self in communication states that as people interact with one another over time, they come to share meanings for certain terms and actions and thus come to understand events in particular ways. Society itself arises from interlinked conversations among individuals (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). This function of communication caters to facilitate the significant characteristic of GNH, as in an individual's capacity to understand his/her life and realities around and derive satisfaction. Here, the happiness is truly relative that grows out of individual ability to merge with significant others and objects. The process of such communication can be referred to as communicative event. The event is a process that starts with some inner state of the sender and ends with some inner state of the receiver (Pagin, 2008). The relevant inner state of the sender takes part in causing the signal, and the signal in turn takes part in causing the relevant inner state of the receiver (Ibid). Lyonpo Jigme Y. Thinley (2007) wrote that GNH seeks to complement inner skills of happiness with outer circumstances. He then adds that both sources have to be harmonized to bring about happiness.

Although the happiness is a subjective experience, it is in the collective experience of the subjective happiness wherein the societal happiness lies. Collective experience can only be created through communication. A societal happiness can only be a virtual communication and representation of the individual happiness.

In their towering work, Gottlieb and Rosenau (2003) proposed a dynamic model of happiness calling it as the "The Happiness Equation." They suggest that happiness is proportional to the *difference* between our perceived actual state and our expected state. In other words, happiness is a function of our *caring about some things*, our perceived actual reality, and our expectations (p-5). Their definition of happiness equation fits into the human communication process. In fact, communication is a two-way process, in that both the speaker and listener come to understand each other and are satisfied. So, the 'understanding of each other' is something that we *care* in the process of communication that ultimately leads to satisfaction and happiness. In development terms, it is the 'expectation' of grassroots from the state to deliver the desired development through a consensus reached in their earlier communication. Therefore, the function of state becomes an enabler of the development.

In another best laid work, Jonathan Haidt (2006) comes up with "The Happiness Hypothesis." In a chapter on happiness, Haidt proposes that Happiness is an interaction between genetic Set point, life Conditions, and Voluntary activities which is written as $H=S+C+V$. Set point is genetically established. Conditions include things like noise in your environment, commuting time, lack of control, shame, and relationships. Voluntary activities are those that yield flow, allowing us to enjoy both pleasure and gratifications. Variables like these leads to a social construction of reality. The social construction of reality refers to a particular set of perspectives on how humans come to know the world (Dare, 2003). Social constructionists reject the assumption that meaning exists in some tangible form independent of human thought, and instead posit that meaning is constructed in social interaction (ibid, p-10). If it is through social interaction that we create and give meaning to our worlds, then

“when we communicate, we are not just talking about the world, we are literally participating in the creation of the social universe” (Pearce, 1995, p. 75; Dare, 2003).

At another level, if GNH is about spiritual and emotional wellbeing of an individual and peoples, then it appropriately relates to the idea of the social construction of emotion through communication. According to one of the best known scholars on the social construction of emotions, James Averill, emotions are belief systems that guide one’s definitions of the situation. Emotions consist of certain internalized social norms and rules governing feelings. In other words, the ability to make sense of emotions is socially constructed. Lyonpo Jigme Y. Thinley, explaining on the socio-cultural pre-disposition to GNH in his paper, “What is Gross National Happiness?”, makes a point by stating that a great deal of cultural knowledge and education in traditional society was meant to train people’s psychology towards happiness of all.

In a broad sense, the conditions for communication, the communication systems and the communication skills are essential for the success of the society. Nowhere is the functional role of communication more elaborately scrutinized than in renowned German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas’ *Theory of Communicative Action*. This theory of communicative action draws on the idea of universal pragmatics and the transformation of society. Both the theory of communicative action and GNH suffers inadequate quantitative research, therefore, the author also aims to conduct a pilot research on these two concepts in Bhutan in his larger work of thesis for the Master’s degree in Communication.

Communication is at the root of the development of human being and the society. Thus, communication is one of the most important tools/means that development concepts such as GNH can truly apply to achieve most of its goals. Bhutan’s effort to create the alternative path of development will become more imperative if it is founded on the very fundamental life system of the human beings, i.e. communication.

Development and communication

The term ‘development’ has become a wearied idea for many countries and societies. The more we talk about it, the more we are disgruntled by the fact that everything around us needs development for our wellbeing. There are several meanings accorded to the word ‘development.’ It ranges from meaning the change, growth, progress, and modernization. Tracing back the meaning of development, Sinha (1978) puts forth that the terms which are very often used interchangeably are ‘growth’ and ‘development.’ Through a simple comparative imagery, he then differentiates the terms by stating that ‘while growth implies spontaneity and naturalness, development subsumes direction, pace, kind, quality, extent and control of growth. This implies that for development, spontaneity of growth has to be planned, guided, directed and stimulated.’ In other words, the development becomes a process in achieving a desired goal or an objective. In the words of Sinha, development is a process of movement from a state of dissatisfaction to a state of satisfaction, it is dynamic not static. This very much points to the direction that the concept of GNH is heading towards.

Having said about the development, what has ‘communication’ got to do with it? Yet it is an inevitable fact that we humans exist and relate to each other through communication. And as development means advancing human growth, therefore, communication takes the central role in development. In communication there are actors and goals involved. Sinha (1978) provides some important tenets of communication:

- a) communication is a process for transmission of ideas, thoughts, feelings, behavior from one person to another;
- b) communication is persuasive and seeks to obtain desirable response to what is being transmitted;
- c) communication is a two-way process both vertically and horizontally in a spirit of ‘give and take’, or ‘send and receive.’

Thus, the role of communication is very imperative in the process of development. The renowned communication scholar, Wilbur Schramm, echoes the concern as “communication is asked to help survey a new environment, raise people’s aspirations, guide and control a dynamic process, teach new skills and socialize citizens to a new and different society that is still only in the process of becoming” (Sinha, 1978). Since development and communication shares a symbiotic relation in fostering balanced growth and progress, the idea of ‘development communication’ has taken center stage in many developing countries.

The concept of development communication traces its origins in the aftermath of World War II stretching to this day. This period witnessed the political emancipation of most of the Third World from colonization as well as the birth of the United Nations (UN) and its various executing agencies (Melkote, 1991). Towards the beginning of the second half of the 1900s the attention turned to the need for development in the underdeveloped Third World countries. The idea of development was then to adopt the Western ways of progress and advancement that outstripped the traditional way of survival in the underdeveloped worlds. Therefore, ‘it made unquestionable sense that the Third World Peasantry discard unconditionally their primitive ways and embrace the technologies which had wrought such extraordinary progress in the advanced countries of the *West*’ (Melkote, 1991; italics added). Communication has been a key element in the West’s project of developing the Third World (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007). This paradigm of development was called modernization model in that ‘the introduction of media and certain types of educational, political, and economic information into a social system could transform individuals and societies from traditional to modern’ (ibid). This mainly economic-oriented view, characterized by endogenism and evolutionism, ultimately resulted in the modernization and growth theory (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007).

As a concept, development communication stems from the belief that telephones, radio, television, the Internet, or group media can support the overall betterment of less privileged people in underdeveloped countries (Srampickal, 2006). Development communication generally refers to the planned use of strategies and processes of communications aimed at achieving development (Srampickal, 2006). Development communication can also make

development initiatives scalable by employing different communication techniques and devices that address varying spatial requirements for local, regional, national and international levels of action (Inagaki, 2007).

The greater interest towards communication as facilitator of development is reported in Daniel Lerner's classic study "*The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*" in 1958. In this classic study of modernization, Lerner found a key concept, empathy, defined by him as the capacity to place oneself in the roles of others, as the most important "psychic mobility" caused by mass media exposure that had a great characterological transformation in modern history (Supadhiloke, 2008).

Mass communication was a means by which 'modernization' was carried across countries. National leaders, bureaucrats, and experts broadcast passionately from the cities about the wonderful differences which the adoption of new and foreign ideas would bring to the lives of the people (Yoon, 1996). They talked at length about farming methods, cures for diseases, the importance of sending children to school, the advantages of having fewer children, the desirability of having a stable government, and so on (ibid).

The showing of urban fantasies and lifestyles brought about by modernization through mobile van cinemas became common sight in villages. The dramatic phase of how mass communication carried the message of modernization is nicely put forth by Yoon (1996):

It showed the beautiful homes and cars of rich Western farmers, and projected the image, voice and charisma of aspiring political leaders. The private sector soon followed suit and sent its own vans to entertain with other cartoons and comedy shows, and most importantly for the companies, to show the advertisements for their wares. Government extension workers trained in the towns became the front-line communicators, repeating to farmers in their fields what they had just been taught in the towns. Posters, leaflets, and other publications made up another important instrument used as a part of this approach. It became known as "development support communication," a term coined by the FAO.

However, towards the last quarter of the 20th century, the modernization model severely failed in explaining the idea of development. This theory sees development a unilinear evolutionary process and defines the state of underdevelopment in terms of observable quantitative differences between so-called poor and rich countries on the one hand and traditional and modern societies on the other (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007).

The communication of modernization to rural and indigenous people didn't serve to bring the real change needed. Because the development had been centrally planned without any consultation with people, the wrong solutions were often pumped down to startled communities (Yoon, 1996).

Participatory Development Communication

What is participatory development communication?

According to some practitioners and advocates of participatory development, ‘normal’ developments are characterized by biases which are disempowering (Peet and Watts, 1996: 20-25). These biases are Eurocentrism, positivism, and top-downism (Escobar, 1995; Chambers, 1997 cited in Mohan, 2008). Clearly, the flipside is that ‘non-expert’, local people were sidelined and their only role was as the objects of grandiose, national schemes (ibid).

As a result, over the past few decades, the study of communication for development and social change has gained so much attention among development practitioners and scholars. Several models of development were drawn and applied. The evolving studies contributed to major shifts in development paradigms. From modernization and growth theory to the dependency approach and the participatory model, the new traditions of discourse now are characterized by a turn towards local communities as targets for research and debate (Servaes, 2007). So many issues affecting people, especially in rural areas were brought to forefront in changing the policies and strategies towards progress.

However, there is no limiting definition of participatory development communication as was for the modernization. A widely held view of participation is that it is *instrumental*, facilitating the ‘formal’ development programmes making it efficient and effective. On the other hand, participatory is also viewed (although at a lesser stance) as *transformative* in that it disregards the formal development system and demands empowering other, non-hegemonic voices as a means for meaningful social changes to occur.

Some contend that the present day practice of development communication was influenced by renowned Brazilian socialist Paulo Freire. Freire’s entire philosophy of education and its orientation towards participation are based on the notion that the historical vocation of human beings is to be free from the shackles of material and psychological oppression, and from the patterns of life that are imposed from above and do not provide for the involvement of people in the processes of change (Thomas, 1994). And the liberation of both the individual and the community comes through a self-sustained effort through growth in individual awareness and community consciousness evolving through a process of learning (ibid).

Within marginalized communities, there is tremendous untapped potential to use communication for collective good (CFSC, 2008). When people most affected by social inequity have the confidence and abilities to access, manage and control the processes, tools and content of communication, development efforts are more sustainable and effective (CFSC, 2008). It is also indicative of an urgent need to deal with the consequences of underdevelopment and to involve citizens in meaningful interactions with message makers and governments (Legakane 1997; Kasongo 1996; Tomaselli, 1997).

In 1970s, the idea of Participatory Action Research (PAR) was advocated to be instituted into development process. Even organizations like World Bank advocated developments that concerned the Basic Needs and women-centered, targeting the marginalized group. Added to

this were academics, most notably Robert Chambers (1983), who argued that ‘putting the last first’ was the only way to achieve rural development (Mohan, 2008). Since then the acceptance of participation has become widespread.

Generally, four different ways of participation can be observed in most development projects claiming to be participatory in nature (Uphoff, 1985; Yoon, 1996):

- Participation in implementation — People are actively encouraged and mobilized to take part in the actualization of projects. They are given certain responsibilities and set certain tasks or required to contribute specified resources.
- Participation in evaluation — Upon completion of a project, people are invited to critique its success or failure.
- Participation in benefit — People take part in enjoying the fruits of a project, such as water from a hand pump, medical care (from a barefoot doctor), a truck to transport produce to market, or village meetings in the new community hall.
- Participation in decision-making — People initiate, discuss, conceptualize and plan activities they will all do as a community. Some of these may be related to more common development areas such as building schools or applying for land tenure. Others may be more political, such as removing corrupt officials, supporting parliamentary candidates, or resisting pressures from the elites. Yet others may be cultural or religious in nature — organizing a traditional feast, prayers for an end to the drought, and a big party, just to have a good time.

It is to be noted that very few development policies adopts these participatory approaches. Many restrict participation to one or two ways.

However, experts and practitioners agree that the fourth approach – participation in decision-making – is the effective and important approach to follow. This approach literally empowers local people in decision-making and derives the benefits of developments through it. At the same time, the people acquire problem-solving skills and acquire full ownership of projects — two important elements which will contribute towards securing the sustained development of their community (Yoon, 1996).

Bhutan’s development for the last four decades is lauded to a cautious development plan pursued upon careful determination of development systems elsewhere. In general, experts noted that most of the governments of Asia that witnessed substantial economic growth have accounted their reason for not promoting the Western-style democracy and participation. They are outlined below (Yoon, 1996).

- Asian societies favour collectivism, while Western societies cherish individualism.
- In developing countries, national interests should take precedence over those of individuals.

- Diversity of views can confuse people.
- People must be educated and mature before they are able to make good decisions from a diversity of views; therefore communities in developing regions require education first, then diversity.

Participatory development communication was first preceded by interpersonal communication processes followed by mass media. The meaning of communication being the simple transfer of information was challenged and given more elaboration. The question of who initiated a communication, and how the decisions leading up to the communication were made, became more important than what was being communicated (Yoon, 1996). Communicators were no longer neutral movers of information, but were intervening actively to trigger changes aimed at encouraging people's participation. In many ways, the "techniques" of communication had not changed (Yoon, 1996). What had changed profoundly were the ideologies and philosophies behind the practice of the techniques. In contrast to the expert knowledges of normal development, participatory development communication stresses the necessity of local knowledges (Mohan, 2008).

Today, most countries in the world, especially the developing nations, are adopting people-oriented projects spearheaded by participatory development process. One recent notable change that puts a country in highlight is Ecuador. Ecuador instituted a new Constitution that recognizes the "group of economic, political, social, cultural and environmental systems that guarantee the realization of the balanced life, *sumak kawsay*" (Tamayo & Narvaez, 2008). This means that economic growth is not the only priority as a means to reach development, instead, it is considered an integrated vision (ibid).

A Rationale for Participatory Development Communication for GNH

The basis for arguing the need for more practical, action-oriented, participatory development communication for implementation of GNH stems from the institution of first ever written Constitution of Bhutan commanded by His Majesty the fourth King. Perhaps, an unwritten nonverbal signs of empowering people already existed in the sustained visions of our Kings to get close to the grassroots. The constitution and the bill of rights, that provide the framework for a system of governance that holds the belief that it will maintain a balance of power within a truly representative government, that would preserve the basic rights and liberties of the people, let their voice be heard, and provide to them a government, "of the people, by the people, and for the people." The very evidences from the constitution of Bhutan are laid below:

"Bhutan is a Sovereign Kingdom and the Sovereign power belongs to the people of Bhutan." (Article 1)

"A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech opinion and expression." (Article 7)

“The State shall strive to promote those circumstances that will enable the successful pursuit of Gross National Happiness.” (Article 9)

Having said this, one of the fundamental elements that draw cohesion between the two concepts of participatory development communication and GNH is the ‘people.’ Both concept places people at the centre of development. The process of GNH, from its point of emanation from the royal wisdom till its latest development, was followed by inherent changes in as much the change in paradigms seen by the development communication over the years.

Under the farsighted and dynamic leadership of our Fourth King, Bhutan has been spontaneously undergoing the process of shifting the powers from central to the grassroots. In other words, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck has always wanted real people to make decisions for the development. According to Bray (1993: 213), the Bhutanese monarchy actually “is based on a contract with the people and has never held absolute power” (Schappi, 2005). The shifting paradigms in governance throughout the reign of His Majesty necessitate the institution of development model that best involves the people in decision-making. Bhutan’s approach to development has led to “emphasize the importance of institutions that are able to guide and manage the process of development as well as to foster participation” (Bhutan 2020, p-23).

A chronology of paradigms can be noted. It all started with the system of representing people at the National Assembly. In 1981, the Dzongkhag Yargey Tshogchung (District Development Committees) was established as a part of decentralizing the powers from central to periphery. The planning and development policies were constructed on the policy of ‘people’s participation. Taking the decision platform further into depths of grassroots participation, the Gewog Yargay Tshogchung (Block Development Committees) was instituted in 1991. Elected village leaders had greater role to play in communicating the needs of their community and the people. Development planning entails a unique system of consultation in which the needs and aspirations of local communities, as expressed through their elected representatives, constitute important inputs into plans, while programmes for each dzongkhag and gewog are only finalized after a further process of consultation (Bhutan 2020, 1999, p-39). Such initiatives have not only democratized processes of decision-making on development but have also significantly enlarged the horizons and opportunities of communities that were formerly isolated and remote from the mainstream of social and economic development (Bhutan 2020, 1999, p-23).

The more conspicuous structural changes occurred when His Majesty devolved the power of absolute monarchy (as the head of the government) to the council of ministers in 1998. In redefining the role of a state, the Bhutan 2020 (1999) document states that Bhutan “must continue with the progressive redefinition of the role of the Royal Government from that of a ‘provider’ to that of ‘enabler’ of development, with continued emphasis on the creation of conditions that mobilize the energies and imagination of people...” In a shocking event in 2006, His Majesty the Fourth King, relinquished his throne and ushered parliamentary

democracy into Bhutan. To this end, Bhutan's structural changes are seen as transition into participatory democracy.

Yet, the significance of structural changes in governance lies in solving the real issues that obstruct the progress. Issues that range from socio-economic areas at bigger level to the matter of bread and butter of a person at a smaller level. And GNH as a programme for social and economic change to remove obstacles to happiness must focus on the nature of public policies (Thinley, 2007). If happiness is the main value a GNH state tries to promote, the institutional structures and processes of a society must reflect this value.

Space for participation and action

The modernization of governance in Bhutan began with economic and political decentralization during the fourth FYP, which further involved local bodies as administrative and financial powers were increasingly given to the districts and village clusters (Brassard, 2008). The institution of DYT and GYT is aimed at creating the space for grassroots participation. These political and economic administrative reforms called for more distribution of decision-making power towards the periphery. In June 2002 the National Assembly passed two landmark pieces of legislation, the DYT and GYT chathrim (Legal Act) that shifted considerable authority and responsibility for local development decision-making and regulation to the elected representatives at the Dzongkhag and Geog levels (UNDP-Bhutan, 2003). In addition, in 2001, the RGoB passed the Co-operatives Chathrim that, for the first time, provided legal status for associations of private individuals who join together to address issues of common concern (ibid).

Moreover, the five year development plans (FYP) ceased to be designed by central government instead it was largely done so through participation at local levels. Decentralized institutions should have the necessary legal support to ensure that their mandate can be achieved, and models for good governance in rural development are context specific (Brassard, 2008). However, communication problems and lack of clear understanding of the new regulations have also emerged, leading to a lesser degree of decentralization in some districts, where administrators are still implementers as opposed to facilitators in the development process.

More recently, following the midterm review report of the 9th FYP (Planning Commission, 2005), several issues were identified as priorities for the Tenth FYP (2007-2012) (Brassard, 2008). One of these issues as reported was the "lack of a systematic, transparent and participatory policy formulation process and lack of systematic macroeconomic analysis and evaluation of effectiveness of the adopted policies." Participation of the local population in the decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation processes is not yet fully functioning.

The space for people's participation is no where well mentioned than in the current tenth Five-Year Plan that it focuses on poverty reduction and the institution of new bloc grants as a means for resource distribution between districts.

Caroline Brassard in her recent study on Bhutan (2008) finds that there is perhaps insufficient discussion on the concept of civil society and its relevance and role in the decentralization process. She reports that although there exist various types of community-based development institutions, each specific to the geographical contexts. These are central to the 'retaining' of cultural values, yet their role in the decentralization process may be at risk of being undervalued (ibid). These need be an integral part of the institutional framework and not simply 'integrated in' the framework (ibid).

Bhutan is also seeking foreign assistance to help address the issues pressing the Bhutanese population. There are two types of assistance: the general process of decentralization including supporting devolution of power, delegation and fiscal decentralization; and the development activities directly implemented by the GYTs or community groups (Brassard, 2008). The long term goal "is to arrive at an integrated national planning process that is both bottom-up and top-down" (UNDP, 2002:20; Brassard, 2008).

The effort to let the Bhutanese people have more access to information and knowledge was enabled by lifting the ban on Internet and Television in 1999. The coming of these new and mass media signals a strong desire to create an understanding in people's mind by watching the price of unscrupulous developments in other countries. More so, the new mediums will complement the traditional medium of communication and will play a very important role in participatory development communication for GNH. Greater priority must also be accorded to the development of the information systems required for informed decision-making and development planning (Bhutan 2020, 1999).

It is, thus, apparent that some conspicuous structural changes are already in place to aid the people's participation. In most of participatory development communication projects, the process starts with having to engage with the particular communication by experts and practitioners. Bhutan has come a step forward in clearing the politically restrictive conditions for participatory communication and by letting the doors of its communities open for people's participation projects. The question is how do people participate efficiently and meaningfully?

Some designs for participatory development communication for GNH

In order to share information, knowledge, trust, commitment, and a right attitude in development projects, participation is very important in any decision-making process for development. The focus on participation of all citizens implies developing strategies of collaboration, co-operation and sharing rather than conflict and confrontation. For Bhutan, participatory development communication can work at two levels: interpersonal and mass mediated communication. Servaes, Jacobson and White (1996) note that there are two major approaches to participatory communication. The first is the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, and the second involves the ideas of access, participation and self-management articulated in the UNESCO debates in the 1970s (ibid). Freire's idea of participatory emphasizes the interpersonal and group communication of the societies, whereas the UNESCO's stresses on institution of the society. Since the findings on GNH are integrated

with the national development goals, the implementation of these goals can take form in the participatory model of development. Bhutan's current development is based on the idea of sustainability.

The substance of this article comes at a time when indicators of GNH are being infused with other development policies especially at the beginning of 10th FYP. Therefore, communication can be integrated into all phases of development policy implementation process. It is time for a systematic approach in the strategy, design and implementation of communication processes and media which can span the gap between policies and people (Schoen, 1996). One of the overarching reasons is that communication is a powerful and often surprisingly cheap policy instrument to be integrated with GNH policy instruments.

The next important thing to consider is the target of development – people. In a predominantly agrarian society and most living based on rural settings, Bhutan's use of participatory communication must first look into empowering the knowledge of farmers. Farmers, therefore, need to be able to adapt information and innovations conveyed to them by a variety of sources, such as extensions and developments agents, mass media and input retailers, to the agroecological and socioeconomic conditions prevailing on their farms (Fliert, 2007).

The basis to use communication in policy implementation is to look at the policy process. Every policy seems to go through a 'life cycle', which has been called 'the policy life cycle' (Winsemius, 1986; Schoen, 1996). The phases of the cycle are as follows:

- 1) Recognizing the problem
- 2) Gaining control over the problem
- 3) Solving the problem
- 4) Maintaining control over the problem

The concept of GNH is still in the process of evolving into an operational development principle. Communication can play a vital role throughout the stages of GNH evolvement. It is essential for a planner/policy maker to realize that different actors are involved in each phase of the life cycle, and that each actor has different perceptions, interests and hidden agendas (Schoen, 1996).

Figure 1: Role of communication in Phases of Policy Life Cycle (Winsemius, 1986; Schoen, 1996)

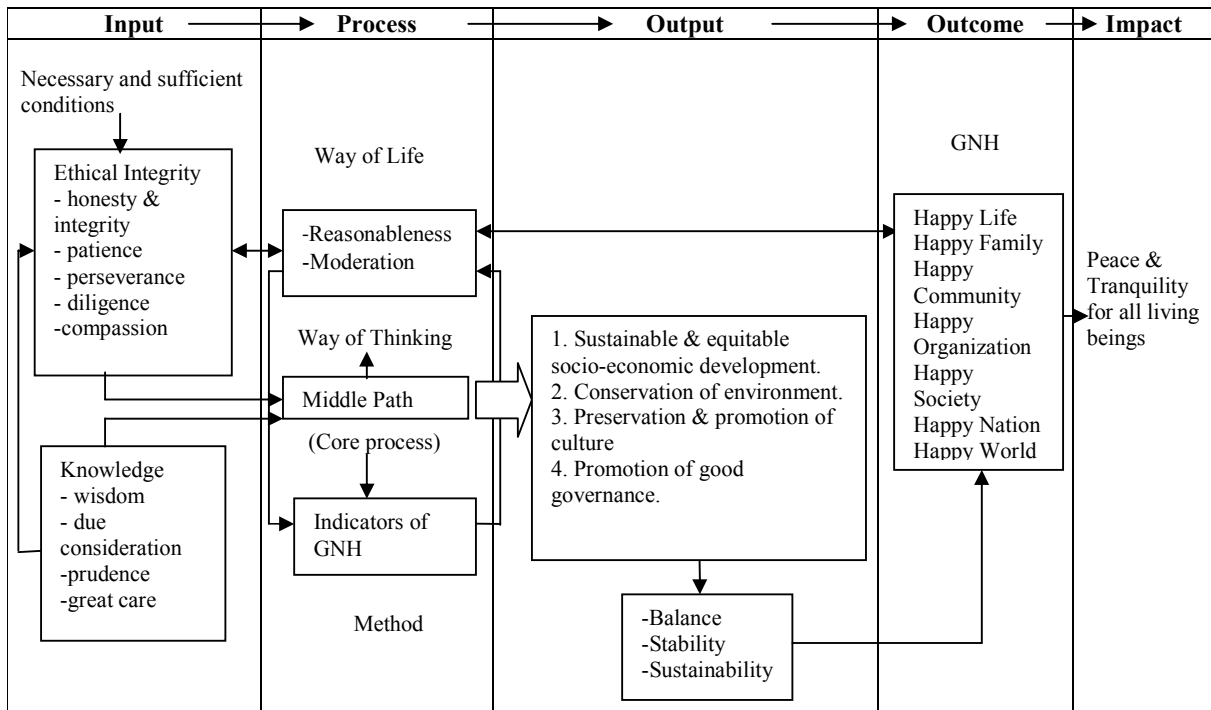
<i>Policy life cycle phase</i>	<i>Methods of communication</i>
Recognizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular opinion/attitude surveys. • (Mass) media content analysis. • Analysis of communication-materials (newsletters, leaflets) of NGOs, consumer groups. • Systematic and continuous network with NGOs, interest groups, scientific institutions.
Formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular briefings/interviews and meetings with interest groups. • Knowledge/Attitude/Practice (KAP) surveys. • Integrating communication in the mix of policy instruments. • Design of communication strategy. • Informative extension/communication (to disclose issues and policy options) to those who will get involved.
Solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication as an independent instrument. • Communication complementary to other instruments. • Informing groups on the use of other instruments (new laws, subsidies, etc.). • Ex-ante evaluation through qualitative research.
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public information. • Informing on changes of policy design and implementation. • Regular opinion/attitude surveys (since age-linked target groups slowly will be replaced by younger generations).

The fact that consistent research on GNH has produced measurable indicators is again another basis to use communication as an implementation tool. The nine indicators of GNH – the standard of living, health of the population, education, ecosystem vitality and diversity, cultural vitality and diversity, time use and balance, good governance, community vitality, and emotional well being—while being infused with the development plans must be facilitated through the use of communication. A recent survey published by Anti-Corruption Commission ranked some of the most crucial social sectors affecting people as poorest service deliverers (Kuenselonline, October 2008). Such public dissatisfaction over the social sectors creates tangible lack of proper communication system and facilitation of services between the sectors and the people. Moreover, Bhutan has also agreed to be guided by the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) in its development. With such challenges to be met, communication must find its place at the forefront of policy implementation.

The achievement of above mentioned goals of development and the idea of GNH itself entails not only the technical resources but also sufficient will and determination of the government, private sectors, development partners, and people themselves. GNH is often defined as looking beyond the material success towards spiritual and emotional well being of the people. The whole system of the society must thus base on the collective effort motivated by will and determination to achieve such high-end goals. A system analysis of such collaborative efforts and outcomes can be drawn:

Figure 2: A System Analysis of Gross National Happiness

[Adapted from “A System Analysis of Sufficiency Economy”, Supadhiloke, 2008]



A system theory holds that systems are sets of interacting components that together form something more than the sum of parts (Littlejohn and Foss, 2008). Any part of the system is always constrained by its dependence on other parts, and this pattern of interdependence organizes the system itself (ibid).

As illustrated by a system analysis in the figure above, the direction of GNH emphasizes the balanced development between the indicators of happiness (way of life) and moderation and reasonableness (way of thinking). In other words, the socio-economic development entails cautious use of resources that culminates in self-reliance and sustainability. The preconditions of the overall development of course are the virtues of good human being—knowledge and ethical integrity. In order to achieve such situation, it would require the society to be without too much greed and selfishness that would allow everyone to live in moderation, that is to have enough to live and to live on, or having the sufficient means to survive (Supadhiloke, 2008). In other words, the process model seeks to reach a balance between ethical and cognitive inputs and the outcome of mental growth, i.e. happiness, not material growth (ibid). Here, the idea of utility proposed by famous English philosopher Jeremy Bentham fits in when he said that ‘the goodness of an action should not be judged by the decency of its intentions, but by its consequences on human happiness’ (Veenhoven, 2007). He argued that we should aim at the ‘greatest happiness for the greatest number’ (ibid).

There are two development planning processes: the planning that is done by the central institutions which is external to the community and, on the other hand, planning done by

community themselves for their own needs and development. Planning for participation should be participatory itself (Cohen, 1996). Every community has their own capabilities to identify their own problems that need development. Such capacity of the community should be encouraged in assessing their own situations. This is done through equipping people with the analytical and action oriented skills necessary for them to become actively involved. Participatory planning emphasizes the importance of the initial contact with the community as a critical step which determines the interaction of the community with outside initiatives (Cohen, 1996). Of particular importance is the need to anticipate and understand the likely reactions of the elite groups, and the need to promote a self-diagnosis that would allow all community members to study the forces that would prevent their participation (ibid).

The benefit of conducting the initial community situation analysis is to help identify the internal power structures that would not favor creating a democratic dialogue and sideline those vulnerable members of the community from actually getting to have a say or participating in the research and agenda setting. The examination of such situations also allows members of the communities to be aware of their say in development and to initiate their own needs at group levels. People can then structure and explain their own reality and gain a critical faculty—moving from passive acceptance to action (Cohen, 1996).

Figure 3: Stages in Community Mobilization for Participatory Empowerment (Oakley, 1991; Cohen, 1996).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Self-assessment:</i> Participant observation, initial contact by change agents. • <i>Problem and context analysis:</i> Self-analysis, Group diagnosis/consultations, Identification of solutions and project • <i>Development and strengthening of the community's structures:</i> Emergence of appropriate organizations, Identification of local cadres, Setting up coordination mechanisms. • <i>Awareness creation:</i> Animation, Leadership training, Briefing, Community education. • <i>Group action:</i> Program management, Doing something concrete. • <i>Linking-up:</i> Networking, Making outside contacts, Building alliances, articulation with outside support. • <i>Self-evaluation:</i> Adjusting strategies, Expansion, Replication. • <i>Stabilization:</i> Autonomy, Functioning alone. |
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Implementation of GNH will require careful execution of communication strategies. This can take form of a social-marketing communication. Given the indicators and parameters of GNH, specific goal-oriented communication campaigns can be conducted. For instance, one of the indicators of GNH is ‘health of the population’; here, series of social health messages and programs can be designed to appropriately guide the social behavior towards better health and living. The nine steps by which an effective communication strategy can be developed are (Schoen, 1996):

1. *Determine priority issues* of the program and policy. For GNH, priority issues can be to focus on indicators of happiness and other development goals like MGDs and Five Year Plans.

2. *List the actors involved* (internal and external, at *all* levels). One will seldom find only one problem or just one target group. This is so true in the case of Bhutan where development is directed towards maximum utility of the communities. Segmentation of total audience is crucial. Men, with strong chauvinistic attitudes for instance, can hamper such a nutrition campaign considerably. To enable a different communication approach to be used, they need to be identified early. Obviously, we need a different approach for them than we do for pregnant women. The segmentation decisions made in this step need to be evaluated and checked at each successive stage.

3. *Analyze target groups*. Impact of program activities will be evident in behavior change. Current knowledge, attitude and behavior, information networks, positive and negative effects (opportunities and threats) of the change must be identified.

4. *Formulate clear objectives* (in terms of knowledge, attitudes and behavior per target group). When answering these questions, it helps to work through the process in reverse order. Based on the *intended behavior*, we can formulate the attitude and knowledge/information which the selected target groups need to have in order to be able to adapt their behavior. By answering these for each target group, you will ensure that nothing is left out. The issue of the participation of women in human settlements policy, for example, demands considerable changes in knowledge and attitudes of target groups which until now have been totally unaware of the problem. Therefore, for each group we have to define precisely, both within and outside the organization, the explicit changes we want to achieve in the attitude or knowledge and awareness of the men and women concerned.

5. *Design appealing and understandable message-elements for the target group* (overall 'message'; 'promise, proof and tone of voice'). When formulating messages, we have to keep in mind that listeners implicitly or explicitly will always ask themselves one question: 'What is in it for me?' or 'why should I listen?'

6. *Selection of media, materials* (including senders and intermediaries for the target group). This step usually gets most attention from communication professionals. It is very important to select media on the basis of your target group analysis. An important concept, which is often forgotten, is 'the information search behavior' of the target groups: Where do the various target groups usually get the information on the issue? The way information reached the target group, in general or on a specific issue, is an important factor which communication managers should take into account. Information can be collected via different channels. Casual conversation with friends or peers is one of the most used information sources, but the use of media can be very powerful alternative. Taxi drivers can put certain issues on the societal agenda and influence public opinion, as can religious leaders, management or trade unions in commercial enterprises, scout leaders, etc. Apart from how information reaches the target groups, we also have to know where and when the target groups meet. Women go to markets, health education meetings, hospital waiting rooms: they meet when working on the land or collecting water and firewood. Men meet at work, at community meetings or when they gather for their cash crop marketing. To be able to develop a sound strategy, *it is essential* that you have a complete view of both the

information and communication networks surrounding the target groups and how they get their information on your own particular subject. Apart from these largely interpersonal sources of information, we need to catalogue how people use the media. How many radios do we find in the area and how do people listen to them? How many (local) radio stations can we use? How many cinemas? Do people read newspapers and to what sections of the paper do they pay most attention?

7. *Design of communication materials* (posters, brochures, editorial plans) and briefing of NGOs and other intermediaries.

8. *Pre-test the materials* (even in the concept stage). It is essential to test the materials early in the process of design and production. In some countries, good results have been achieved with pre-testing story ideas or film and video spots.

9. *Action plan for strategy implementation*. It is important to recognize that plans and strategies are easily made but not so easily implemented. The critical factor in implementing strategies is the amount of effective and relevant team work in the strategy development phase. Often consultants prefer to design strategies quickly by themselves. They have deadlines to meet and the success of their mission depends on a good-looking professional report. In the short term, intensive teamwork might be highly time consuming but the output will be sustainable in the long term. When the consultant leaves the project, the chances for continuation of the communication management activities will be significantly enhanced.

The participatory models are many. One important tenet of participatory communication is the fact that it allows any society to develop its own model of participation. However, the principles of communication remain the same. Communication is needed in the *evaluation* of the proposed changes and then in moving people to act either to resist or to bring them about (Whiting, 1976).

Conclusion

Communication can play a vital role in development. GNH is aimed at creating a happy society. As the renowned sociologist Charles A. Ellwood writes, it is the interdependence in function on the mental side, the contact and overlapping of our inner selves, which makes possible that form of collective life which we call society. Communication being a medium of interdependence can contribute greatly towards achieving a society of GNH.

As a matter of fact, communication is not coincidental, it is planned for an intended outcome. In the light of development, participatory development communication can cater to implementation of goals of GNH. Participation is in itself a strong indicator of human development. There is greater need to make our communities more resilient through awareness, avoidance, alleviation and assistance. And also the need to constantly update our understanding so that this work can be most effective, and to manage uncertainty. Participatory communication is a two-way process. It involves dialogue, collaboration and group decision-making.

One crucial suggestion this paper also aims to make is that communication should also be considered in the very early phases of the policy-making process. Most of the policy makers never think of laying importance on communication while planning. It is only looked at when the policy is ready to be implemented. It should explicitly be used in the early phases as well to assess and enable participation of target groups from communities to top-level policy makers (Schoen, 1996).

Both mass media and interpersonal communication are important for the designing participatory communication model for GNH. For a society like Bhutan, which has evolved through the use of oral communication, interpersonal communication decision-making at grassroots level cannot be undermined. At the moment, Bhutan has set favorable conditions for the better communication to take place. In other words, necessary socio-political structural changes are made that allows most participation of the people. Given this condition, adopting participatory communication model for implementation of GNH will be useful and timely.

GNH must also emphasize on communication research if its core message of happiness is to be reached to the common people. Policies and developments can only be successful when the intended change has occurred through the understanding and involved of the targets of the change. This should be followed by the need to research and develop indigenous models of communication and development through participatory research.

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