ESSENCE OF AND A MODEL FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNIATION

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Abstract

A transformative approach to Integrated Development Communication framework is driving the development of and innovation in student learning with promises to significantly impact local communities. A case study concerning a themed – MBA Programme (Development Management) of a Multi-faculty State Private University in India is used to illustrate how self-learning, action-learning and technology-enabled learning can be dynamically combined for sustainable community development. Content and topic are effectively negotiated with communities, facilitating the creation of a supportive learning and development ambience, and providing opportunities to apply new skills. The three philosophies of learning influence the program design and practice. Integrated Development Communication is introduced as an integrative construct that facilitates critical thinking, community interaction, problem solving and cross-domain learning. Learning is driven by the need to solve a problem. The paper aims to present the vision and evidences of responsible involvement in real problems to promote positive attitudes and behaviours. The paper also reflects on the essence and impact of theory of

learning on integrated development communication model where Learning = Programmed Knowledge of the Past + Questioning Insight + Implementation.

Keywords

Development, Communication, Learning, Integrated, Community

1. Introduction

'The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms'- Socrates

Development communication is viewed as "the process by which messages are transferred from a source to a receiver … [Communication] causes the receivers to change an existing behaviour (Rogers, 1995). Development communication is also viewed as a social activity with a goal 'to improve the living conditions of society' (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). Integrated Development Communication framework in the MBA (Development Management) program of a Multi-faculty State University in India is purposive and value-laden. The Centurion University of Technology and Management with its long years of experience in rural enterprise development and management, and strong linkage with the government, corporate and non-government organizations provides a great opportunity for students to build their career in Development Management. The two year program with an optimal mix of experiential and action learning provides a unique opportunity for young professionals to achieve their career aspirations and lead a meaningful life while creating a just society (www.cutm.ac.in). It envisions a holistic and integrative education process. In the development context, a tacit value is tagged to what one communicates about, which shall motivate the learners and communities for change. The program initiative aligns with "The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development", which aims to promote a more sustainable world for integration of core values and practices of sustainable development into education and learning, as an opportunity for reviving and promoting the vision of and transition to sustainable development (Action Report on Sustainable Development, 2015) through integrated development communication, development motivation, development awareness and training. The paper relates to the 'contextual settings of an educational model, to the institutional mission and objectives, as well

as to the specific standards within a given system, institution, programme, or discipline' (Vlasceanu, et al., 2007).

1.1 Essence of Development Communication

Development communication is empowerment of marginalised individuals, groups, and organisations where empowerment is more than just information dissemination. It requires giving grass-roots marginalised individuals and groups the capacity to organise and undertake social actions for their own development (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). The paper intends to help learners and educators to understand the essence of communication for development and empowerment of individuals and associated communities. An integrated approach is needed for development communication to be effective and meaningful. The essence of innovative approach in the themed MBA program is the integration of the interpersonal communication, traditional and modern media for development communication for different courses such as Development Project Management, Planning Tools and Techniques, Rural and Community Group Behaviour and Integrated Development Communication.

Integrated Development Communication (IDC), as one of the learners of the program views, represents that part of communication that incorporates people's skills being directed towards the common goal of developing themselves and the community in which they live. Most often the skills remain hidden or under nourished. So, the communication that is made to bring out the potential within people, and direct it to achieve the development goal is integrated development communication. It incorporates not just the people but uses the technology and the societal structure to bring about developmental concepts from within the community.

The paper presents a framework for integrated development communication, an analysis of a new paradigm to reorient education and learning, an alternative pedagogy to traditional classroom learning. The new paradigm is self-directed, sustainable, provides enabling role, and most urgently needed in the post-development era. Here development communication is viewed as a dialogic process through which learners and 'community members learn self-management' (Jacobson and Servaes, 1999), and acquire attitude, skills and knowledge that empower them to contribute to development.

1.2 Impact Logic

For the purposes of this theme-based program, learning and development activities were designed to deliver specific skills to meet the program objectives.
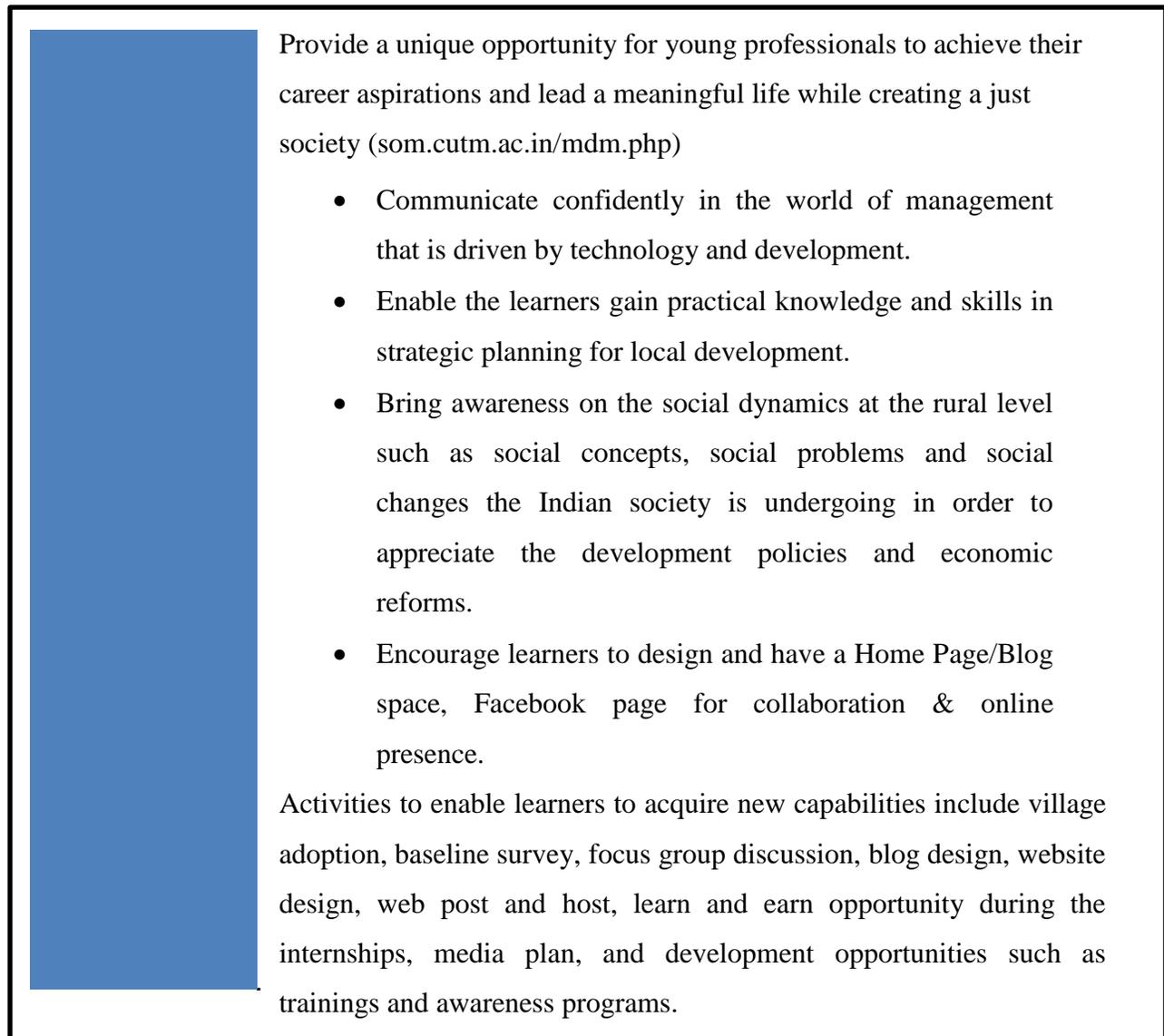
Provide a unique opportunity for young professionals to achieve their career aspirations and lead a meaningful life while creating a just society (som.cutm.ac.in/mdm.php)

- Communicate confidently in the world of management that is driven by technology and development.
- Enable the learners gain practical knowledge and skills in strategic planning for local development.
- Bring awareness on the social dynamics at the rural level such as social concepts, social problems and social changes the Indian society is undergoing in order to appreciate the development policies and economic reforms.
- Encourage learners to design and have a Home Page/Blog space, Facebook page for collaboration & online presence.

Activities to enable learners to acquire new capabilities include village adoption, baseline survey, focus group discussion, blog design, website design, web post and host, learn and earn opportunity during the internships, media plan, and development opportunities such as trainings and awareness programs.

Figure1: *Impact Logic*

2. Learning Competencies of the 21st Century

The model for integrated development communication is based on the four learning competencies of the 21st century:
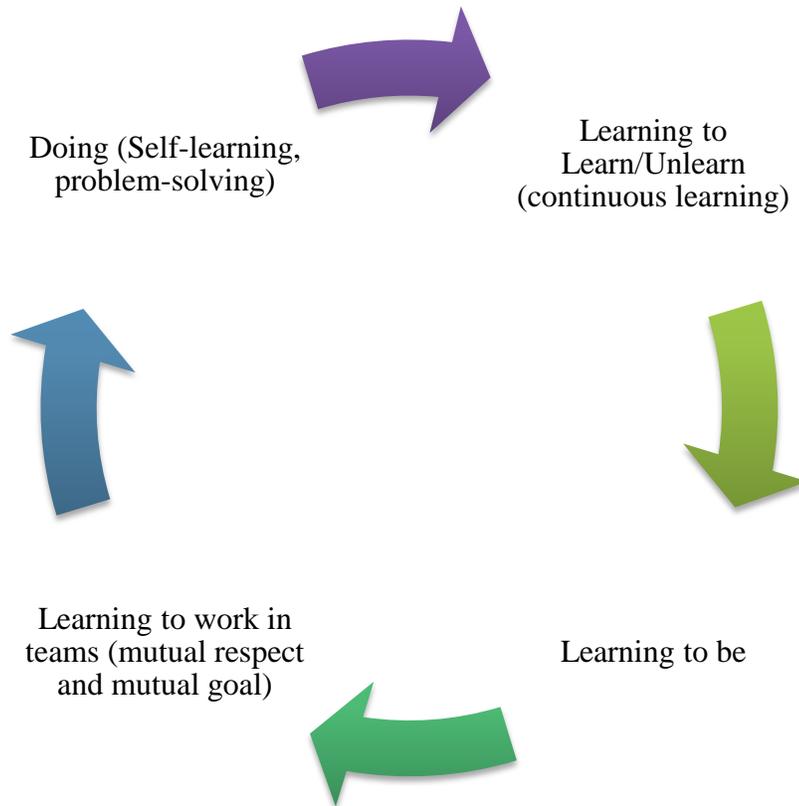

Figure 2: *Learning Competencies of 21st Century (www.ibe.unesco.org/cops/Competencies/Pillars Learning Zhou.pdf)*

Learners were resistant to doing new things at the beginning: an extremely discomforting notion for all of us. 'The traditional classroom lectures work fine with us', said one of the learners. Development communication restructured the learners' mental framework in deciphering specific methods, events, objective of learning, and to relate it to the outer world. Learning by doing, when one is talking about processes, means inventing for oneself strategies that work within the processes that one is involved in (Schank, 1982). Facilitators and mentors play a critical role in helping learners understand the learning process that is usually a prerequisite for social change and sustainability progress. Thus, in this program education as viewed by John Dewey is not an affair of telling and being told (Schank, 1982), but an active

constructive process. The paper highlights what students learn when they learn by doing. The following questions are posed for reflection:

- Have they acquired new knowledge and skills needed to face the challenges of the world?
- Can the learners make a development plan/media plan?
- Do they have the confidence to work on projects?
- Do they have the ability to solve problems and take decisions?
- Can they be the agents of change?

2.1 Learning to Learn and Unlearn

The central theme of this curriculum is 'learning to learn' and 'unlearn'. Learning to learn adopts self-regulation approaches. As per Transforming Higher Education Report (1995), in the information age, society and individual learners have different needs, both in terms of what people need to learn and how they can and should learn (Fink, 2003). The paper emphases on 'how to learn' through the three learning philosophies – self learning, action learning and technology-enabled learning. The program helps the learners with learning methods and environments to develop their own intellectual tools, thinking abilities and learning strategies. The model of development management, says one of the learners, 'truly represents the concept of problem solving. But how does one define learning goals. Is it the goal of learning different terms, theories, models and methods from books to know what to think to prepare business plans and micro plans or is it the goal to learn about oneself to discover how to think. Well, I guess it involves both'. The emphasis is on educating students to be "intentional learners" who are purposeful and self-directed, empowered through intellectual and practical skills, informed by knowledge and ways of knowing, and responsible for personal actions and civic values (AACU, 2002). The curriculum is designed around a style where the learner acquires – from a learning acquisition-based society to a society where he/she learns to unlearn obsolete knowledge and deal with abundance. This goes hand in hand with change.

The mentors get the learners to unlearn what they had learnt to be able to grasp the latest initiative and embrace a challenging situation. In essence, this unlearning happens with thinking and generation of new idea to replace the old. In fact, thinking about one's thinking creates the foundation for 'learning to learn' (Bateson, 1972).

2.2 Learning to Be

Learning to be in the program implies a vision, where knowledge is beyond the boundaries. The program combines effective pedagogical strategies and curriculum to instil moral values. The essence of learning to be is ethical. The learners are ethically responsible for their own learning. It demands one to develop to the fullest. Learning to be "is a dialectical process, which starts with knowing oneself and then opens out to relationships with others. In that sense education is above all an inner journey …it is thus a very individualised process and at the same time a process of constructing social interaction" (Delors, 1996). The model of development communication shown in Figure 3 endeavours to integrate strategically rural community and group behaviour, communication, use of technology, use of local resources, development problems identified by the people themselves and community participation as a mediating force in development.
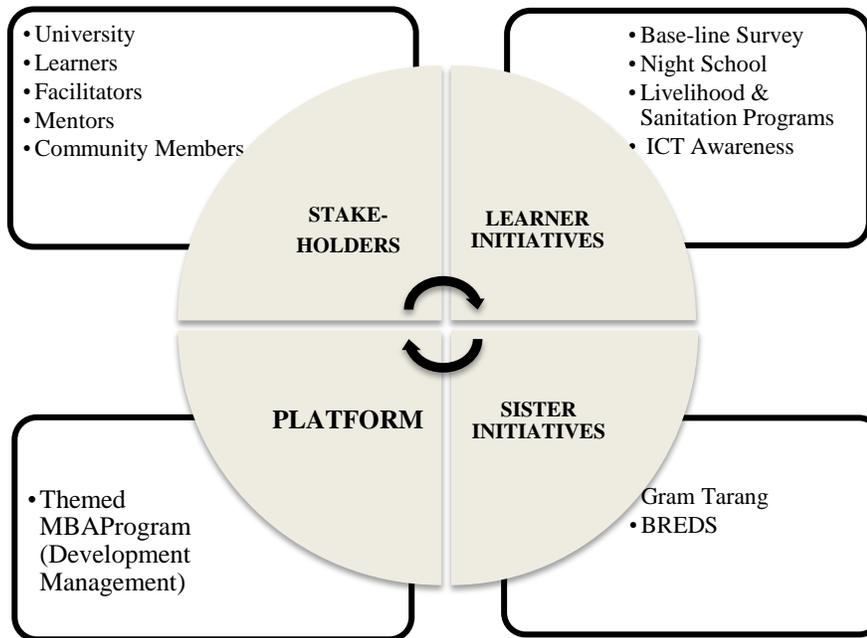

Figure 3: *Model of Development Communication*

2.3 Doing and Working in Teams

The valued concepts lead to action. The development problems such as livelihood and sanitation issues identified by the people were addressed. Learners developed creative ways to deliver content into disadvantaged situations and effectively reach communities who might

otherwise be denied access to education and other facilities. Simple methods were awareness talks, trainings, poster presentations and focus group discussions. Learners including Gram Tarang (sister institution), community organizations, NGOs such as Bapuji Rural Enlightenment and Development Society (BREDS) worked on diverse issues such as agriculture, sanitation, livelihood, gender, education, community development, communication, planning. Learners with these institutions/organizations serve the most marginalized, rural communities and focus on the betterment of their lives through empowerment and sustainable livelihood promotion.

Figure 4: *FGD in Savara Bejji*   **Figure 5:** *Livelihood & Sanitation Program in Badigaon*

2.3.1 Questioning Insight

Community development in the current context is viewed as a process and an outcome – bringing the stakeholders together to achieve a common goal for enhancing the quality of life of community members. The key to learning is finding the right questions at the right time. Learners seek new knowledge by asking questions. As per a learning theory, Learning = Programmed Knowledge of the Past + Questioning Insight. The questioning insight may be described as 'intuition', things crossing the mind, insight (Revan, 1989). Programmed knowledge means 'expert knowledge, knowledge in books, what we are told to do because that is how it has been done for decades (Weinstein, 1995:44). Learners at the initial stage of the integrated development programme ask questions -Why should we do the survey? What we will do with the data? Why we do what we do? Thus, the essence of integrated development communication lies in helping the learners ask and find 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'how' and 'why' questions.

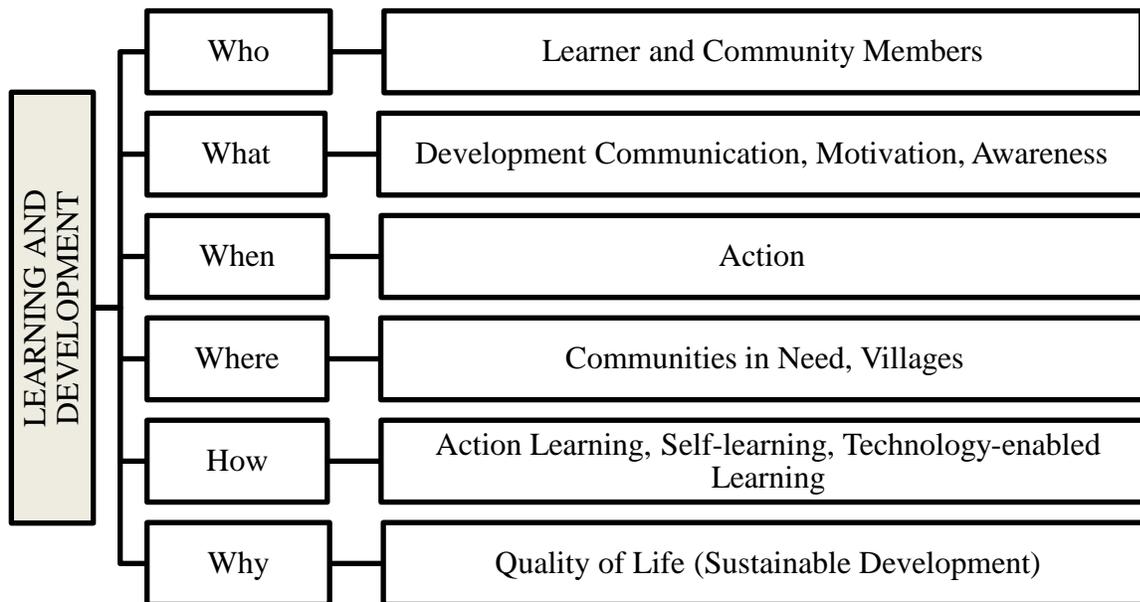| LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT | Who | Learner and Community Members |
	What	Development Communication, Motivation, Awareness
	When	Action
	Where	Communities in Need, Villages
	How	Action Learning, Self-learning, Technology-enabled Learning
	Why	Quality of Life (Sustainable Development)

Figure 6: *Model of Learning and Development*

WHO: Who is the target audience? Who is responsible for learning and development? It is the learner and the community members. Each learner posts the learning outcomes in the blogsites aided by mentors and facilitators. Who are the change makers of today and tomorrow? Obviously, 'You' and 'I' influencing the answers to all these questions will most assuredly involve change.

WHAT: What is the purpose? What is the content/message? What is the learning outcome? Integrated development communication, development motivation and development awareness are the main purposes. The learner and the community members identify focal community problems during the field visits and focus group discussions. The learners and community members collaborate to address and solve the problems.

WHEN: When does the learning take place? When is the action time? Learning takes place in relation to a specific context. Its meaning and value are linked to a particular time and place.

WHERE: Where can learning be practiced? Learners choose two villages viz., Badigaon and Savara Bejji as venues for interactive and focused discussion on key issues related to

sanitation, livelihood, water problem, agriculture and education. Badigaon, a poorly structured village with a population of only 441 is located in the southern backward district of Odisha, India with no proper health, sanitation and education facilities. The literacy level in the village is below 8%. Villagers earn their livelihood primarily through wage labour (90%) and distress migration (10%) to far of places. The main reason for livelihood insecurity is lack of awareness and lack of skills. Savara Bejji is another small village in the Saravakota Block in Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh which has a population of 233. The literacy rate is 37%. The key development challenges were: How to reach these two villages and enrich the lives of the people by using media for their well-being and development? How to use different means of communication to make a difference to the vulnerable and disadvantaged people, in ways that build their resilience, and set them on the trajectory for a better life? Learners were constantly engaged with local networks in this endeavour. Thus, development communication is experienced as a social activity with a goal to improve the living conditions of society. Social development here connotes a move towards a better social life - a process of humanisation.

HOW: How does learning and development take place? Peoples' participation is becoming the central issue to learning and development. Participation requires communication. Learning also takes place by developing an attitude to 'learning to learn', through developing an ability in self-learning, action-learning and technology-enabled learning.

3. Learning Philosophies

The paper discusses the reflective practices that underpins the impact of three learning philosophies in integrated development communication; action-learning, self-learning and technology-enabled learning as shown in Figure7.
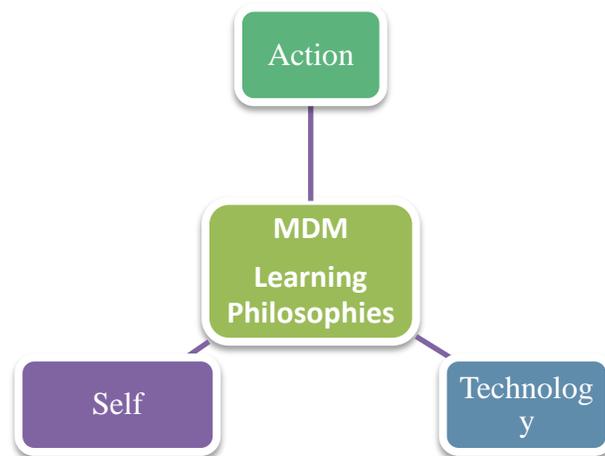
Figure 7: *Three Learning Philosophies*

3.1 Action Learning

The starting point of any learning is action. Learning is from and for action. A core component of Integrated Development Communication of MBA curriculum is action-learning in which learners examine issues or problems, and use the findings to benefit the communities. Revans, the father of action learning defines 'action learning as a means of development, intellectual, emotional or physical that requires its subjects, through responsible involvement in some real, complex and stressful problem to achieve intended change to improve their observable behaviour henceforth in the problem field (1982)'. Action learning is 'learning from and with each other in small groups or 'sets' from action and concrete experience in the workplace or community situation. It involves critical reflection on this experience, as well as taking action as a result of this learning. It is a process by which groups of people address actual workplace issues or major real-life problems in complex situations and conditions (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). The learning cycle includes baseline survey, logical framework analysis and implementing change, which progressively add to understanding of the problem and how it can be solved.

Cycle 1: Baseline Survey

Cycle 2: Logical Framework Analysis

Cycle 3: Implementing Change through integrated development communication

Learners conduct baseline survey to collect data, use Quantum GIS, and map socio-economic, cultural, political details of the adopted villages (Badigoan and Savara Bejji).Then integrate the data to prepare a development plan/ proposal using various tools and techniques. The learners in real life apply the tools to live projects through a baseline survey, and conduct impact study. Students take up problems in nearby villages and use Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) technique to solve the problems. LFA provides a methodical approach to exploring the main paths of change. As stakeholder analysis, problem analysis and alternative analysis are the keys to any project planning, learners applied LFA which is adapted from Capacity Building Workshop for Dryland Management (2000). LFA is widely used in project planning at social sectors and corporates. The problems during the practice were used as triggers to acquire knowledge. Learners were encouraged for supplement reading on Logical Framework Analysis, which was integrated into the learning model. The task components were well defined and organised to help the students practise a logical analytical approach to unfamiliar situations. This phase taught the learners to probe, brainstorm, reflect on stakeholder analysis, strategies to solve problems, and accomplish the tasks. The main purpose was to undertake participatory and objectives-oriented planning. Thus, a set of tools for planning, designing, implementing and evaluating projects is provided as a guideline to the learners.

Students learn from each other, create their own resources such as communication messages, identify the community problems and their own problems and form solutions.

'Got an experience of analysing the intensity of the problem faced by the villagers'

The learning process in the themed MBA program was so enriching that every learner is able to identify transforming outcomes. At the individual level, these include enhanced self-efficacy, positive attitude , passion for learning, a new sense of direction and purpose for career and life – along with new age skills, new insights and the sense of being equipped for the future.

3.2 Self-learning

Self-learning enables students to continue learning with greater effectiveness and is a particularly important skill with the recent explosion of knowledge and technology. Self-directed learners are highly motivated, independent, and strive toward self-direction and autonomy. They

"take the initiative to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes" (Savin-Baden and Major 2004). The following comment reflects the experience of a learner in the development management program.

'After going through a self-learning process, I got an opportunity to help my friends in creating and customising their Blog Sites. Now I am able to create my own Blog site and even customise it the way I like. This blog site is the outcome of what I learnt by myself and from this Workshop'.

3.3 Technology-enabled Learning

Adaptation of a technology that can be functional and meaningful to the communities is the need of the time. The new era of development and sustainability movement calls for the adoption and use of technologies to drive implementation. The program aims to ensure that peoples' voices are in front-and-centre in the ongoing national and international dialogues, and to design a model for the peoples, with the peoples and by the peoples for digital inclusion which could be a sound foundation for the way forward and innovation.
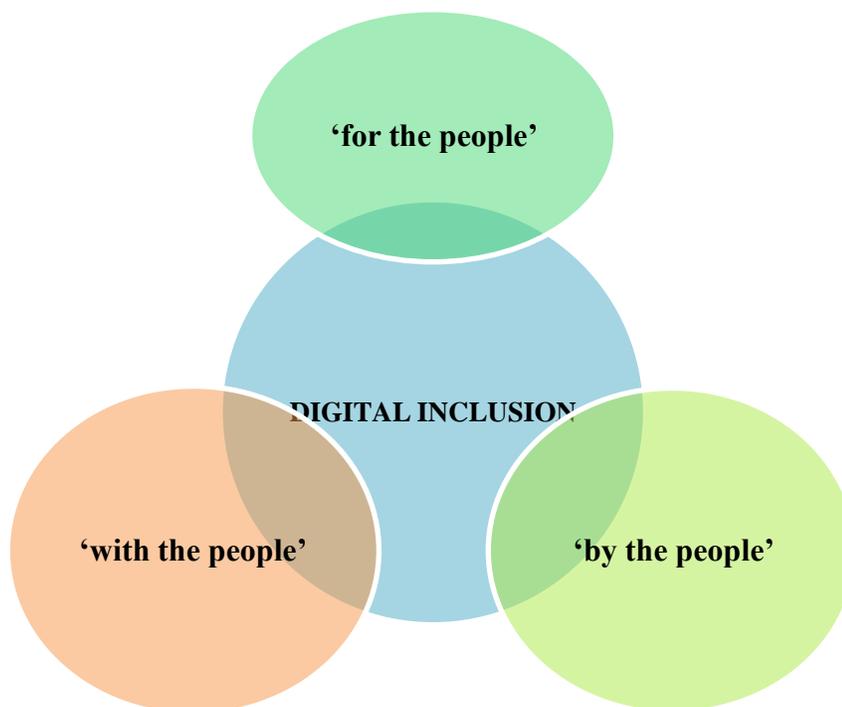

Figure 8: *Digital Inclusion*

Mobile internet is a great medium for reaching out rural communities at all places untouched. In this digital age being an internet user means being a smart phone user. India has more than 160 million smartphone users where 50% of the population is under 25 (WeAreSocial Reports, 2015). The possibility of growth in internet populations can be seen on mobile or smartphone. People not willing to go online can access what's needed or other essential services by alternative means such as phones, mobile apps without learning to use computer. Thus, the integration of ICTs would not only help in promoting personal growth but also in developing "knowledge societies". The call of the hour is the need to provide education for everyone, anywhere, and anytime (Buttar, 2015).

Women's empowerment has been identified as a primary development assistance goal, and considers gender equality both as a development objective in itself, as well as a means to promote growth, reduce poverty, and promote better governance (Word Bank, 2002). UNICEF uses Women Empowerment Framework which encompasses welfare access to resources, awareness raising, participation and control (UNICEF, 1994). It is immensely gratifying to note that learners initiate ICT Awareness raising programs for the tribal girls of the community to make things more inclusive. For instance, they use mobile apps like DISHA to promote digital literacy among the rural people (Digital Saksharta Abhiyan launched in 2014 to aid digital literacy in Bihar, India. The app mainly envisages offering digital literacy to Tribal and Dalit women. People learn about computers and Internet digitally, through self-learning modules in rural and semi-urban areas of the state). The self-learning modules include introduction to digital devices, operating system, introduction to the internet, communications using the internet and use of internet. The lessons helped people to learn about computers and internet available in the form of videos, download materials, and take test modules of different levels.

Figure 9: *Print screens of Mobile App 'DISHA' during an awareness program by students*

WHY: Why is this kind of learning important in the new age? This kind of learning begins with a vision of nurturing "Future-ready and Responsible Digital Learners (Salleh, 2015).This approach leads to continuous learning, continuing improvement of life circumstances; sustainable development communication. Learners create new knowledge as they encounter new conditions and challenges.

4. Reflection and Recommendation

The paper is a reflection of meaningful learning experiences. Upon review of the themed MBA curriculum, it was found to have made at least partial progress on learner commitments and development. Learners conducted base-line survey in the adopted villages, launched night school to improve education services, organized livelihood and sanitation programs, brought ICT awareness among the tribal villagers and engaged with the community for development. This provides an optimistic outlook that the progress is in shape and form, moving integrated and sustainable development forward. Learner engagement and community engagement highlights a few facts of deep motivation: sense of autonomy, feeling of competence, and relatedness to the work and connection to the community. As suggested by Fraser and Villet (1994), the planned use of communication techniques, activities and media gives people powerful tool to experience

change and actually to guide it. These are fundamental requirements for appropriate and sustainable development. The paper shows evidences of some of the strategic efforts and learner initiatives that drive and nucleate change for sustainable development.

- Evidences obtained from the individual blogsites and websites
- Evidences obtained from survey reports and action
- Evidences obtained from video documentaries
- Evidences obtained from awareness and training programs
- Evidences obtained from assignments and review meetings

'Learnt how to deal with small but deadly technical problems that I usually overlook. The design and inspiration of this blog site is the outcome of my learning in this workshop'.

'I learnt how to analyse an industry using Porter's five force model, and as an outcome of my learning in this session I have done Industry Analysis on Health Care industry in India using Porter's five force and presented it in class.

'I learnt how to collect data of the part which is to be represented graphically, using my Android phone and an application installed in it, i.e., VGIS (Village GIS)'.

'This visit had an impact on my communication skills, because during the visit I met and interacted with a number of people'.

'I learnt how to design a website using Joomla'.

'Learnt the basic Do's and Don'ts of a professional documentary making… the step-by-step process of scripting, recording and finally identifying the relevant clip to be used for preparing the perfect documentary'.

'I learnt the process of making a video documentary which includes the proper way of taking video shots using my smart phone and the graphical way to represent my ideas and concepts using a software called Mind Maple' Mind Maple is a visual thinking tool that helps me to structure information, better analyse and comprehend, recall and generate new ideas'.

'Got a glimpse of a beautiful software called Mind Maple which is primarily used to increase one's productivity and creativity by visually organizing the ideas and thoughts onto a mind map. A perfect tool for *Project Managing, Concept Mapping, Brainstorming* and *Task Scheduling.'*

'The tribal girls from Badigoan and other neighbouring villages were able to use computers. They learnt to operate a smart phone, find and manage related Apps, browse for newspapers in their native languages which they could understand, use YouTube as a platform to search useful videos, open G-mail and Facebook accounts, use of smart phone and in addition to that gained knowledge on some useful applications on android devices (DISHA and other applications for mobile learning). The program raised awareness on various government schemes for development and upliftment of rural and tribal girls'.

'The most important thing that I unlearnt was my shyness. I also unlearnt the way I used to trust people which in turn changed how I put forward my opinion in front of them. I unlearnt the way I perceive the world, as I found the earlier to be too unrealistic and untrue'.

Thus, the paper provides satisfactory answers to all post-course reflection questions: How do you view integrated development communication? How far the model was successful in achieving learning goals? Can the new learning be translated into improved behaviour or change? What changes in learning and performance are observed during the practice? How are sustainability challenges addressed through this program? What are the things that you learnt? What are the things that you unlearnt? What changes would you suggest in the themed MBA (Development Management Program)?

It can be asserted that the program has provided, and will continue to provide an enabling role in integrated development communication. The platform provided by the University has improved coordination, communication and accountability for learning and development. The program comes to an end, but not conical. The starting point of learning is action, not just recommendation:

- Preparation of a comprehensive village development plan for integration into curricula and action. The interns will make a development plan to determine what people want to do, can do, and can continue to do in a sustainable way.

- Conducting of village need analysis. Meaningful discussion generated by the people will help community to identify its true problems and priorities.

- Initiation of sustainable projects: Self-analysis can help a community to generate realistic proposals for new development initiatives and stimulate interest to have these initiatives succeed. This will encourage learner engagement in the implementation of sustainable agriculture projects such as irrigation, soil health analysis.

- Establishment of production units in the villages e.g., cashew, sewing machine operation, where its capabilities and needs lie. For instance, Badigoan village has 1200 acres of land out of which 800 acres have been used for Cashew plantation by the villagers.

- P.AC.E Training for women empowerment. P.A.C.E. is an innovative program that positively impacts female garment workers (FGWs) by providing them with foundational skills and support that will help them advance in the workplace and in their lives. Training modules, with a short outlook for each can include training based on communication, problem solving and decision making, time and stress management, financial literacy, legal literacy, health literacy and executive excellence.

- Facilitate training to the farmers under National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) projects on agri-processing and agri-marketing, development of community resource persons (as trainers to train the farmers), support development of supply-chain for availability of input and output services to the farmers in a fair manner.

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