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## From Rural Sociology to Integrated Rural Development: Re-Establishing Valuable Antecedents and Connections of Rural Communication

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### ABSTRACT

The growing concern for food security, the environment, and the need to strategize on rural development continues to arise in today's globalized world. This is more so because a sizeable number of the world's population resides in the rural areas in addition to the reality that rural areas remain the food baskets and the repository of usable knowledge of all growing economies. This paper is based on findings from a systematic literature review of related literature and concludes that while the need to focus on the rural area and develop its potential is ever increasing, it is becoming imperative to return to the root of the rural phenomenon with the hope that such a return may offer the needed wisdom and perspectives to navigate the recurring issues of strategic communication plans for rural development. It is believed that this return to the classic foundations may offer a sense of contact with the basics from which clearer ideas may emerge to steer the ship of rural communication to the promised land of sustained development. Through a review of related literature, the paper brings insights from antecedents and attempts to present a clearer view of issues and concerns that will form the thrust of more effective planning and implementation of communication strategies geared toward rural development. By establishing links between rural sociology, rural studies, rural development and communication for rural development, the study also attempts to confirm the authenticity of the recurrent theme of inter-disciplinarity in the search for a usable past.

### INTRODUCTION

The need to focus on rural development continues to arise among the crucial concerns of today's globalized world. An effective communication strategy for rural transformation remains a focal point in finding answers to the challenges of rural areas in their bid to maximize their abundant deposits of natural and human resources. This is more so because a sizeable number of the world's population resides in rural areas in addition to the reality that such communities remain the food basket of all growing economies. While the need to focus on the rural area and develop its potential is ever increasing, it is becoming more and more imperative to return to the root of the rural phenomenon with hopes that such a return may offer the needed wisdom and perspectives to lead nations out of the woods of under-development. It is believed that this return to the largely ignored foundations may offer a sense of contact with the basics from which clearer ideas may emerge to steer the ship of rural communication to the pinnacle of sustained development. Through a systematic literature review this study attempted to establish connections with concepts and frameworks from Rural Sociology, Rural Area, Rural Studies, Rural Development, Integrated Rural Development to Communication for Rural Development. A synthesis from these connections emerged with implications to provide deeper insights that will form the thrust of more effective planning and implementation of rural communication strategies. Most importantly, this study was able to establish the authenticity of the

recurrent theme of inter-disciplinarity in the search for knowledge that is crucial enough to continue to form an integral part of the consciousness of analysts.

### METHODOLOGY

A literature review is a systematic way of data gathering which is usually followed by a synthesis of previous research. This methodology is believed to give room for a painstaking and effective research method to ensure a solid foundation for knowledge production. It is believed that an integration of viewpoints and findings will produce robust discussions from which recommendations can be made (Snyder :2019) . This is therefore the methodological approach taken by this study.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of rural communication has been said perhaps to have its roots in the field of Rural Sociology. Rural Sociology as a field emerged in the U.S in the early 20th century, but its foundation can be traced to the social climate of America especially from the last quarter of the 19th century. (Lowry, 1969). According to Chitambar, (1973), the motivation to study Rural Sociology arose from the felt needs to develop greater understanding of the behavior of rural people and the rural society in which they live, as well as that of equipping students with tools that will help them better understand how to effectively analyze rural people in their relationships with others in rural society. He reiterates the reality that the

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world's population was more rural than urban and that in the developing nations where promotion of change for increased agricultural production within the purview of rural community development was receiving urgent attention in investment in natural resources especially, the need for applied rural sociology was critical.

Speaking of change in the rural society, Rogers, (1960) opines that social change is a continuous process over a period of time in which differences in human relationships take place. He underscores the obvious changes in family, community, organizations, jobs, and admonishes that an awareness of these changes in any society including the rural society should be seen as a call for planning to meet them and adjust to them, and that this implies setting courses in tune with the times. For example, he mentioned such changes in rural social institutions such as communities, schools and churches as effects of improved transportation, and goes on to establish some of the effects of social change on rural organizations in his time. He observes that neighborhood and community boundaries were becoming less distinct and less meaningful to local residents while community services were becoming specialized or compartmentalized, making it possible for one to work in one location and live in another or shop for groceries in one village, have recreation in another, go to church in a location and go to school in another location. Family was also according to him losing some of its functions such as the care of the aged. The changes according to him cut across the rural church, the rural school, their farmer organizations, economic organizations as well as government agencies. Rural Sociology therefore emerged as a scientific study of rural people in group relationships, and in line with Newell, (1947), Rural Sociology is 'the study of the association among people living by or immediately dependent upon agriculture. Open country and village grouping and group behavior as distinguished from larger urban aggregates and their behavior are its concern'.

It was perhaps with a view to giving more focus to the growing realities of the peculiar needs and challenges of the rural community in a contemporary world that the study of Rural Studies as a field also emerged. The focus became more enlarged and more specific to include food, Agriculture and Resource Economics, Geography, Political Science, and Sociology and Anthropology and the integration of socio-cultural and bio-physical components for capacity development, design, or planning of landscape systems in the rural community with emphasis on ensuring sustainable rural communities and sustainable landscape systems. Sustainable rural communities are by way of long-term well-being based on the integration of economic, social and environmental factors in planning, while sustainable landscape systems field examines structure, process, and change in the rural landscape through research on bio-physical and socio-cultural sectors. All of this clearly establishes the reality of a rural community with specific features and the added

reality of the existence of a rural economy(uoguelph.ca) Mondal (no date) highlights ten characteristics or features of the rural community as follows:

#### **Size of the Community**

Village communities are smaller in area than the urban communities

#### **Density of Population**

The density of the population is slow and this allows for intimate relationships and face-face contact because everyone knows everyone.

#### **Agriculture is the Major Pre-Occupation and is the Foundation of the Economy**

Farming is a family enterprise. The farmer as head of the family requires the cooperation of every member of the family.

#### **Close to Nature**

Villagers regard nature as their mother and are dependent on it for food, shelter and clothing. Their everyday activities revolve around the natural environment

#### **Homogeneity of Population**

They mostly speak one language, share same affinity with the land and nature and consequently have one culture despite the presence of different castes, religion and classes

#### **Social Stratification**

Social stratification along groups, statuses and castes are common in the rural setting

#### **Social Interaction**

Even though social interaction is perceived to be lower in the rural setting than in the urban center, the level of interaction is more stable and continuous. Relationships and interactions are close especially in the primary groups while family meets the needs of the members and has considerable control over the family especially in introducing them to customs and traditions. As a result of the closely knit relationships, there is hardly any room for individuality and this limits their viewpoint within the limits of their exposure and makes opposition to violent changes common.

#### **Social Mobility**

Since all occupations are tied to the caste system, this makes mobility or shifting from one occupation to the other very rigid in the rural community. The social status is determined by caste hierarchy.

#### **Social Solidarity**

The rural setting has a greater degree of social solidarity in comparison with the urban areas. People are united by common purposes, customs, traditions and experience.

### Joint Family

The joint family system is prevalent in the rural society. Affairs of the family are managed by the father as head of the family. The family exercises great influence and control on the behavior of the individuals with the father maintaining discipline.

The various issues related to rural society and its study in the modern world include the following;

Land use, natural resources and environmental change

- Multifunctional land use and the evolving role of small farms

- Land use and food security
- The management and governance of natural resources
- Agri-environment policy
- Environmental valuation and choice modelling
- Access to land for outdoor recreation and leisure
- Protected areas management

Rural planning, community governance and resilience

- Relationship between rural development policy and communities in a changing political landscape

- Rural policies and the role of communities in policy development

- Neo-endogenous or networked rural development
- Rural housing and trends in counter-urbanisation
- Community asset management
- Rural partnerships and stakeholder relationships
- Community resilience

Rural change, culture and wellbeing

- Perceptions of rurality
- Rural social change
- The role of rural women
- The needs of a changing rural community
- Wellbeing and quality of life
- Rural social capital
- Social exclusion and rural poverty
- Changing perceptions of farming

Rural economy, enterprise and innovation

- Rural enterprise and its economic contribution
- Innovation and entrepreneurialism
- Networks and knowledge exchange
- The nature and needs of rural enterprise
- Technological adoption and innovation in agriculture
- Linkages between urban and rural economies
- Business collaboration and networking
- Expertise and knowledge exchange
- Social and community enterprise
- The green economy (ncl.ac.uk)

However, the recurring challenges of rural communities are problems linked to poor communications, low population densities and natural resource based livelihoods.

Some of the major differences between rural and urban settlements are discussed as follows;

While rural communities are located in the outer parts of towns or cities, the urban area has a high population and possesses the features of an environment that provides basic amenities for human activity. The environment is built with an urban space.

While life in urban settlements could be fast paced, it is laid back in the rural area.

While the rural area is made up of villages and hamlets, the urban area is comprised of towns and cities

Rural areas are in close touch with nature and are influenced by its elements while urban settings are greatly isolated from nature because they are built environments. Urban dwellers are engaged in commerce, trade and in the service industry while rural dwellers are into agriculture and animal husbandry.

In terms of population there is a density associated with urban areas while population is sparse in rural areas.

While urbanization and industrialization policies guide the development of urban settlements with a systematic and planned outlook, development is hardly ever a feature of rural areas because they serve more to preserve the fauna and natural vegetation of the areas.

In rural areas there is less intensive mobility while in urban areas there is an intensive social mobility as people constantly change their occupation or residence while searching for greener pastures.

Division of labor and high degree of specialization abound in urban areas while this is non-existent in rural areas.(keydifferences.com)

### Discussion of Realities and Issues

#### Rural Development, Integrated Development and Emerging Trends and Issues

##### What is Rural Development?

Rural Development is the combined political, social, technical and economic change efforts made by the government or the private sector towards the uplifting of the well-being of rural citizens. However, it must be noted that there has been controversies over what rural development actually entails because of its dual entity as a policy and as a process. It emerged as a clear focus of policy and research in the 60s and was fully established in the 70s when it was consistently observed that the thrust for growth in the economy and for industrialization was incomplete without a focus on rural areas and the development of rural areas because of the central role rural areas play in the development of a country.

Rural development therefore emerged as a fall-out of disillusionment with the outcome of previous development interventions. Central to its adoption as a planning thrust was its equity objectives. While it is a state-led intervention with a focus on policy and development, in its broader sense as a process of change, it may be state-led or not. While rural economies and agriculture constitute a major focus in rural development, it has been established that a successful rural development program can only succeed through an inter-disciplinary or multi-dimensional approach that incorporates the larger political and social factors that constantly interact with economic processes. This broad range of disciplines include economics, environment, agriculture, sociology, political science, and institutional theories which can together serve as lenses to study social change in the

search of desired objectives. There is also the needed expertise of biological and natural scientists, education, engineering, and health professionals to confront the challenges of rural development. Even though there are two angles already posited as entry points for rural development, this study however will concentrate more on state-led intervention with the rural development process.

Among the characteristics of Rural Development are the following;

It is an area-based approach to development with policy targeted at specific geographical areas, rural areas in this case, and not at economic sectors or a particular group of people.

Rural development is also multi-sectoral in the sense that it does not only target agricultural growth in terms of crops, livestock, fishing and forestry, it also gives priority attention to the non-farm sector which include services to agriculture such as supply, marketing, transport, finance, rural manufacturing, mining, rural infrastructure such as road transport, energy and water, because they all play significant roles in the process of achieving rural growth.

Other areas of focus for rural development include, the environment and sustainability, rural poverty, and gender. All of these are co-ordinated by various actors which include farmers, government organizations, rural development professionals NGOs and other Civil Society organizations, rural residents as well as private firms and businesses (soas.ac.uk)

According to Maxwell *et al.*, (2001), narratives on Rural Development have included Community Development, the Green Revolution and Integrated Rural Development. In recent times it has come to include a higher-level green revolution, sustainable agriculture, 'rural livelihoods, food sovereignty, and a liberalization-friendly narrative that is based on growth. However, it is said that new narratives are needed to deal with challenges such as globalization, urbanization as well as the increasing diversity of rural environments. In practice, there will not be one new rural development narrative, but several. For all, however, the building blocks will need to include special attention to the growing diversity of livelihood strategies; rural poverty in low potential areas; the imperative need for stronger social protection, conflict resolution and management as well as the crisis of HIV/AIDS, and the need for greater decentralization and devolution

The key challenges of rural development policy include:

- (a) Recognizing its multi-dimensional objective,
- (b) Finding practical ways of making rural institutions more responsible and accountable to poor people; and
- (c) The imperative to protect the poorest, and the need for new social protection measures.

On the other hand, it has been asserted that if new agricultural technology is to contribute to rural development, it must meet three challenges:

- (a) Identifying the most efficient mechanisms for providing information to farmers.

- (b) Setting technology development policies that distinguish among different types of rural household; and

- (c) Identifying a clear mandate and sustainable support for public research.

The rural economy possesses great potential not only for creating productive jobs but also for contributing to sustainable development and economic growth. Even though decent work may be scarce in the rural economy, it is said to account for a considerable share of employment and output in many developing countries. This perhaps explains why several international organizations including the International Labor Organization has been involved in advocacy for promotion of decent work in the rural economy. This is considered critical in eradicating poverty and ensuring that the nutritional needs of a growing global population are met. It also probably explains why the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes this and is set to increase attention towards rural development and agriculture and food security in particular. (Ilo.org)

Also, there is increasing emphasis on the reality of a faltering rural economy and a call to make villages more attractive to live and work especially for younger people. It is believed that this may ensure that rural areas become more economically sustainable with local businesses in the rural areas forming a crucial part of the growth of a rural community and providing local employment thus playing a key part in rural life. Rural areas are also seen to suffer from several interdependent issues which stagnate the local economy. The issues include poor public transport links, uneven broadband coverage which is considered crucial in evolving small and microenterprises, affordable housing as well as the centralization and monopolization of farming. The absence of these fail to facilitate the potential of the rural economy. It is believed that this occurs because government policies do not account for the realities of rural life because they apply blanket policies which are often more suitable to urban location. There is an insistent emphasis on the need for policies to be rural-proofed with a bottom-up rural policy involving local people who must have a big say in how they are developed and managed since it is believed that rural populations are best placed to work out how to shape their local economies. (forbes.com)

### Rural Development in the Sustainable Development Goals

Major highlights of Rural Development in the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, include:

- The conviction that the SDGs demand priority to rural areas because in many developing countries over half of the population live in rural areas,
- The strong belief that Rural Development is inevitable for attaining the SDGs,
- The affirmation that growth in agriculture and rural sector of developing countries has a much greater impact in reducing poverty and hunger than do urban and industrial growth,

- The acknowledgement that rural challenges are often severe and sometimes insurmountable and that even though poverty has been significantly reduced globally, the rural areas still lag behind,

- And that 70% of the world's food is produced by the rural communities farming small plots of land,

Also that Earth has lost a third of arable land in the past 40 years, to erosion and pollution,

- And the reality that wealth inequality is likely to be most acute between urban and rural communities and perhaps most importantly, that rural people bear the brunt of climate impact disproportionately.

Other highlights of the SDGs on rural development include the call for an evolution towards a New Rural Development Paradigm in which the principles will be to focus on rural areas only, with a link to cities and regions.

The key target will be Agricultural and rural communities. The main approach will be project based such as focus on Green Revolution, Agricultural Technology while the actors will be Government institutions, donors and farmers with main tools as subsidies with a view to

- Fostering rural and urban relationships to reduce the inequality between them,

- Reducing the negative effects of urbanization, that is, rural-urban migration,

- Ensuring sustainable regional development through economic dynamics, social links and environmental synergies.

The rural-urban relationship targeted here is among other things,

- A two-way flow between rural and urban territories of various sizes which are functional and structural,

- Movements of people, goods, capital services and information,

- Social transactions and administrations/governance, and

- Flows of technology, lifestyles and culture.

This is as against rural urban partnerships which refer to initiatives to formulate, adopt and implement an integrated policy. (fig.net)

## CONCLUSION

### Integrated Rural Development

The Integrated Rural Development concept was built on these basic assumptions;

1. Rural Development is part of the overall socio-economic development

2. Development is a system of inter-related social change process resulting from the integration of elements like, goals based on existing values, human and natural resources, available technology, as well as forms of socio-political organizations. These elements and their components are integrated in a system in which the elements are closely interrelated, meaning if one element changes, it affects the whole system.

3. Agriculture has a multitude of functions in the development process which include,

- Production of food and raw materials for its own consumption, for the non agricultural population and for the developing industry.

4. Agriculture is therefore one aspect of rural development. It can not take place without a simultaneous development of other sectors. Its development depends on a framework of institutions which must be created or adapted to requirements which include administration, communication, market credit and extension services at village regional and national level.

IRD therefore has dual purpose. A goal part and a methodological part.

The goal part recognizes the need to include the neglected rural communities in the process of development by applying a number of appropriate social, economic and political measures. This approach starts with an assessment of current situation and the identification of existing challenges with the following as key factors;

Available agricultural and non -agricultural resources,

Available quantity and quality of Human resources,

Identified social stratification pattern in terms of power structure, , land tenure system,

Industry market relations as it applies to agricultural production and the entire economic structure,

The state of affairs of technology in the agricultural and non-agricultural sector,

State of infrastructure in terms of physical transport, communication spatial order and solid infrastructure,

Institutions and organizations administration,

Services in terms of marketing , credit extension, education , training in both the formal and informal sectors.

The methodological part however recognizes Integrated Rural Development and the need to deal with the identified challenges , not at the same time because of their complex nature, but according to their relative importance. It identifies the need to create the minimum requirements for development and then a gradual expansion of the activities can follow. It believes only a network of communication makes it possible to create, between rural areas and urban centers the kind of relationships which will allow each to contribute to the requirements in accordance with their capabilities. It therefore implies the creation of a bigger economic system with a higher potential than a subsistence economy. (professorfrithjofkuhnen.de)

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