1ST SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON

COMMUNICATION FOR BASIC SERVICES.

TRAINING THE TRAINERS OF EXTENSION WORKERS

THOUGHTS ON MODELS OF COMMUNICATION.

### BY KABWE KASOMA

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

TOWNSMAN:	Do you read newspapers here?
FARMER:	No. We do not get them. etc.
TOWNSMAN:	Oh, you are missing a lot of information about the correct ploughing, good crop-rotation and use of fertiliser. You must read them everyday.
FARMER:	Then I am going to town to buy newspapers to last me a year.

<div align="right">(unkbown author).</div>

This short dialogue sounds funny. It will sound even more funny when I tell you I took it from a University of Zambia lavatory wall. The author, of course remains anonymous for obvious reasons. But the MESSAGE is loud and clear. What is more, this message is complex, i.e. several aspects of the PROCESS of communication are possible depending upon how you interpret the total communication environment created by the townsman and the farmer.

Firstly, and most importantly is the idea that rural farmers do not have access to newspapers. Newspapers, as we all know are an important source of information. The rural farmer, deprived of this information will lag behind in his farming techniques. Secondly, two ironic levels of intelligence are revealed by this INTERACTION between a rural farmer and a townsman. We see the farmer's field of experience predicted in this theory.

For example, let us look at the Shannon/Weaver model.

Fig. 1. The Shannon and Weaver Model


Fig. 1. The Shannon and Weaver Model
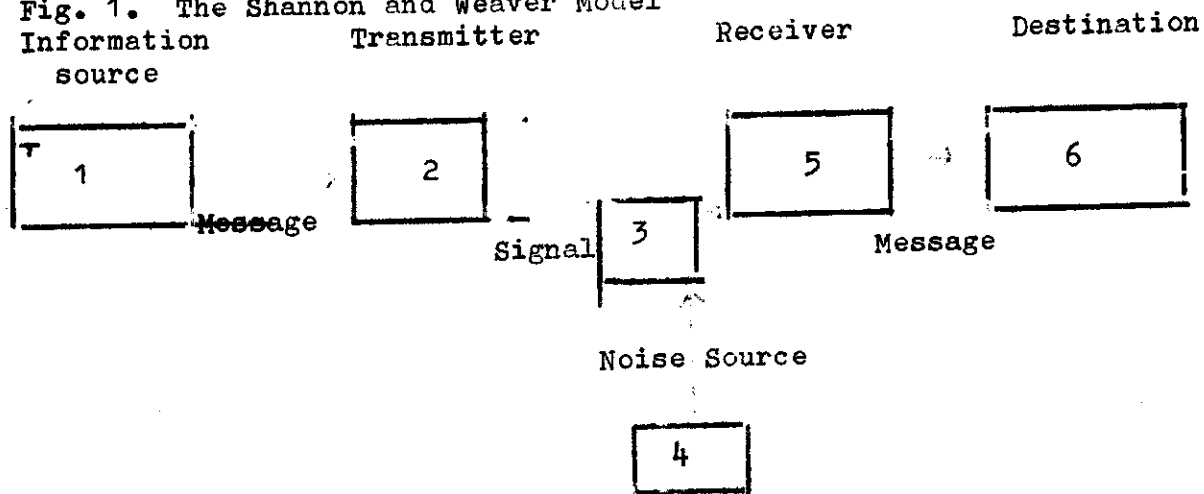
I have numbered the boxes 1 to 6 in the model for explanation purposes. Box 1 is the source of information. The message is formed here. Box 2 transmits this message and at 3, this message is translated into a signal or set of signals that are received in turn transformed into noises at 4. At 5 the message is received which is finally passed on to the listener at box 6. This is very well if you are thinking of the radio announcer on the mike at one end of the line.

In the real life situation, the line along which the message passes is not so straight and clear. It has many hills and valleys which affect the quality of the message by the time it reaches the listener. The quality of the message is determined by the amount of noise at 4. The more the noise, the better the quality. This must explain the poor reception village radio receivers have.

THE OSGOOD MODEL

Osgood has advanced a communication model that includes feedback. And for our purposes in this workshop, feedback is a very important element since we are emphasising persuasive and participatory rather than directive communication. Diagramatically, the Osgood model is as follows:-

3/....
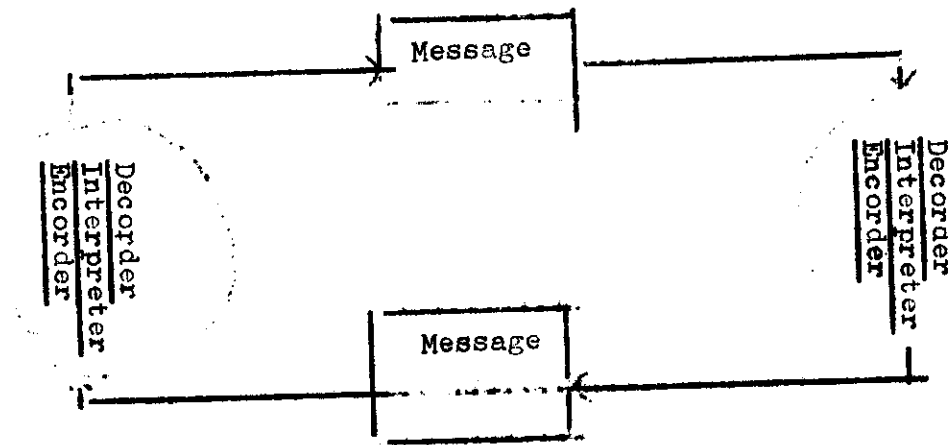
You will note that in this model the return message is the feed-back. Osgood uses the idea of encorder and decorder to describe a process obtained when information is encorded in the internal states of the sender into signs that may be put out for the receiver to respond to. He calls this type A-act. And type B act may include the decording of information from those signs so that it can be absorbed into the receivers internal states. The Osgood model in essence is similar to the Shannon-Weaver model. Osgood says:-

> "In the most general sense, we have <u>communication</u> whenever one system, a source, influences <u>another</u>, the destination by manipulation of alternative signals which can be transmitted over the channel connecting them."[1]

It is important here to note that no thoughts are transferred from the source to the receiver. The source drawing upon his internal resources encodes information that becomes separate from him and the receiver must decode the signals to get the message. Both Shannon - Weaver and Osgood rely on the working of electronic system to explain their models.

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[1] SCHRAMM; Wilbur. <u>Men, Messages and Media, a look at human Communication.</u> (Harper & Row, Publishers. N.Y. 1973).

THE WESTLEY - MCLEAN MODEL

Westly and Mclean borrow inturn from the Lewis theory of the gatekeeper and Newcomb's A - B - X model. In this model, A communicates to B concerning subject X^2. The Westly - Mclean model includes the following concepts:-

(a) Advocacy Roles: This happens when a personality or social system (radio) "engages in selecting and transmitting messages purposively."[3]

(b) Behavioral System Roles: Which takes place when a personality or social system engages in communication to change the social environment in order to satisfy its basic needs.

(c) Channel Roles: Here we think of communications like extension workers, teachers or the mass media as fulfilling the role of gatekeepers. They are the channels through which messages pass to reach the destination audience. They act as agents of the receivers in selecting and transmitting messages. The Westly - Mclean model also uses the concept of encoding and feedback. This is an important and useful model for us trainers of communicators and extension workers. For unless communication is two-way and persuasive the change in attitudes we seek to create among the masses will not be forthcoming. Westly and Mclean diagramme their model as follows:-


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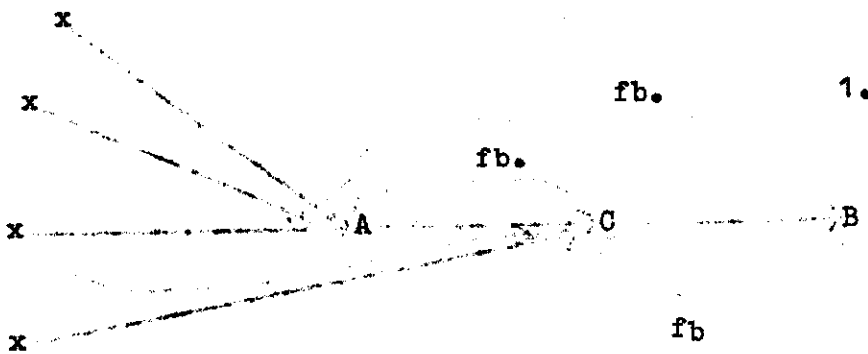
[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[1] SCHRAMM, Wilber. Men, Messages and Media a look at human Communication(Harper & Row publishers. N.Y. 1973).

The X's are the messages in the environment, and the fb stands for feedback. A denotes the source of the message and B the receiver. C denotes the gatekeeper or the channel through which the message x is transmitted to B. It can be noticed in this model that there is feedback between B abd A, as well as between B and C and C and A.

THE BERLO MODEL

Diagramatically, the Berlo model looks as follows:-

Feedback
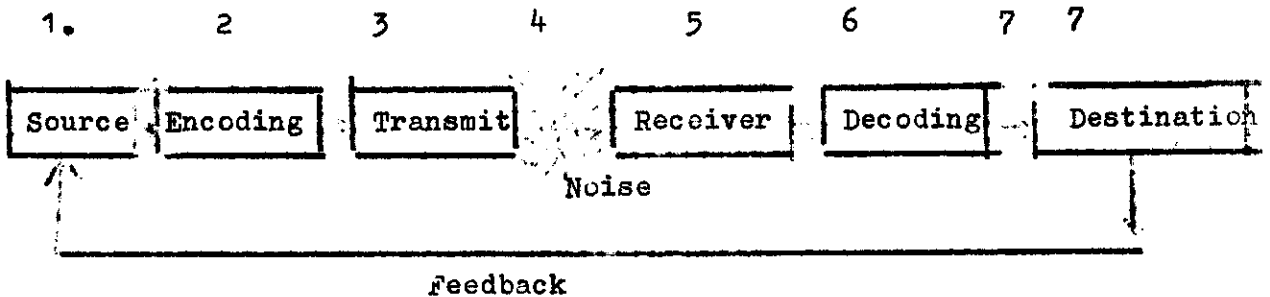
I have numbered the diagramme for explanation purposes again. At 1 the message signals are formulated. These signals are translated into meaningful message at 2 - vix, encoded, and at 3 the message is transmitted. This message has to pass through an electronic medium in which noise is produced and this noise mixes up with the message which is received at 5. You could regard box 5 as the radio receiver with all the transmission noises. At 6 the message is decoded and made ready for the listener or destination. The line connecting 7 and 1 is feedback from destination to source. Again this model is useful for development communicators as it contains the important element of feedback.

THE LASSEL MODEL

The Lassel model asks the question "who says what to whom, how and with what effect?". Lassel's model is based on sociological, political as well as psychological factors. If a chief speaks, his words will carry weight. The message of the chief's words will also determine how much attention the people will attach to his words.

The social-political circumstances of the audience also determines whether the message will be taken seriously or rejected. For us therefore, the relationship between the message sender and the audience is very important. The sender must perforce understand the social, cultural environment of the audience. In other words he must be in empathy and not merely in sympathy with his audience. This will in turn determine the effect of his message upon the audience.

A CAUTION ON THE MODELS

Trainers of extension workers in development communications must not take the above models literally, as the models have many weaknesses which the trainer needs to know about. We will have no time in enumerating the weaknesses of all the models cited in this short paper. Moreover the models discussed are not exhaustive. But we can look at one model - the Shannon/Weaver to illustrate the point. As I have said before, in real life situation, the mathematical formula suggested by Shannon and Weaver does not correctly predict the human element. Again, the line along which the message may pass has many hills and valleys which may affect the quality of the message when it reaches the receiver. The noise at box 4 will also affect the quality of the message. This is infact why villages in mountain valleys have poor receptions.

This concept can further be demonstrated in my play "Distortion". Buntungwa Compound is an imaginary shanty township within the City boundaries of Lusaka. It has no social amenities such as schools, clinics, and community centres. The roads are poor or non-existent. The city council has plans to upgrade the township so that infrastructures like tared roads, and the social amenities like schools and dispensaries are brought to the area:

The mayor of Lusaka pompously drives into Buntungwa Township where he expects a meeting had been arranged for him to address the residents on the city's development plans. He is introduced to a local UNIP Chairman who professes ignorance of the planned meeting. This local party official is hard of hearing. And when the mayor pompously announces there is going to be CHANGE in Buntungwa township,

the Chairman hears the word NJANJI. Now Njanji in one of the Zambian local language meaning the railway-line.

The mayor tells the party Chairman to address meetings where he should tell the Buntungwa residents about the city's plans. The mayor leaves. The party Chairman is shocked and irrate. He calls a meeting of the residents and angrily announces what the mayor had told him.

THEY ARE GOING TO BRING NJANJI HERE THESE CRUEL CITY FATHERS. He roars in anger. The residents of Buntungwa township vow never to co-operate with the city council in their evil plans.

In the meantime, the council is already spending overheads in survey plans. Acity Engineer's survey team that arrives to lay pegs along which roads will pass is threatened with violence by the hostile Buntungwa residents who even uproot the pegs and a sign post reading:

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CITY OF LUSAKA
BUNTUNGWA UP-GRADING PROJECT
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The city fathers are buffled at the strange behaviour of the residents of Buntungwa who have always complained of lack of modern social amenities in the area. And now that ehe city has decided to up-grade the township, the residents are refusing to co-operate. An investigation is carried out which discovers that the city council had overlooked using the correct channels of communicating to the people their well intentioned plans. Eventually, the real intentions of the council are explained to the Buntungwa residents by a Community Development Officer and finally the residents co-operate and the project is a success.

Now, where are we in the Shannon-Weaver model with this story? Obviously this story cannot neatly fit into the telecommunication formula described in fig 1. Certain parts of the story may fit into the jig saw, oth rs may not. His worship the Mayor is somewhere at box 1 and is the source of the information bearing the message "CHANGE"

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And where do we place the partially deaf chairman of the party?
At 2, 3 or 4? What about the chairman's deafness? Remember, this
condition has adversely affected the quality of the mayor's
message. And this is an understatement. The truth is, it has
"DISTORTED" the message. And should we say the residents are at 5,
or 6? Or is it the chairman who is at 5 and the residents at 6?
One thing we are sure of is that the residents are the final
destination of the message "NJANJI".

We can see that the model fails to describe what happens in
between the source of information (1) and the final destination of
this information (6). The mayor's pompousity, his crude approach
to communication, the local party chairman's deafness. All these
constitute the important HUMAN ELEMENT that a communicator can
ill-afford to overlook. A better model had to be fo und to explain
effective communication. Even then, the model can only be better
and not best, for science knows no last word.

COMMUNICATION AS A PROCESS

Communication is a process. A process has no definition in
time and space. In other words it is incapable of starting and
stopping. Like God, it was, it is and it will be. It is therefore
not simple but very complex.

> "It is the concept of process that prevents
> our supplying easy formulars for communication
> and that permits us instead to promise an approach
> that is realistic and based firmly on current
> knowledge in a range of scientific fields."[1]

The case of our mayor and the local party chairman amply demon-
strates that the mayor should first have researched into the social,
cultural and economic circumstances of the people of Buntungwa in

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[1] BALL John (Edit) Process: The conceptual Basis for Communication
Study. In Research, Principle, and Practices in
Visual Communication

(American Association of Land-Grant College and State
Universities. Washington 1960) Ch. 1.

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order for him or the council's communication machinery to effectively reach the target audience of Buntungwa. John Ball amplifies this thought when he says:

> "Communication itself is a process, a complex of events operating in several dimensions of space and time, and always involving the attitudes, the knowledge, the communication skills of more than one person and the social and cultural context in which he is located."[2]

THE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

If radio, television and the newspaper have been ineffective as communication media for development it is because they have not fully been used to effect a two-way traffic communication. Our mayor in the play "DISTORTION" did not think he needed to hear from the residents of Buntungwa on how the township can be up-graded. He did not even think there were any leaders of opinion in Buntungwa whose support was necessary before any development programme succeeded. He did not even wait to hear what the local chairman of UNIP in Buntungwa township had to say about the city council's up-grading project.

> "...........not only do people like to receive communication from others, they also like to communicate what they think and feel to others. Thus the concept of communication were added such motions as 'expression, relationship and participation."[1]

Berdenave has described in his communication and rural development, how radio and television can be effectively used as a two-way communication media in a number of case studies in South America, India, Africa and the Middle East. In each of these case studies, communicators use the strategy of study and listening radio or television groups. These study groups provide a FEEDBACK on such campaigns as literacy, health, education and agricultural extension work.

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*Ibid

[1] BERDENAVE Diaz Juan E. Communication and Rural Development (UNESCO Paris. 1977)

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THE INTERACTION MODEL

George Gerbner defined communication as:-

> " a theoretical frame work which can generate
> definitions, structure discussion, and lead to
> judgement."[1]

In agreement with John Ball's definition, Gerbner also states
that:- happenings, a string of events which are inter-connected so
that their significance can only be seen when you can grasp the whole
pattern of those happenings. Gerbner says this in relation to an im-
portant element of communication namely STATEMENT. In any communica-
tion activity, the statement, he says, forms an important part of the
message. In fact, the statement is the message. But is this always
true? Does Gerbner insist that a statement can obly be composed of
words spoken or written? It would seem so, and I would personally
find quarrel with this traditional view of looking at communication.
But I will raise the quarrel later.

Gerbner is supported in a way, by Marshal MacLuhan who says:

> "The instance of the electric light may prove
> illuminating in this connection. The electric
> light is pure information. It is a medium
> without a message as it were, unless it is used
> to spell out some verbal and or name."[1]

He further states that "the electric light, escapes attention as a
communication.medium just because it has no content."[2] He says that
the content of any medium is always another medium. This means that
the content of speech is thought, and the content of writing is speech.
Like wise "the content of the written word is print."[3]

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[1] GERBNER George. Perception and Communication. In Research,
Principles and Practices in Visual Communication.
(American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and
State Universities. Washington D.C. 1976) Ch. 2.

[1] McLuhan Marshal. The Medium is the Message. In understanding Media:
The Extensions of Man. (McGraw - Hill Book
Company. N.Y. 1964).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

To a certain extent I agree with both Gerbner and McLuhan especially
in the view that an electric light does not communicate any message
until it spells out the advertisement:

> Colgate Tooth Paste has MFP Fluoride
> which protects your teeth.

But when McLuhan quotes Shakespeare in a bid ot convice me that content
can only exist when it is spoken or written, I cannot help turning
the very quotation upside down to counter-convince him that content
cannot always be defined in terms of spoken or written media.
Listen to Shakespeare:

> "But soft!
> What light through yonder window break?
> It speaks, and yet says nothing."[1]

I am sure the light that suddenly appeared in the window spoke some
message for Romeo. He may not have seen Juliet, but he knew that
the appearence of that light meant the presence of someone. And in
the lover's mind's eye. Romeo could even see Juliet.

MIME THEATRE

I would liken Shakespeare's light in the window to what happens in
Mime Theatre. There is not a single statement uttered in terms of
spoken words,. And yet, in my view, the mime action is pregnant
with silent statements made audible in the audience's mind's ear
through hand gestures, facial expressions and the general body
movements. I dare say therefore that mime can creatively be trans-
cribed into spoken statements. It is true that mime relies upon the
intelligence of the audience as they are the ones to create statements
about the various mime action and movements. And it does not take so

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[1] McLuhan Marshal. The Medium is the Message In Understanding
Media: The Extension of Man.(McGraw-Hill Book
Company. New York 1964)

Kasoma Kabwe. (Edit). Theatre and Primary Health Care Workshop
(Unpublished Draft Report of the I,T.I.
Zambia Associate Centre International
Workshop on Primary Health Care.
Lusaka 1981).

much intellectual exercise to be able to construct messages from silent statements. All you do is to study the sullen face of the doctor from an operation theatre, and you know you have a funeral at hand.

SO, WHEN DOES COMMUNICATION TAKE PLACE?

Although we have felt the question, WHAT IS COMMUNICATION? explicitely unanswered up to now, we have said enough to give us material around which we could start building an answer, if there is one. We should at the same time remember that whatever answer we shall give shall not be final. It can only serve for the present purposes. Remember, I have already stated that science knows no last word.

Paulo Freire says that effective communication"must be organically integrated with such processes as conscientization, organization, politization and technification."[1]

The key words here are, organic, concientization, organization, politization and technification. Organic emphasizes communication as a process. This means that the communicator must be integrated with the community itself if he is successful to conscientize the target community. But simply to arouse a community to its plight could lead to frustrations if that community is not assisted to find ways of dealing with the problems of the felt needs.

This is where organisation for change comes in. There should be a social structure within a community that is capable of synchronising missing the innovations to make their diffussions possible. Moreover, such social structures must not only be able to make decisions, but command resources to make those decisions practicable.

Another definition of communication for development is that advanced by J. Allan Reegle and Charles P. Loomis (1957) when they said:-

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[1] BALL John. Process: The conceptual Basis for Communication. Research Principles and Practices in Visual Communication (East Lausing. Michigan, National Project in Agricultural Communications, 1960)

"Communication is the process by which information,
decisions and directives pass through a social
system and the ways in which knowledge, opinions
and attitudes are formed or modified."[1]

This definition emphasises the social systems and the diffusion of
innovation approaches. It has however been argued th.t this model
is more suited to developed countries where the pre-occupation is
the search for social equality say between the middle class blacks
and whites in the United States of America. Never-the-less, the
concept of difussion of innovations, Beegle and Loomis say, has
important applications, namely the personal approach to communi-
cations rather than the impersonal approach.

Another important application is that of approaching a community
through its opinion leaders. Such leaders are usually the inform-
ation clearing houses for any community. And since these leaders
make good and effective reference points[1] for the rest of the community
diffusion of innovations can be expected to be rapid. Rogers and
Shoemaker (1971) describe a case study (among others) where the
public health authorities in Peru try to introduce innovations to
villagers to improve their health."[2] Nellida a district nurse is
sent to a village called Los Molinos. She is to talk to the villagers
about the bad and contaminated water that they are used to drinking.
This in turn causes typhoid and other diseases. If the villagers
of Los Milinos could learn to boil water, their health would improve,
and nurse Nellida is charged to amplice this task.

However, Nellida is not accepted by the majority of the village house
wives, as she is an outsider. And among the reasons that Rogers and
Shoemaker advance for the failure of the campaign is the fact that
Nellida fails to convince the opinion leaders of Los Molinos. It is
doubtful if Nellida had even made any attempt to identify such leaders.

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[1] BEEGLE Allan, J. and LOOMIS, Charles. P.
         Rural Sociology. The Strategy of Change (Englewood
         Cliffs N.J. Prentice-Hall, 1957)

[1] ROGERS, Everett, M. and SHOEMAKER Floyd, F.
         Communications of Innovations. Across Cultural
         Approach. (The Free Press. Macmillan Publishing
         Company. New York 1971)

[*] Ibid.

Under the sub-title,

"Understanding Why Water-Boiling Failed;"
Rogers and Shoemaker correctly point out that Nellida concentrated
upon delivering the "Boil the water message," and completely ignored
the social-cultural determinants of behaviour.

> "An important factor affecting the adoption
> rate of any innovation is its compatibility
> with the cultural beliefs of the social system."[1]

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KABWE KASOMA
Institute of Adult Studies
University of Nairobi.

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Notes

Paper presented at the Swaziland workshop by Kabwe Kasoma, Project Coordinator, Playwright, Dean of Students, Univ of Zambia in Lusaka. The paper discusses various models of communication in contemporary literature, but cautions trainers and extension workers that they must not take these models literally, and takes one example to demonstrate that " ... the mathematical formula suggested ... does not correctly predict the human element ..." Cautions communicators that radio reception may be intermittent in hilly regions. Also discusses two-way communications; the interaction model; mime theatre; when does communication takes place?

The author makes reference to his play "Distortion" (see CF-RAI-USAA-PD-GEN-2007-000204) enacted at the UNICEF/PSC Workshop on Communication for Social Development, held at the University of Zambia, Lusaka, 29 April to 10 May 1974

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