

CHAPTER 7

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND MANAGEMENT

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Information Dissemination and Management

Introduction

Information Dissemination and Management is a very important tool in any developmental project or programme. It is a topic that has been taken for granted by the educated, bureaucrats, technocrats and planners. The key concepts related to information dissemination and management are defined below:

Information: Knowledge or facts acquired or derived, from study instruction or observation.

Dissemination: The spreading of news, information and beliefs as wide as possible.

Management: An act or practice of directing, guiding, controlling and influencing something or someone.

Communication: The transfer of information as facts, wishes or emotions from a source to a receiver. This can be an act or a process.

Public: A colony comprising groups of people sharing unconventional ideals bound together by such aspects as religious dogma, racial undertones, and economical similarities.

Participation: A scheme or system of partnership and common destiny enriched by thorough and joint consultations within and without the project groups.

The Process of Information Dissemination in Society

In today's society, information dissemination and management, is very vital and occupies a high priority in the planning sequence. There are *various reasons and circumstances that favour or facilitate the process of information dissemination*, among which are:

- a) To keep the people informed of the affairs around them in order to secure their participation;
- b) To legitimise a project or programme in order to ensure its success;

- c) To effect some changes in attitudes and methodology of operations in a given situation; and
- d) To impart skills and knowledge in order to empower a community or an individual.

Information dissemination as a process can be influenced by the following factors:

- a) Knowledge of/about the community;
- b) Composition of the community;
- c) Characteristics of the community;
 - (i) *Sanguines* – ever ready but not dependable people
 - (ii) *Cholerics* – workaholics and optimistic people
 - (iii) *Melancholics* – pessimistic and critical people
 - (iv) *Phlegmatics* – dependable and organised people
- d) Totality of the message or information from project conception, through implementation to completion; and
- e) Time factor and occupation of the community.

The grim reality must be noted that due to lack of knowledge of the communities, many officers such as thinkers, planners, advisors, administrators and politicians, have fallen victim to errors relating to the propensity to import *modern technologies and the techniques of modernisation*. They have not obtained the legitimisation of imported technologies by the accepted traditional leadership. They have usually either tried to impose these important ideas and techniques on the citizenry, without paying much attention to existing local traditions or mentality; or they have appealed to local innovators who, though indigenous, often times tend to be equally foreign in outlook.

One other phenomenon in information dissemination is the notion that ‘things or development’ should always start in the urban areas and then slowly filter to the masses in the rural areas. This is seldom the desired approach. Such approaches have significantly disaggregated developments peoples of the towns and peoples of the villages within one country, and by so doing pushing the developmental scales of balance towards the cities and towns. There are many examples of this situation namely, the rural urban dichotomy, such as in the medical field, road construction industry and technology transfer, waste management, and sports facilities. This should change if our information dissemination should continue to be a success.

In Botswana, through the Primary Health Care concept, the approach has been changed for the better. The country has capitalised on this concept to reach out to all the communities irrespective of where they are. It has been realised that there is no community which is identical to another. Approaches to these communities should depend on what that community attributes and functionality are. This is somewhat obscure to many people, especially public officers. They normally engage in what may be termed the “come-to-me-syndrome”. This is counter productive in the world of today.

Information can be communicated through many avenues and fora. In Botswana, the following are used:

a) **The Kgotla Meetings**

These are excellent avenues to relay information to the general public. The meetings are normally presided upon by the traditional chiefs. The chief can easily legitimise a programme.

b) **Training and Public Education**

These are normally organised, formal and/or informal training sessions where information can be imparted. Seminars and workshops are also included. Training sessions are meant to produce a more informed person in any given undertaking.

c) **Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)**

These provide an important avenue for information dissemination. They include churches, political parties, clubs, societies and youth and women organisations.

d) **Law Enforcement**

This can be one of the most effective means of sending messages, particularly within the context of a legal framework. A number of pieces of legislation need to be implemented to enforce compliance on certain issues of local or national importance.

e) **Education through Media**

This is generally a very important tool. It encompasses television, newspapers and radio. Information management on the other hand, serves to gauge the success or failures of an organisation. It serves as a mirror of an organisation and it serves as a dependable springboard into the future. There are many ways to ensure that the information received is well managed, and these are: statistics, reports, archives, libraries and computers.

Information management is primarily implemented for the following purposes:

- As reference material;
- For comparison, where one can compare their statistics with another; and
- To be used as a measuring tool for progress or retro-gression.

Conclusion

For information to be meaningful and useful, it must be periodically *updated and checked against other sources*. It must be properly managed. Information management is important for the household, club, organisation, department, ministry, country and for governance of any form. The world is becoming a global village due to the information which is communicated around. It must therefore be adequately managed.