

**GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM**



**EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ISD MOBILE CINEMA VAN IN  
COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY OF CHORKOR**

**BY**

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A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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## **DEDICATION**

This long essay is dedicated to my daughters Akyaa and Asantewaa Osei-Safo. Their smiles gave me a reason to overlook the stress and accomplish this project successfully. God Almighty bless them.

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this long essay is my original work and that no part of it has been presented in this institution or elsewhere.

STUDENT'S NAME:

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE:

DATE:

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this long essay was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of theses established by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE:

SUPERVISOR'S NAME: Dr. Kofi Amponsah-Bediako

DATE:

## **ABSTRACT**

The mobile cinema van was a reliable channel of communication during the British rule. It was used by the British government to communicate with majority of illiterate folks in the various local dialect. Of late, the radio, newspapers, television, mobile phones and social media have become very common channels of communication but are they able to reach out and meet the needs of every citizens? Most African government are saddled with the challenge of finding effective channels of communication that can reach out to every citizen and also provide voice for the voiceless on government affairs. This paper seeks to assess the effectiveness of the Information Services Department (ISD) mobile cinema van in promoting greater public participation. The paper will further reveal the role of the mobile cinema van in bridging the communication gap between government and the citizens. Finally, this paper will explore the relevance of the Information Services Department (ISD) in disseminating government information to the general public in an era of information age and the need to focus on resourcing the department to deliver its core mandate.

Keywords: Government, citizens, dissemination, communication, and effectiveness.

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# **EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ISD MOBILE CINEMA VAN IN COMMUNICATION.**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Right from birth to death, people communicate with people and things around them. For instance, a child communicates with his/her mother by crying. At the workplaces, churches or homes individuals communicate to express their feelings by talking to each other or by writing about their emotions. Others also communicate by discussing their thoughts with others. In the same vein, governments must employ effective channel(s) to reach out to every citizen irrespective of where they are located.

Communication plays an essential part in the development of both individuals and societies. Government communication is therefore a useful way to build relationships with community residents who have long-term effects, one of which credibility and community-based model of government communication seeks to encourage dialogue and public debate (Aji, 2017). People's participation is essential for any program of development to meet its objectives and achieve its goals (Satish, 2011). It is believed that government performs most effectively and efficiently when citizens participate (Ali Tanti, 2015). Nonetheless, a major challenge facing most African countries is which effective communication tool to employ to involve citizens in the day-to-day governance.

In Ghana and other developing countries, crucial information on government programs and policies for the improvement of lives of citizens is often times extremely difficult to come by. Information is vital to development and must be easily accessible to everyone who desires to have it. Access to information encourages citizens to participate effectively in making and implementing decisions that affect their daily lives, and this reinforces the principles of good governance (Ofei-Aboagye, 2015).

Every citizen matters and must be reached out to and not left behind in terms of accessing information about the government. Again, everyone is entitled to government policies and programs, therefore the medium or channel of communication employed by the government should benefit all and not only the educated few.

Mohammed (2018) suggested that there's the need to ensure that we provide a voice and platforms for the meaningful participation and engagement of the most marginalized, vulnerable and excluded communities and individuals. Citizens need to understand and measure the outcome of policies they vote for. If citizens are well informed on government policies, programs and initiatives, they willingly participate and exchange ideas through public dialogue for development and social change. In essence, well- informed citizens willingly participate in decision-making and contribute significantly to the effective execution of government programs and policies (Abdul-Hamid, 2018).

The introduction of social networking sites and the coming of the internet in the 1990s has led to a key expansion in the world of communication. Television, radios, newspapers and the social media are very good communication and connection tools popularly used by governments to educate and inform citizens on issues that bothers on national development. However, it is uncertain whether these modern channels of communication are effective enough for engaging both literate and illiterate citizens.

Kumar (2016) in a study, found out that owing to the emotional power of television, the uneducated and illiterates find it difficult in drawing a contrast between the good and the bad as well as truth and the ultimate which is made available to them. They are thus shelved especially in partisan and social spheres which is damaging to any democratic set up particularly in developing countries.

Statistics from UNESCO sources indicate that 756 million adults and 263 million children across the world are unable to read and write. In Ghana, illiteracy rate is 28.5% according to the 2010 Housing and Population census report. In other words, these people cannot read and write and for that matter may not be able to access information via social media or mass media. How can such people or

citizens who fall under this umbrella reach out to the government with their problems and also contribute their quota towards the development of Ghana? Research have indicated that illiteracy affects the effective use of mobile phones, the internet and other technological gadgets (report by Eric Amanor, Daily Graphic, September, 2017).

It is an undeniable fact that very few people in Ghana and other developing countries have no access to the internet, television, newspapers or even a radio set. Previous studies have demonstrated that disparities regarding internet and ICT use suggest that people with certain socioeconomic and demographic characteristics are at a disadvantage to the use and access of the internet (van Deursen and Helsper, 2015).

The situation is aggravated by the fact that most communities in Ghana do not enjoy constant supply of electricity. There is interruption every now and then. Most of the basic telecommunication devices cannot function without electricity.

According to the Internet World Statistics, (2017) from a total of 3.6 billion of people universally, 48.3% of the population is digitally excluded. Some people regardless of the advancement in Information and Communication and Technology might not know what a computer is. Again, in Ghana, statistics from Afrobarometer report (2017) indicated that there was a decline in the dependence on radio (43%) for information.

According to UNESCO, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) entails the risks of further marginalizing those who lack access to technology or technical skills. They therefore underline the need to bridge the digital and knowledge divide to ensure that they do not increase inequality but rather foster empowerment and citizens participation, social and human development, transparency and social accountability along with government effectiveness (UNESCO, 2018).

According to Mohammed (2017) the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect the voices of millions of people from all over the

world. She explains further that the success of this collective journey to 2030 will greatly depend on how effectively governments will engage local authorities, indigenous people, and civil society to bridge the gap between people and national policy setting.

Citizens' participation can only be achieved through effective information dissemination. An appropriate channel of communication must therefore be chosen by government to disseminate information to the majority of people who fall have no access to mass media. Degraff (2016) advised that if a conscious effort is not made to reach the illiterate segments of the populace, they tend not to understand the local governance processes.

Medium or channel of communication like television, radio, newspaper and social media can be very effective for literate citizens and ineffective for an illiterate citizen who might not be privileged to have access to television, newspaper, radio or social media. Illiteracy limits people ability to access information about the government programs and also give their opinions on national issues.

A study conducted by Ahenkan et al (2013) disclosed that citizens are reluctant to access information on government programs and policies as a result of illiteracy. Every government therefore has a peculiar task of bringing information and educating the general public on issues about health care, climate change, education, agriculture, women and children, the economy, among others. This assist the government to adequately plan for every citizen.

In order for every government to succeed in involving every citizen in the governance process, it is essential to effectively communicate with her shareholders on how the country is being run and also provide a means by which citizens can send feedback or how they feel about a policy or initiative to the government. In doing so, it is very expedient for the government to adopt the most appropriate method or channel of passing on information to everyone especially those at the grassroots. Mahmud (2017) argued that just as government needs to hear from citizens, citizens need to hear from governments.

Effective communication is achieved when the message one wish to convey has been received, understood and acted upon in the intended way by the recipient. The study of governments finding effective ways of communicating to her citizens is extremely important for social change and development. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) advocates 6 principle for effective communication as accessible, actionable, credible and trusted, relevant, timely and understandable. To this end, a study aimed at finding the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van in bridging the communication gap between the people and the citizenry is crucial for development.

## **1.2 Background Statement**

In Ghana, one institution that has a rich experience in educating citizens to participate in government business is the Information Services Department which will be referred to as the ISD in this study. It was established about 81 years ago and has representation in all the sixteen regions of Ghana. It is mandated to promote and create awareness on government policies, programs and activities across the country devoid of political inclinations. It also sends feedback on how residents feel about government policies, programs or activities to the government for the appropriate action to be taken. (Ghana Today Magazine, December, 2017 Edition)

In the colonial era, when most part of the country did not have electricity, the ISD mobile cinema van was an effective communication tool not only for educating but also for entertaining residents. ([www.isd.gov.gh](http://www.isd.gov.gh) )

The Department in the past played a crucial role in major national sensitization programs such as introduction of the Value-Added Tax (VAT), National budgets, introduction of the new currencies, the Ghana Poverty Eradication Poverty, the Volta River Authority project, Population and Housing census, referenda and all general elections since 1992. Currently, with very little resources the ISD has performed tremendously in sensitizing Ghanaians on government achievements as well as the

basic preventive measures of the COVID-19 outbreak. The ISD even before Ghana gained independence from her colonial masters had an exclusive way of disseminating information with the assistance of the mobile cinema vans (source: [www.isd.gov.gh](http://www.isd.gov.gh)).

The mobile cinema van was first introduced by the British in the Gold Coast as a means of reaching out to the illiterate population (Blaylock 2017). The mobile cinema van is a yellow and green car with horn speakers fixed on top. It comprises of a screen projector, folding screens, and microphones. Although, considered as a traditional method of communication, it has proven to be an effective channel of communication employed to strengthen the flow of information and public dialogue between the government and the public.

The ISD mobile cinema vans appear to be irrelevant in recent times with the proliferation of radio, television, newspapers, mobile devices and social media. Ikem (2011) states that over dependence on traditional media for the purposes of politics are no longer doubtful.

Blaylock (2017) has outlined the reasons why the ISD mobile cinema van is still relevant and an effective government tool for communication as follows: First, it is regarded by most people as an accurate, ultimate, credible and official source of government information. Second, it can be used to disseminate information at places where television, radio and newspapers cannot reach. In other words, the mobile cinema van has the ability to move and travel to remotest places in Ghana. Third, it remains an effective channel of communication for reaching out to people without access to television, radio, newspapers and social media. Fourth, unlike the radio, television or newspaper, the mobile cinema van has commentators or translators who translate and explain films, documentaries, announcements, government policies or initiatives into the local dialects of their audiences (Rice, 2016). The commentators/ translators respond quickly to the questions of their audiences and ensure that everyone fully comprehends the information that is being communicated. In short, receivers of the information have the opportunity to ask questions from the senders of the information (Adenle, 2017).

### **1.3 Problem Definition**

Prior research has established that effective communication with the citizenry on issues that affects them directly will assist them to take good decision and also change their behavior (Global Health. Media Project and UNICEF, 2017). A study conducted by Waisbord (2003) suggested a use of mix communication strategies such as mass media to reach large population, social mobilization to bolster participation, social marketing to target specific groups; media advocacy to gain support from government and popular folk media to generate dialogue and active information networks. Kealey (2017) in a study argued that the concept of audience –centric communication has long been established as a best practice aimed at ensuring that the communication experience (i.e. message and channel) are oriented to the needs of the audience member.

Also, a research conducted by Mahmud (2017) on diverse communication tools revealed that never before has government had so many tools to communicate to citizens: through print, television online media, through social media feeds, through e-mail and text notifications, through mobile application ecosystem that seems to change by the day.

A research work was done by Sanina et al (2018) to examine how government can improve the efficiency of her communication with her target audience. One of the findings showed that government organizations need to select the proper composition of various communication channels to achieve the most efficient results.

Despite all these studies on different ways of effective communication, several gaps nonetheless exist about the effectiveness of the ISD mobile cinema van as a communication platform. This study thus seeks to explore whether the mobile cinema van remains an effective communication tool that the government and the Information Services Department can rely on to disseminate information to the general public regardless of the proliferation of other communication tools such as radio, television, newspaper and the social media.

## **1.4 General Objective**

The general objective of the study is to critically analyze the effectiveness of the ISD mobile cinema van in disseminating information to enhance citizens' participation on government programs.

## **1.5 Specific Objectives**

1. To investigate the extent to which the ISD mobile cinema van can foster public dialogue.
2. To ascertain citizens' reaction about the use of the mobile cinema van in information dissemination.
3. To identify the reliability of the use of mass media in disseminating information to the illiterate population.
4. To make appropriate recommendations about how government can reach out to all citizens with the help of the mobile cinema van.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

The study seeks to address the following questions.

RQ1. What is the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van in stimulating citizens' participation and good governance?

RQ2. What is the role of the ISD mobile cinema vans in bridging the communication gap between the illiterate population and the government?

RQ3. What is the relevance of the Information Services Department mobile cinema van in an era of ICTs?

## **1.7 Hypothesis**

In conducting my research, I expect to establish the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van in the dissemination of information to promote citizens' participation and good governance. I also expect to find out the necessity to deliberately reach out to illiterate citizens who have no access to television, radio, newspapers or social media. I envisage the relevance of the mobile cinema van in a fast-growing world of information, communication and technology.

## **1.8 Justification for the Study**

Academic research on the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van to promote good governance and prompt citizens' participation has received inadequate or no attention in Ghana. Whereas several studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of television, radio, newspaper and the social media same cannot be said for the mobile cinema van.

An academic research aimed at documenting the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van is thus crucial for identifying how the mobile cinema van can be employed by governments to reach out to every single Ghanaian with the essential information needed about government policies, programs and activities.

## **1.9 Definitions/Concept of Communication**

The definition of communication varies from individuals and renowned intellectuals. The broad definition of communication includes body-language and the objectives of communication. It emphasizes listening as an essential component of communication. An excellent definition of communication should give precise meaning and also throw more light on the scope of the word. Sullivan (2017) defines communication as being able to convey your thoughts to someone else. It

doesn't matter whether it's through pictures, sign language, words, numbers or colors. If you can convey what you wish to express and have someone else garner your meaning than it is accepted as communication.

Communication according to Brown (2014) is the transfer of information from one person to another whether or not it elicits confidence. The important element is that the information being transferred must be understandable to the receiver. Communication is a way of reaching others by transmitting ideas, feelings, thought, facts and values. (Newstrom and Davis, 2019). Nordquist (2019) defines communication as the process of sending and receiving messages through verbal or non-verbal means including speech or oral communication. For the Haiman (2019) communication means the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another.

Munodawafa (2008) defines communication as the transmission of verbal and non-verbal messages. He explained further that communication consists of a sender a receiver and channel of communication. It is no doubt that communication play an integral role in the development of every society.

Oneil (2019) explains that channels of communication are means through which people communicate. Oneil explains in details that communication channels include face-to-face interaction, mass media and electronic communication. Face-to-face communication is one of the richest channels of communication. It allows for interaction between a speaker and recipient to clarify ambiguity. It gives the speaker the opportunity to evaluate whether an audience has understood the message or not.

Mass media encompasses radio, television, newspapers and social media. It is effective when addressing a mass audience. Electronic communication channel comprises of email, internet and social media platforms. It is very effective when addressing individuals, mass or group communication.

Adenle (2017) suggests that methods and channels chosen for the dissemination or communication must suit the circumstances and the need of both the sender and the receivers. Ofei-Aboagye (2018) also called for the adoption of innovations and best practices that would facilitate information availability, dissemination exchange, feedback between the government and governance stakeholders.

Effectiveness refers to choosing the right channel, or combination of channels to solve some particular problem and to increase organizational development. It is also connected with cost of communication (Sanina et al, 2018).

Westmyer et al (2006) defines effectiveness as meeting the goals set for communication interaction to be fulfilled. In other words, a channel of communication is considered to be effective when it is possible to send information or receive responses from the recipients of the information.

### **1.10 Summary**

In summary, even though ICT is expanding globally, the use of the ISD mobile cinema vans as an effective communication platform where individuals and societies can access accurate information on government policies, programs and activities and also exchange ideas for development remains extremely relevant in contemporary times.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will examine the development of the mobile cinema from the colonial era to modern-day Ghana. The chapter will also investigate the earlier works by renowned authors on the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van in communicating messages to the illiterate population and the general public through film shows. The role of the cinema commentator during film shows will equally be analyzed. Further, the chapter will also discuss the theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning the study. The various findings will be of immense assistance to this study.

#### **2.2 Development of the Mobile Cinema**

The use of the mobile cinema van in Africa commenced as far back as the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Kenya and Nigeria, health professionals used the mobile cinema van to get vital health messages across to people who were illiterate. Mobile cinema films were made locally and shown to intended audiences with gramophone records in many different languages (Bloom et al, 2014).

A 16mm amateur film was produced by Dr. A. R. Paterson of the Kenya Department of Sanitary and Medical Service to assist in a public health campaign against hookworm in 1926. Another film was also manufactured in the same year to fight the outbreak of plague in Lagos with the help of a specially designed mobile cinema van (Sellars, 1953).

In Ghana, development of the mobile cinema emerged when the quest to inform people on the progress of the Second World War arose (Blaylock, 2011). One cinema van was imported from Britain whilst three others were produced locally to assist the Information Services Department, the

main public relations outfit of government to send war films and newspapers on weekly bases to the people of the Gold Coast who lived in the remotest part of the country.

Additionally, the mobile cinema vans were used to tell people about government policies and programs in order to solicit their support and active participation. The Ghana Film Unit was thus established in 1949 to show educational films fortnightly and embark on country wide campaigns ([www.isd.gov.gh](http://www.isd.gov.gh)). Today, the Mobile cinema van remains an effective and major tool employed by the ISD in getting messages about government policies and programs across to the public.

### **2.3 Various Findings on Effectiveness of the Mobile Cinema Van**

According to Jafri, (2018) the use of the mobile cinema van commenced as early as the 1905 through circus performance by the Lumiere brothers in the capital of Senegal, Dakar. The author explained that, in the 1930s, films shown by Charlie Chaplin in cities such as Nairobi, Free town and Lagos drew large crowds to the annoyance of the European authorities. This prompted the colonial governments to begin to produce films purposively for African audiences. Mobile cinema vans were used extensively to educate the African audiences who lived far away from the cities through the films produced.

Meyer (2015) contributed to the studies by criticizing the use of the mobile cinema van as a development tool. Referring to the mobile cinema van as the green- yellow Bedford buses, the author first described how it effectively brought people together wherever it went for screening programs. With the assistance of documentary films, Ghanaians in towns and villages were enlightened on government policies free of charge (Sakyi, 1996).

For Meyer, even though the ISD used the mobile cinema vans to actively engage Ghanaians including farmers in the cocoa growing areas, the target audiences were limited in their choice of what to watch, access to information and to the van itself. Besides, the films screened sought to

portray the Western world as an embodiment of 'civilization' and the African way of life as 'backward' with 'superstitious' beliefs that should be forbidden (Diawara, 1992).

Africans were thus denied access to the entire arena of Western cinematic images (Diawara, 1992). Fortunately, the situation changed when the Ghana Coast Film Unit (GCFU) was established in 1948. The unit was established purposely to make local educational films that emphasizes on matters that were vital to the Gold Coast.

The Mobile Cinema Foundation (MCF, 2011) of Congo employs films toured by the mobile cinema vans as a medium for education and engagement to influence change in societies. The main target of the MCF was to reach out to millions of community members. The MCF has so far sensitized millions of people across the globe on issues that are of utmost importance to their well-being.

It reaches out to their target audiences through the travelling mobile cinema vans and sends messages with the assistance of educational films and documentaries. On August 2011, in North Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo over 10,000 were reached out to through mobile cinema film screening on 'Fighting the Silence' in Mulo village. The MCF through the film addressed the stigmatization of women who have been disowned by their family members as a result of being raped.

The audience reaction after the screening was so amazing. People confessed how the program has changed their lives and understanding of violence against women. The screening correspondently triggered a debate by men, women, and the youth about ways to treat and assist victims of sexual violence after the programme.

Smyth (1988) likewise found out that the British authority had confidence in the power of the mobile cinema as a tool of persuasion in communicating with the grassroots. Films became an effective medium of reaching out to the populace.

During the second world war, information offices were opened in the colonies for the provision of information because the British authorities recognized the importance of disseminating information to the ordinary people. Thus, public messages about the world war were communicated to citizens with the help of the touring cinema and loudspeakers vans. The target audience of the information disseminated on the war was majority of Africans who were illiterate.

Goode (2018) explained in a study by UNESCO on how the use of the mobile cinema and radio vans has assisted in fundamental education. The study was conducted focusing mainly on the problems associated with mass communication. The author emphasized on how the Soviet Union 'sought' to 'cinefy' the USSR during the 1920s in the process of developing films as a tool of education and persuasion (Kepley 1994).

Goode argued that the placement of mobile cinema did not depict a political divide after the world war but rather encouraged for the usage of the mobile cinema van by government, cultural and political institutions. The study emphasized on the relevance of the mobile cinema shows around the world. It underlined the mobile cinema film as a world-wide technique of promoting rural literacy and education in more than half of the world's population who are illiterate. It outlined how the mobile cinema van has function effectively throughout the world especially at places without a supply of electricity.

The findings of the research also revealed that the mobile cinema van has the power to educate, encourage, stimulate and lead millions of the world's populations. It was also concluded that the mobile cinema van which attracted mass rural audience can assist enormously in educating countries with high population of illiterate citizens through educational film programs.

The study as well touched on how mobile cinema films have been used as an effective device to reach out to wider audiences. For instance, in villages in China, feature films projected with help of the mobile cinema vans were taken to villages in the rural areas to educate audience on how best to be good and loyal citizens to the government. In order to achieve the aims of the government, mobile

cinema vans were distributed and transported to all the villages in China. Projection teams were set up to decide the number of films to be shown and how the films will be communicated to the rural audience. The role of the projection team also included making sure that all towns and villages regardless of how remote will have access to news bulletin and feature films. Messages were also communicated with the village audiences through popular films, folk songs, pictures and posters.

Odile (2020) demonstrated in his research that the arrival of a mobile cinema van in a town or village was a special moment. This is because it triggered the entire population's participation including women, men, boys, girls, children, the youth, musicians and the uniqueness of the venues chosen for screening all made it a major event in local life.

Blaylock (2011), in a study compared two mobile technologies for development. The two mobile technologies Blaylock compared were the mobile phones and the mobile cinema van. The investigation revealed that successive governments have been operating the mobile cinema van even before the independence era. The mobile cinema van according to Blaylock has been used to effectively teach colonial Africans as early as the 1930s and 1940s.

According to Blaylock, the mobile cinema van was initially used by the British government to disseminate information through various war films for development purposes. The research demonstrated that governments collaborated with state agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for screening on the second world war to Ghanaians residing in isolated areas. After the war, the mobile cinema van continued to be an effective communication device for disseminating information about agriculture, health and voting to countries that had gained independence at that time.

In another study on the contemporary uses of the mobile cinema van, Blaylock (2017) again observed how the mobile cinema has contributed to the spread of the gospel in Ghana in a programme called the Challenge Enterprises of Ghana's mobile cinema van. The study highlighted

how the mobile cinema van has been utilized effectively in the sale of bibles and other Christian literature to people in towns and communities during the 1980s.

Similarly, Rice (2016) contributed to the studies on the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van in communication by looking at the central role played by the local commentator during the screening. For Rice, the local commentator was a vital link between the film and the audience. His roles involved introducing the film to be shown to the audiences and also giving talks in between the screening. He also interprets messages, documentaries and films into the local dialect so that audiences can properly understand the information or messages that are being delivered. He as well answers the questions from the audiences.

The study ascertains that audience responses throughout film shows can change the intentions of the government. The study further concluded that the influence of the mobile cinema films was sustained even after independence.

By the time Ghana gained independence from the British, she had about 57 mobile cinema vans in operation according to the findings of the research. In order to make cinema messages more effective, an attempt was made to train more indigenes as technicians and film makers (Blaylock, 2011).

Rice, likewise discovered that the mobile film shows were understood as political procedures, as a way of monitoring, addressing and regulating different groups of people. Rice consequently described the participatory scene in a village when the mobile cinema van arrives. According to Rice, as soon as residents receive news of the arrival of the mobile cinema van they quickly gather to participate in the film show.

The commentator before the commencement of the film show gives the chief and his elders a tour of the mobile cinema van and subsequently explains the purpose of the film show to them. By evening

time, all the equipment is set up for the film show to start. Such scenes according to the study were very common in African countries and other parts of the world.

The mobile cinema van shows were made solely for Africans to promote government initiatives. The audience were stimulated to practise or act on the messages delivered in the film afterwards. In summary, films with the assistance of the mobile cinema vans were used by government officials to reach out to citizens and to deliver the ideas and intentions of the government.

This study seeks to advance on Rice's findings and investigate how much and in what ways the mobile cinema van can play an essential role in reaching out to everyone in order to promote citizens' participation to enhance good governance. Specifically, the study will investigate how information about government policies, programs and activities can be effectively disseminated with the mobile cinema van to all and sundry especially the illiterate and digitally excluded population to make them well abreast with government issues.

The role of educational films in disseminating information will as well be analyzed. The manner in which targeted audiences respond or react to film shows and messages from the mobile cinema van will be investigated. The study will also pursue the role of the local commentator in interpreting policies, programs and activities of the government into the local languages of the targeted or intended audiences.

#### **2.4 Multiplicity and Community Engagement Theories**

A combination of the Multiplicity and Community engagement theories as well as the participation model of communication will be applied to this study.

The Multiplicity theory is the third and most recent theory of development. It progressed during the first, second and third world war period. The Multiplicity theory was first influenced by the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation in Sweden and the Green Political Movement in Germany.

The theory is defined as the “the systematic utilization of communication channels and techniques to increase people’s participation in development to inform, motivate, and train rural population mainly at the grassroots” (Waisbord, 2000) The Multiplicity theory is also defined as “need oriented, endogenous, self- reliant, ecologically sound and based on participatory democracy and structural transformations” (Servaes, 1999).

The theory emphasizes the importance of communication as a critical tool for citizens’ participation. It considers the needs and participation of all stakeholders as extremely crucial to development and thus gives room for the participation of all essential stakeholders in decision-making. The theory promotes citizens participation, awareness raising, knowledge acquisition, change in attitude and participation in decision-making through education and communication. Community participation is based on the idea that local people, as key stakeholders can have an impact on issues that affect them (Burns and Taylor, 2000).

The Multiplicity theory uses the participatory model of communication which incorporates the concepts in the framework of the multiplicity theory. Under the participatory model of communication, there is a reciprocal process that involves the marginalized groups who are trying to put their problems across to development agents. The model holds that information sharing is vital in participation and also conveying the precise attitude to development. This model consequently offers the local people or communities the chance to share information on what they want or wants to be done for them.

The participatory model identifies community access to information as a way of motivating citizens’ participation especially at the grassroots. Access to information means the ability to access what information you want whenever you want it (Dadzie and Kommey, 2017). Here, individuals and

groups are inspired to participate in developmental issues by speaking about their problems, contributing their ideas and taking initiatives (Melkote 1991).

The participatory model of communication employs traditional or indigenous media such as storytelling, songs, drama, street plays, community meetings, church meetings, markets, puppetry, face to face interaction, entertainment and edutainment as tools for raising awareness for action.

In the same way, the theory of community engagement which is also called citizen or public engagement entails the various ways or methods of mobilizing people to discuss matters of public importance (Nabatchi and Amsler, 2014). The objective of the theory is to ensure that people outside of government are included in as well as have influence over, decision-making for policies and services that is closely linked to concepts of empowerment (Holmes, 2011). The theory argues that community engagement offers the chances for a variety of unheard voices to be heard on problems that are of importance to people.

Furthermore, the community engagement theory is one of the influential theories of communication that encourages citizens to get the support, arrangement, and energy for public actions. Community engagement also gives ordinary citizens the capabilities and confidence to promote a more participatory system of democracy. Again, it offers the opportunity for adequate information to be provided to people for engagements with the government.

In conclusion, both Multiplicity and community engagement theories and similarly the participatory model of communication focuses on people's participation in governance processes by consciously making essential information accessible to them. One crucial duty of every government is to make information accessible to citizens and also disseminate key information to citizens on regular bases.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter analyzed the methods or techniques that were employed to collect the required data or information for the study. The methodology included the research design, source of data, the sampling population and the sampling size for the study. In other words, the data gathering procedures that led to the findings for the study. The reasons for choosing my methodology over the other methods for data collection has been explained.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The research design for the study was the qualitative research design. According to Myers (2008) one of the greatest strengths of the qualitative research approach is its richness and in-depth exploration and descriptions. For Flick (2002), ‘‘qualitative research is concerned with construction of reality’’. With a qualitative research design, a holistic impression of the study was obtained. It also gave me the opportunity to get a thorough understanding and interpretation of the findings of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

#### **3.3 Source of Data**

I conducted an unstructured face to face interview with the Director of the ISD, mobile cinema commentators as well as Municipal and District information officers to obtain information on the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van in disseminating information about government policies and programs. This group of people use the mobile cinema vans in disseminating information to the

general public on government programs, policies and initiatives at the various District, Municipal and Metropolitan. They were therefore in the best position to give relevant information on the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van as well as audience reaction after a screening program. Data was also collected from the residents of Chorkor after a street announcement or mobile cinema film screening.

### **3.4 Method of Data Collection**

Respondents were selected through non-probability sampling for interview. This method was appropriate and convenient because people who participated in mobile cinema screening normally show up and leave as soon as the screening is over. Collecting data at the screening was suitable because respondents could be accessed easily.

### **3.5 Advantages of Interviews**

There are several advantages of choosing interviews over other methods of data collection. Interviews are easy to administer because it does not required respondents to have the ability to read or handle complex and long questionnaires. Interviews also have extremely high response rates. Besides, complex questions can be asked because the interviewer is available to explain difficult questions to the understanding of the respondents. This is extremely valuable and unavailable in other forms of data collection such as questionnaires. Finally, unlike questionnaires, respondents for interviews can be easily identified for spontaneous answers.

### **3.6 Limitations of interviews**

Nonetheless, interviews have numerous limitations. It is time consuming and extremely expensive. There are consequently several biases associated with interviews. Interviews allow for less anonymity than the other methods of data collection. It is also reflective in that most respondents or people prefer to write about complex or sensitive issues than talk about it.

### **3.7 Population of Study**

The population of Chorkor, according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census was 344,627, with an average growth rate of 6.0% per annum. Chorkor is located in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. It is one of the densely populated communities of Accra. Chorkor was selected because it is one of the deprived areas in Accra with high illiteracy rate and digitally excluded residents (Quaye, 2018).

### **3.8 Sampling size**

On the whole, seventy (70) respondents were selected for the study. The respondents comprised of 5 mobile cinema operators, 1 Director of the ISD, 10 District/Municipal/ Metropolitan Information officers, 10 officials from AMA, and 44 residents of Chorkor.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarized the major points of the entire study, specifically from chapters one to three. The effectiveness of the mobile cinema van over the other channels of communication was discussed. The chapter also examined the methodology employed to collect data for the study, the relevance of the study to intellectual knowledge and recommendations for the future.

#### **4.2 Summary of Study**

This qualitative research studies sought to establish that the ISD mobile cinema van is still an effective communication tool in today's modern world despite the proliferation of radios, television, newspapers and the social media. The research also touched on the importance of the concept of communication in information sharing and exchange between governments and the masses. Data was gathered through an unstructured face to face interview from ISD officials who work with the mobile cinema van as well as some residents of Chorkor.

The study brought to light that communication plays an integral role in the development of communities, societies and the country as a whole. From the study, communication entails what governments wants to say to her citizens, how to say it and when to say it in order to achieve excellent results.

The research also revealed that there are several channels of communication in today's contemporary world. For instance, email, mobile phones, radios, televisions, newspapers, and social media. Governments are therefore faced with the huge challenge of choosing a channel of communication that is effective enough to meet the needs of both literate and illiterate citizens (Mahmud, 2017). The research ascertained that governments cannot dialogue with her citizens

without an effective channel of communication (Aji, 2017). An effective channel of communication such as the ISD mobile cinema van gives every citizen a common platform and voice to be heard (Rice, 2016).

Even though radios, newspapers, televisions, and the social media are common medium of communication and have played a major role in shaping perception and feelings of target audiences towards government policies, programs and initiatives (Gerbner et al, 1980) most of them especially the private ones are owned, controlled and managed by people who are affiliated to political parties. Such people influence to a large extent the kind of information that should be given to the populace. This has limited information sharing on most newspapers, radio and television stations to only political information and has raised concerns in recent times as to whether true independent media exists in Ghana (Osei - Appiah, 2020).

The consequences of allowing people who are affiliated to political parties to disseminate information on government issues include biased reporting, destabilizing citizens' trust in the media as well as discouraging people to confidently participate in government business. Moreover, high rates of illiteracy in Ghana also deters people from reading to get more insight about government policies, programs or initiatives (Afrobarometer report, Daily Graphic, 2017).

In Ghana, although some media houses communicate in Ghanaian languages, majority of newspapers publishers, radio and television stations communicate only in the English language making it difficult for majority of the populace who are illiterate to comprehend many national issues that are discussed. As a result, a huge communication gap exists between the government and ordinary citizens. The ISD mobile cinema van bridges this communication gap by consciously and regularly disseminating government information with the mobile cinema vans in different Ghanaian languages to all citizens in order to make them well informed on government business (Degraff, 2016).

### **4.3 Effectiveness of the ISD Mobile Cinema Van**

Over decades, the ISD mobile cinema van has proven to be an effective communication tool in reaching out to ordinary citizens who reside at both urban and remotest part of the country where radio, newspapers, television and the social media cannot reach (Blaylock, 2017).

According to findings from the numerous authors who have contributed to the effectiveness of the ISD mobile cinema van there's still a place for the mobile cinema vans in disseminating government information that are crucial, genuine and devoid of any political leanings for the development of the lives of the citizenry and subsequently motivate citizens' participation in governance. This is so because majority of Ghanaians are digitally excluded. In other words, they are not privileged enough to have access to social media, newspapers, television or even radio to rely on for salient information from the government (UNESCO, 2018).

The mobile cinema van has been used to engage local leaders and millions of people within a short pace of time in policy formulation and enactment since the colonial era. It has also assisted to raise awareness as well as sample opinions of citizens on government policies, programs and directives on major national campaigns such as the Value Added Tax, redenomination of the cedis, peaceful elections campaigns and currently the novel Covid- 19 pandemic ([www.isd.gov.gh](http://www.isd.gov.gh) )

In addition, the trained mobile cinema commentators of the ISD have a unique way of communicating messages to citizens in the various local dialects such as Twi, Fanti, Ga, Ewe, Dagbani, Nzema, among others. This ensures an in depth understanding of government policies and programs by the ordinary citizen before implementation. Citizens have the opportunity to ask the mobile cinema commentators as many questions as they can about government policies and programs (Adenle, 2017).

In a nutshell, the mobile cinema van remains a resourceful communication platform for engaging the citizens on daily bases irrespective of the proliferation of radios, television and the internet. As

Lodenyo (2012) puts it “the mobile cinema van is meant to empower citizens in the rural communities with the necessary information that will change their lives and improve their socio - economic status. It also has the tendency to integrate government programs and policies that triggers and inspire citizens to take the necessary actions that inspires positive action”.

#### **4.4 Relevance of the study**

There are several academic research works on medium of communication such as the radio, television, newspapers and the social media. On the contrary, much academic research work on the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van is unavailable. This research work will therefore add to intellectual knowledge and confidently set the pace for other communication researchers to carry out more researches on the effectiveness of the mobile cinema van.

Although the study has revealed the significant role played by ISD in disseminating information to citizens on government issues that affect them prior to the second world till date, the department in recent times is faced with so challenges. Most of the mobile cinema vans have broken down in the various districts, municipal and metropolitans Assemblies across the country.

The department can only boast of few mobile cinema commentators. In some Assemblies, information officers do not even have offices to work in. The department seems to have lost its relevance.

One important advantage with the dissemination of information through the ISD van is that, they are targeted at specific individuals who may be present at a particular point in time. Examples are market women and other sellers who may be present at a particular area for dissemination of certain information.

Again, the ISD van can move to other places and come to repeat the information already given. This helps in the reinforcement of the targeted groups.

This study is therefore important in that it seeks to bring to bare the current situation of the ISD and establish the fact that the department has not outlived its usefulness but can tremendously perform its core mandate of public education on government issues if it is supported and provided with all the necessary logistics needed.

#### **4.5 Recommendations**

After critically studying the significant role played by the ISD mobile cinema van, I will humbly recommend that various governments will henceforth realise the crucial role played by the ISD mobile cinema van in disseminating information on government business to the citizenry and retool the Department by fixing all broken-down mobile cinema vans as well as purchasing extra mobile cinema vans that are fully equipped with information dissemination gadgets such as projectors, microphones, horn speakers, public address systems and generators for all Districts, Municipal and Metropolitan information offices countrywide. Funds for the maintenance of the mobile cinema vans should also be provided for regular maintenance of the vans.

Currently, there are only few mobile cinema commentators in the ISD nationwide. The mobile cinema commentators are officers in the ISD who well trained to translate government information from the English language into the various local dialects. I recommend that more of such people should be employed and trained to disseminate information to the people of Ghana. In addition, more people should be encouraged to undertake academic research or study the effectiveness of the mobile cinema in spreading government information to enhance citizens' participation and good governance.

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