

## **E-DIALOGUE AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper takes a look at e-dialogue and effective communication with a view of digging out dialogues that are compliant and effective for communication that brings out desired results from the rudimentary models to the electronic and modern alternative.*

**Keywords:** E-dialogue, effective communication, electronic and modern alternative.

### **Definition of Terms**

E-dialogue here is synonyms with compliant digital and effective interpersonal and intra-personal dialogues that bring about the desired communication goals and objectives. In fact in the context of this paper e-dialogue is synonymous with effective communication from source to destination via diverse effective media. This is communication or dialogue that is clear, effective without noise. And of course the paper will look at this effective communication models from the rudimentary to the modern electronic variants, or choices or alternatives.

### **Introduction**

A man and woman were living as husband and wife for over 30 years. They were talking, they were communicating but there was no dialogue. After these years, they mutually agreed to go their separate ways. They divorced because the union had been irretrievably damaged by lack of effective communication or communication without dialogue.

Dialogued cut across every area of our lives:

- A man cannot impregnate, give birth to a child without dialogue.
- A man or woman can never marry without dialogue.
- There will be no dividends or democracy and good government without dialogue.
- Military operations cannot be successful without dialogue.
- Nations cannot stay at peace together without dialogue.
- United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS cannot have member nations without dialogue.
- Associations and groups cannot function without dialogue.

We can go and on!

But we must ask ourselves some basic questions.

What is the origin of dialogue?

It is in Genesis. In Genesis, when God made the first pronouncement;

Let there be light

**(Genesis 1:3)**

One can interpret this in our context as the first – ever interpersonal (communication between God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and intra-personal communication (communication within God) in the entire creation to those of us that believe in God.

In the early days of communication evolution, when the prehistoric man hit 2 stones together to ignite fire and smoke signals are sent into the atmosphere different forms, for decoding techniques and/interpretations are set in motion. The straightness of the smoke or the zigzag nature of the smoke may form the parameter of this type of communication. Then came the print media or the press, the newspaper, the magazines, the journals, the photography, the hieroglyphics etc – with their different presentation techniques for different effects.

Further evolution in communication jumpstarted the radio followed by Television and now the social and/or new media of communication with their different and modern communication challenges for effectiveness within the different communication chain.

All these passed through different stages of different challenges as they complete within or with themselves to perfect their different modes of communication.

The print media was once referred to as the profession as the pen with the mantra:

**The pen is mightier  
Than the sword**

But today change and its debilitating influence has made the mantra archaic and outmoded as practitioners can do without the pen in this era of computers, ipads, palmtops, desk-tops, etc.

The radio and television went through the analogue stages with the bulk and cumbersome equipment but today they have to go digital.

All these changes are necessary because if the practitioners do not change in line, they will be changed out of relevance!

The present challenge of e-dialogue in effective communication are part of these changes that are necessary if media practitioners are to be continuously relevant. But then we must understand the communication chain first if we are to be effective in e dialogue in effective communication. These include

- Conveying a message between a listener and speaker (radio/TV).
- Conveying a message between a writer and reader(Print).
- Communication from source to destination.
- Shanon weaver's model of communication message from production to transmission and then reception.

What all these entail are that in Newspaper/Print journalism there must be research for materials/backgrounder before interview, questions answers, editing and writing via the different genres such as editorials, commentaries, news, features and other articles. In Radio/Television there is the research backgrounds, the packaging/writings via a host of diverse programmes and news such as News, Guest Forum, Drama, features, Documentaries, Talks, News, Analysis, etc.

Each of this programme format has its style of writings with the rule, and regulations of practice.

**The foundations of e-dialogue is effective communication.**

To delve into this analysis, reference must be made to great pioneering works in this area such as the works of Diana Booher (2001) et al.

The conventional media – i.e. print, radio and television must have heard the dread and death alarm signals of the new media for them to change or be checked out if they do not adopt the new media techniques, that must have accounted for their new changes in adopting the new and popular new media techniques at the old slogan started fading and failing fast. For an example while the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Radio Nigeria), Nigerian Television Authority) (NTA) were gloring in the past as being the godfathers of radio and television broadcasting in Nigeria, the Raypowers, Channels and Cools of Nigeria stormed the air waves, in most cases breaking the rules of orthodoxy and conventions. And before the FRCNS and NTAs could know what was going on in the deregulated sector, public media ratings tilted in favour of the New Independent Stations to the disfavour of the old giants! They were forced to recharge and change in order not to be changed out!

The secret of the new relevance of the media of mass communication lies in their quick adaptation of the New Media techniques. Shaibu (2016) sounded that alarm in the national change workshop.

That project yielded the following recommendations for better e-dialogue in media communication in Nigeria.

BBC/FRCN/NTA change project 2004 for which the research was coordinator for FRCN GWNP, threw up many challenges toward digital upgrade a broadcasting in Nigeria. See below the recommendations:

1. This study was based on three different approaches; the conclusions that emerged, however, were mutually reinforcing, underlining the importance of taking a holistic view, accepting the conclusions and recommendations as coming together to form an integrated programme for managing change.
2. It is important for their credibility that FRCN and NTA are perceived to be independent broadcasters operating within a democratic society. To achieve this, both organisations should be freed from the constraints of operating as part of the Civil Service.
3. At the same time the legislation under which FRCN and NTA operate should be updated as appropriate for independent public organisations operating within a democracy.
4. A process should be established whereby Independent Boards are appointed who would be responsible for the public accountability of both organisations. The Chairs and DGs would present Annual Reports and Annual Accounts for scrutiny by the Joint Committee of the National Assembly.
5. Uncertainty of funding determines any organisation, de-motivates staff and makes it impossible to achieve its objectives. A Task Force should be established during 2005 to consider the range of funding options for public broadcasting in the context of the overall national broadcasting strategy. A new approach could be introduced from 2008, taking full account of the economic realities and the fast changing media marketplace.

6. The government should guarantee the delivery of funding already approved for 2005-6; the amount of government subvention for 2006-7 and 2007-8 should also be guaranteed before the end of March 2006. At the same time targets (and limits) should be set for attracting commercial income. This would include clear statements about which parts of the operation were to be supported by Government funds and which from commercial income.
7. To build public confidence and trust, from 2005-6 both organisations should be subject to full independent external audits of all income and expenditure. These audits would be incorporated into the published Annual Accounts and scrutinised by the Joint Committee of the National Assembly.
8. Bringing stability to the income base is essential for the business planning which underpins the success of any Change Programme and ensures that service delivery is improved.
9. To undertake change and improve the services members of staff have to be inspired and motivated. To achieve this there is a need for a reappraisal of the Human Resources systems to ensure that: recruitment is open and transparent and related to need; a separate salary structure is introduced into each organisation independent of the Civil Service approach; all staff receive induction training in the values and objectives of the organisation; a comprehensive and integrated training and re-training programme is drawn up for all staff linked to a staff development initiative which will provide new challenges and opportunities for long serving staff; an improved system of internal staff communication is introduced.
10. Targets should be agreed for the period 2005-2008 to move more resources (human and financial) into programmes and away from administration and support services. Alternatively, the number of staff in administration and support should be drastically reduced.
11. Taken together these changes will demonstrate to staff that their views have not only been listened to but acted upon. These changes are an essential foundation if any Change Programme is to be sustained.
12. The spine of FRCN and NTA as public service broadcasters is their journalism, the core service on which the reputation of each organisation depends, Accuracy, impartiality, fairness and balance are accepted as the values by which quality of journalism should be judged.
13. Both organisations are open to the criticism that their news programmes do not reflect the new priorities or needs of the audience. Government initiatives, for example, are reported in a predictable way which does not engage the audience; there is over-reporting of seminars and speeches involving politicians and experts and not enough illustration and analysis of the impact of specific policies on families and communities.

14. The national interest of Nigeria means that the issue of (self) censorship was hotly debated, revealing a polarity of view: restraints on reporting were justified because to do otherwise would undermine the stability of the country; on the other hand, these self-imposed restrictions were felt to undermine the credibility of the broadcaster, essential if it was to be trusted to play a full role in a democratic society, for example relaying information relating to developments in social policy like health and education.
15. As a matter of urgency a journalist review should be undertaken in both organisations with a view to developing a news agenda that relates to the priorities of the audience. Journalists should be (re) trained in what is expected of them in producing fair, accurate and impartial journalism.
16. International news should not be confined to separate programmes but included in news bulletins according to news priorities.
17. No payments should be accepted for news coverage and any commercial messages should be branded and separated from the editorial content.
18. To improve service delivery across all the programme output on FRCN and NTA will mean a new emphasis on production skills and expertise and technical proficiency. This will form an important part of the integrated training programme.
19. Improving service delivery will also depend on connecting more closely with the audience. Comprehensive audience research should be undertaken as a priority to help inform editorial decisions and to bring some awareness of the needs and interests of listeners and viewers.
20. A joint FRCN and NTA editorial team should be established to agree a number of co-operative ventures during 2005 which would strengthen the impact of separating radio and television programmes.
21. The introduction of on-line services should be co-ordinated so that benefits can be obtained from joint planning and shared technology.
22. Against the background of working more closely in these areas the potential for a full merger of both organisations should be explored and assessed against the criteria of improved service delivery, cost efficiencies and improve use of resources. Consideration should also be given to including the Voice of Nigeria in any merged organisation.

## **Part 2**

23. Thirty-six Change Workshops took place in FRCN and NTA with 3573 staff participating. They identified Themes based on positive experiences and Conditions of Success and Wishes (thing that need to happen to help them to do better).

Based on this data the building blocks for success were identified and the “big ticket” issues that had to be addressed if change was to have a chance of success. A

number of Quick Wins were also identified which should be introduced before the end of March, 2005.

24. The data indicates that the situation both organisations face in Nigeria is very similar; while they have vision of where they want to take both organisations, they are hampered by a number of big issues:

- Unstable funding, which leads to the inability of the organisation to: carry out systematic development; deliver according to plan; and invest in both the technological as well as human resources.
- Out of date equipment and technology and lack of “fit for purpose” facilities to house them.
- Lack of high level of objective and impartial journalistic aptitude.
- Lack of consistent and strong leaders/managers.
- Lack of investment in the human resources systems, policies and procedures.
- Lack of deliberate strategy to cultivate talents and maintain skills through training and development.
- Lack of effective infrastructure.
- Lack of equity treatment because of the lack of unity of people.

25. What both organisations have, are members of staff who are willing and eager to grow and take responsibilities.

Considering the support from staff, one comes to a conclusion that if any of the issues listed above (23) are addressed, the FRCN/NTA capability will improve.

### **Part 3**

26. The technology review revealed poor accommodation, unreliable power supply, worn out transmitters, a mix of new and (very) old equipment, lack of IT infrastructure and skill base, and a culture of repair, not maintenance.

Staff, especially those in the middle ranks, were resourceful, keen and enthusiastic.

27. Quick Wins are good for staff involvement and morale. Some which could be implemented immediately are: banishing the dust; disposing of redundant kit and wiring; checking on alignment; using a satellite transponder for audio distribution; and making more use of the recent good installation at the National Stadium in Abuja.

28. To make any progress, standby power systems must be enhanced to improve their reliability and capability. This is a priority.

29. Basic electronic test and diagnostic equipment must be provided at each station and staff trained to use it. A purchasing budget for spares should be devolved to an operational level and a stock built up.

30. Decisions must be taken about the long-term use of SW and MW. If these represent a good investment then a transmitter replacement programme must be drawn up. Consideration must also be given to getting the best value from FM, developing a strategy for DAB and Radio for the internet.

31. Automation of television transmitters will take ten years but work should begin now.
32. An NTA presence is essential on satellite and cable: it must be carried.
33. An integrated refurbishment programme is needed for TV studios; ergonomics and studio conditions should be improved; recording formats should be rationalised; master control suites in Abuja and Lagos should be re-equipped.
34. FRCN should build on the success of their existing digital audio kit – Audio Vault; the MW and SW studios should be upgraded with improved ergonomics and studio conditions; digital studio editing should be developed; limited networking should be introduced in each station with a view to progressing to full server-based layout.
35. To improve recording in the field compact cassette recorders with good quality microphones should be provided at each station, eventually being replaced with digital solid-state recorders.
36. It is essential to begin the installation of an information technology infrastructure beginning with each station and then progressing to inter-station links.
37. The training centres in Lagos and Jos should be equipped with the same type of equipment as used in the field, with courses re-designed to be “hands on”.
38. To move forward Technology Policy teams should be set up and given responsibility for the formation of policy and its implementation. Each team would be by a Principal Technology officer who would drive the technical update plan. These teams should be given responsibility for procurement based on a set of rules drawn up and approved centrally.
39. Capital funding must be secured for a three year period to allow investment in technical training and development and for buildings to be updated along with the kit.
40. The technical strategy must be closely linked with the editorial strategy. Technology should be in place and staff trained in its use, ahead of the programme strategy. All technology must be within the capability of the staff to operate and maintain it. Training facilities and techniques should be updated ahead of the new technology.
41. A number of engineering organisational options are suggested, along with a risk analysis and some assessment of costs.
42. A programme to update the technology in FRCN and NTA is unlikely to be completed in less than 5 years. It is premature to estimate the likely cost, but it is clear that a significant investment that will be required.

## **Conclusion**

This study has revealed a powerful appetite for change among the staff of FRCN and NTA. They are committed to their work and to their country and they believe that improvements can be introduced that can help them make a stronger contribution to the national good. In doing so they want to see FRCN and NTA become the best broadcasters in Africa and then exploit digital technology to operate on a global scale.

This report makes a range of recommendations. Some are cost neutral and could be implemented immediately; others will take a number of years to be achieved. Many, but not all, especially in the area of technology, will require significant investment. Progress should be tracked on a quarterly basis.

Taken together they provide an opportunity for a phased Programmed of Change where improvements will be seen from the outset although it may take as long as three to five years to achieve in its entirety.

The staff in both organisations would support that. There is now no alternative to moving forward.

Old as these recommendations may be, they provide an enabling environment for e dialogue and effective communication even into this 21st century.

Also the Report of the Vision 2020 National Technical Working Group of which the research was an active participant is germane to the issue of e-Dialogue in communication in the area of content delivery that comes under strategies for Improved Media and Communication in Nigeria. It is here presented:

## **Vision**

### **Vision Statement**

*A professionalised industry in a pluralistic environment, with deep commitment to promoting democracy, accountability and guided by solid sense of ethics and social responsibility, while enhancing national development.*



**3.2. Objectives, Goals, Strategies and Initiatives**

**Objective 1: To be a key instrument in transforming Nigeria into a critical player in the global political economy, using information as a powerful tool for development**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Goals/Targets</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Initiatives</b>
1	Extend the reach of broadcast media to communities in Nigeria	Ensure connection of all media establishments to the internet.	Enact a law to enforce internet connectivity of all media establishments
		Create a synergy between mass and traditional media to guarantee effective communication in the development process.	Codify, synchronize/integrate and apply all traditional media in Nigeria to national development
		Integrate communication strategy into public policy formulation, design and implementation.	Professionalize information management from the minister across the MDAs at federal, state and local government levels
			Appoint communication specialists as minister and commissioners of information
			Set up a Bureau of information comprising of media practitioners
			Upgrade the information units in the MDAs to the level of directorate

<b>Objective 1: To be a key instrument in transforming Nigeria into a critical player in the global political economy, using information as a powerful tool for development</b>			
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Goals/Targets</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Initiatives</b>
2	Establish community media particularly community radio, newspapers, community theatres and viewing centres in all 90,000 communities in Nigeria	Promote indigenous language media	Establish community-based media in each state
		Establish and promote community-based media	Approve national policy on community media
		Issue community radio licenses at no fee, except application fee to be fixed at 10% of the commercial license charge	Establish Community radio stations in each community
3	Increase daily circulation of each of the 10 leading newspapers to a minimum of 1.5 million copies	Vigorous advocacy for massive investment in public education.	Adopt the use of indigenous language media (newspapers) as a teaching tool in the formal and non-formal educational institutions
		Resuscitate the paper, pulp and allied input products in publishing industry.	Resuscitate the paper pulp and allied input products in publishing industry
		Establish community information resource centres	Zero duty on all printing materials for community papers and VAT fee on cover price
		Production of mass educational materials for radio, Tv& film	Production of mass educational materials for radio, TV & film
4	Increase media consumption habit among Nigerians	Establish information resource centres in schools	Establish information resource centres in schools
		Include media hours (newspapers reading, tv viewing and radio listening in the curriculum)	Promote media hour in all public and private schools
			Supply newspapers to all schools

**Objective 2: To remove all legal, financial and administrative hurdles that hinder a free and pluralistic media and communication environment**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Goals/Targets</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Initiatives</b>
1	Institute comprehensive policy and legal reforms  (Freedom of Information Bill, Motion Picture Council of Nigeria Bill, National Film Development Fund and the National Film Policy Bill to become laws)	Identify all laws inimical to the growth of the media industry and mobilize stakeholders including National Assembly and state to enact relevant laws and repeal, or abrogate outdated media laws  Empowerment media regulatory bodies to function independently e.g. National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and Nigeria Press Council (NPC)	Enact relevant laws and repeal, or abrogate outdated media laws. (Freedom of Information Bill, Motion Picture Council of Nigeria Bill, National Film Development Fund and the National Film Policy Bill to become laws)  Reform broadcasting and newspaper laws that directly protect the independence of public owned media

**Objective 3: To ensure a fully structured industry that is reflective of the ethos and development drive of the nation**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Goals/Targets</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Initiatives</b>
1	Enact relevant legal reforms and legislations to fully operationalise statutory functions of NPC, NBC, APCON and NIPA	Strengthen regulatory institutions for effective performance of their functions – NIPR, APCON, NCC, etc	Mobilize stakeholders to generate input, and to support sectoral legal reforms

Objective 4: To generate wealth that would add to the nation’s GDP, through development media and communication practices that project Nigeria’s cultural values, tourism potentials and the empowerment of the people			
S/N	Goals/Targets	Strategies	Initiatives
1	Increase output of the industry by tenfold and increase contribution of media to the nation’s GDP by estimated 10% in 2020	Production and promotion of support for local input/materials and technology for the media industry	Establish a strategic think tank of stakeholders
		Use Nollywood as viable instrument for foreign exchange and national image projection	Strengthen the agency with responsibility for tracking Nigeria’s culture exports and repatriation of earnings from such exports
			Establishment of intervention funds to support the production of local inputs
		Restructure the media into formal business sector	Reform quality control mechanism in production and content of Nollywood products
			Establish one Nigerian film development fund and 3 centres of excellence for capacity of excellence for capacity building and film production
		Restructure the media into formal business sector	Establish and strengthen collection societies
Collaborate with financial institutions to develop product lines targeted at Nollywood			

Objective 5: To be a prominent promoter of Nigeria’s cultural products such as music, films, art & cuisine and books, costumes in global arena			
S/N	Goals/Targets	Strategies	Initiatives
1	Promote visibility and acceptance of Nigeria’s culture, values and products	Repackage and promote values and products nationally and internationally	Repackage and promote values and products nationally and internationally

Objective 6: To ensure a rich pool of manpower, research and well equipped training institutions and infrastructure			
S/N	Goals/Targets	Strategies	Initiatives
1	6 of the 47 accredited journalism/mass communication training institutions would become centres of excellence	Develop six centres of excellence out of the existing media and communications institutions	Evolve curricula and standard monitoring mechanism for media and communication education
2	Promote more specialized media and communication training (radio, tv, advertising, PR etc)	Establish and strengthen existing media and communication specialized centres	Upgrade staff and modernize facilities of existing specialized media and communication centres
		Regular interface between classroom and media houses to bridge gap between theory and practice	Institutionalize mentoring as a value in the media industry
			Re-enforce stricter compliance with industrial training (IT) programmes

Objective 7: To ensure quality, professionalism and ethical standards in media and communication			
S/N	Goals/Targets	Strategies	Initiatives
1	Training and retraining of media personnel and students	Capacity building for practitioners and would-be practitioners	Enforce compliance with professional code of ethics
		Promote originality and creativity	Enforce copyright laws
			Establish more creative writing schools
2	Provide state-of-the-art equipment e.g. quality cameras, laptops in all media organisations	Subsidize media equipment and facilities	Comply with UNESCO recommended zero duty on all educational media equipment and facilities

Objective 8: To ensure quality, professionalism and ethical standards in media and communication			
S/N	Goals/Targets	Strategies	Initiatives
1	Promote open and accountable leadership at all levels	Infusion of more of Nigeria’s positive values into media contents	Regular media monitoring and analysis of government budgetary performance
			Identification and celebration of our national icons and landmarks

Yes, it can be observed that the flurry of changes in the media, the movements from analogue to digital systems of media presentations, the deregulating of the Nigerian media, etc just to mention but a few, may have necessitate an upgrade of these recommendations, it does not necessarily annul the valid observations toward the ultimate objective – e-dialogue in communication is asine-quanon to effective communication.

The final word in all these recommendations can be gleaned in the works of Booher (2001) as follow:

- Selecting the right medium for effective communication.
- Following the rules e-mail etiquette to create the proper image in the medium chosen for e-communication.
- Development of e-writing culture as opposed to the conventional styles and programmes packaging.

For an example, it worked in the old conventional ways to have lengthy feature articles, long durated or duration programmes of...one hour, 30 minutes and so on, on radio and television but that approach is gradually giving way to programmes news and advertisement or marketing productions in capsules and/or in bits and pieces as the listeners and viewers no long have time for long durated/duration programmes because of their busy work schedules. Also pursuit of capitalist ventures makes everybody to be on the move all the time.

In the new dispensation the view of the audience/listeners/viewers and advertisers tend to override professionalism considerations. The choice is now dicey – in striking a balance between professionalism and popular ratings of the viewers and listeners. Also, now content delivery is via compliant diversities of new digital systems, recording, product broadcasting machines, and gadget, productions, evaluations and ratings to effective communication. The professional cannot but be abreast with these new digital trends and developments in order to be relevant in the new communication dispensation.

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