

## Research Article

# ESSENCE OF PARTICIPATION AND ITS BENEFITS IN COMMUNITY RADIO BROADCASTING: A CASE STUDY OF RADIO GRAHAMSTOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

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### ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the link between participation and development. In essence, the focus was on listeners' participation in community radio and its associated developmental benefits, using Radio Grahamstown as a case study. The study adopts qualitative research method and focus group interview was conducted with some selected listeners of the radio station. In addition, an in-depth interview was conducted with the radio station manager to know the importance of listeners' participation and if indeed the station involves its listeners in its activities. The study findings revealed that Radio Grahamstown involves its listeners in its activities and gives them opportunity to participate in programme content development. The findings also revealed that these participatory opportunities contribute in many ways to the development of the listeners and the community radio station.

**Keywords:** Community Radio, Listeners, Participation, Programmes, Development.

### INTRODUCTION

To be successful, community radio stations are not to operate in isolation but to involve their listeners in their programme content development and also tailor their programmes to meet the needs of the listeners and the communities where they broadcast from. This is because community radio stations are meant to be for the communities and the communities are also meant to be part of community radio stations. This is however achieved when community radio stations ensure consistent participation of their listeners in their daily activities. But in situations where community radio stations broadcast without considering the listeners or their inputs, then such stations are not fulfilling the mandate of a community radio station. This is because a community radio station is meant to be run by the people who listen to it and for the people who listen to it and this is only when the station would be able to run smoothly and also fulfil its goals of contributing to the development of its listeners. But for this to be possible, participation of listeners is very important. Scholars over the years have noted consistently that there would be no proper development of listeners or the communities without the active participation of the recipients of the would-be development. Participation is therefore very central when packaging any development-related projects to ensure the success of that initiative and thus ensure complete development. Bamigboye and Osunkunle (2020) notes that participation takes place when there is active involvement of target beneficiaries of a planned development initiative in the process of planning, implementing and follow-up of development programmes. This therefore means that community radio stations are also to get their listeners involved in their programme content development and other related activities for the radio stations to meet the needs of their listeners. Participation is therefore an important element in any development programme as sustainable development cannot be achieved without the full participation of the target group. It is against this backdrop that this paper looks at the essence of participation and its associated benefits in community radio broadcasting, using Radio Grahamstown in South Africa as a case study.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Identifying the different types of community radio stations

As noted by Osunkunle (2008) and Mawokomayi and Osunkunle (2019), community radio station can be defined as a type of radio station that is fully managed and controlled by a non-profit entity and operated for non-profitable purposes with the aim of serving a particular community. Unlike other tiers of broadcasting like public and commercial broadcasting, community radio is unique in its operations. It encourages members of the community where the radio station is located to be fully involved in all its daily broadcasting activities such as the selection and provision of programmes to be broadcast by the stations (Bamigboye and Osunkunle, 2020). There are two types of community radio stations and they are community radio stations serving specific geographic areas and stations serving a community of interest (ICASA, 2000; Osunkunle and Wozniak, 2015). The first type, which are community radio stations serving specific geographic areas, are unique in some ways to South Africa and are usually focused on serving communities that were disadvantaged under apartheid. It must be noted here that many of the early geographic community radio initiatives came from the non-governmental sector and typical examples are the Bush Radio in Cape Town, Radio Zibonele in Khayelitsha and Radio Winterveld in North-West Province. Interestingly, some of the present day community radio stations that serve geographic areas include JoziFM (Gauteng), Radio Grahamstown (Eastern Cape), Moletsi Community Radio Station (Limpopo), and Moutse Community Radio 96.3 FM (Mpumalanga) among others (Community Radio in South Africa, 2006). On the other hand, and as noted by Osunkunle (2014), stations serving a community of interests are further divided into three sub-sections according to the groups they serve. Firstly, there are stations serving institutional communities and these are community radio stations that cater either for higher institutions of learning such as universities, or large commercial organisations. An example of a company or organisation-based community radio station is Radio Pick 'n Pay in-house radio, while examples of campus-based radio stations are Forte fm at the University of Fort Hare, Alice, Radio Turf at the University of Limpopo and Rhodes Music Radio at Rhodes University (Osunkunle, 2008). Secondly, there are stations serving

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religious communities and most of these stations are evangelical Christian radio stations such as Link FM, based in East London and Kingfisher FM, which broadcasts to Christian listeners in Port Elizabeth and its environs and both are in the Eastern Cape Province. But there are also Muslim and Hindu stations such as Radio Islam, Radio Al-Ansaar, and Hindvani FM. Radio Islam is an example of a Muslim Radio Station which serves the Muslim listeners in Gauteng and Radio Al-Ansaar in Durban (Osunkunle, 2008; Osunkunle, 2014). Thirdly, there are stations serving cultural or ethnic communities. As noted by Osunkunle and Wozniak (2015), many community radio stations serve communities defined in terms of ethnicity and culture, such as a strong network of white Afrikaner stations in most Afrikaans-speaking areas and a range of stations, mostly in Gauteng, serving South Africans of Portuguese, Chinese and Greek origin. For example, Comunidade Portuguesa serves the Portuguese community residing in Gauteng, while Lotus fm serves the Indian community in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town, and Radio Hellenic serves the Greek listeners in Johannesburg (Osunkunle, 2014; Osunkunle and Wozniak (2015).

### **Brief on Radio Grahamstown**

As noted earlier on, there are different types of community radio stations and Radio Grahamstown is a type of community radio station that serves a specific geographic area. It was first established in 1991 by a group of individuals who had a vision of a community radio and the positive contributions it could bring to any community. The aim was to provide a dialogue platform to bring people around Grahamstown community together to share their views on how best to develop the town and also address community problems. The founders see radio as a tool for change and development, but despite the idea and commitment of these people, there were no funds to start a studio. Radio Grahamstown eventually started to broadcast as a community radio station in 1995, when most community radio stations were established in South Africa. The station broadcasts local news and entertainment on the frequency of 102.1 MHz FM stereo, targeting both youths and adults in Grahamstown, Fort Beaufort, Adelaide and the surrounding areas (Hoho, 2010). Radio Grahamstown then applied for a license with the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), but since there was still no studio to broadcast from, the licence application was denied; however, the group was able to secure a slot on Rhodes Music Radio (RMR) every Saturday between 7 and 10am. Radio Grahamstown therefore used this slot to cover community issues as it was, and still is, the objective of the station to bring the community together. In 1998, a task team was formed to raise funds for a studio and subsequently installed radio equipment in 1999. This was a year of change for the station. Despite the usual several challenges that community radio stations face from time to time, Radio Grahamstown has by 2013 outgrown most of these problems and presently broadcasts from the back of the Grocotts Mail building in Grahamstown. The station also boasts programmes aimed at meeting the needs of its diverse listeners (Hoho, 2010).

### **The role of mass media as a catalyst for development**

It is important to highlight the important role of the media as a catalyst for development. While there are several criticisms against the media, the positive contributions of the media particularly in emerging democracies far outweigh these criticisms. I want to note from the onset that the role of mass media in facilitating development cannot be over-emphasised as the media usually provide the needed platform for a well-informed populace and also act as a catalyst of development. It should be assumed that people desire progress and positive developments in their lives and would not want to remain

stagnant or unproductive. Radio therefore provides a platform for contributing a form of development to the people. This is also attested to by media scholars Ziegler and Asante (1992) and Osunkunle and Wozniak (2015) who argue that radio is an important tool for development. They further defined national (or social) development as an ongoing process that should afford any government the opportunity to meet the basic human needs of the majority of the people of a nation. This suggests that government activities and development plans are usually supported and strengthened by the participation of a properly informed and competent public. This paper wants to note that despite the various criticisms put forward against the role of the media in the society, numerous scholarly texts have documented the role that the media and specifically community radio plays in helping people and communities at large to achieve common development. Such include the alleviation of poverty, malnutrition and other health problems, unemployment, illiteracy, promoting a stable economy and generally improving the lives of the masses (Rodney, 1972; Libiero, 1993; Olorunnisola, 2000; Raufu, 2003; Rodriguez & Amparo, 2007; Murillo, 2009; Manyozo, Nassanga & Lopes, 2012; and Bamigboye and Osunkunle, 2020). This therefore points to the important role of the media as agents of change and development. However, Osunkunle (2008) notes that the government as the sole innovator of change in the community and country at large cannot achieve this alone. They assert the vital role of mass media (in this case community radio) as an agent of change and development. In addition, Teer-Tomaselli and De Villiers (1998), Bosch (2003) and Mawokomayi and Osunkunle (2019) also observe that community radio stations have a role to play in involving people at the grassroots level in national and community development debates by giving them opportunities to participate in their own development.

Research has continuously shown globally that radio is very essential for disseminating development messages to the people. For instance, Jankowski & Prehn (2002), Banda and Fourie (2004), Alumuku (2006), Myers (2008), Moyo (2010), Jallof (2012) and Bamigboye and Osunkunle (2020) have conducted research on the valuable role of the media in development processes. They all noted that the media, especially community radio stations, usually act as a link between government and citizens as the government tries to bring about the necessary development and provide basic services for its citizens. Significantly, Bosch (2003), Manyozo (2012) and Osunkunle (2014) emphasise that such developments can only take place when there is adequate and effective communication at all levels, thus stressing the valuable roles of community radio stations in getting their listeners engaged in meaningful discussions, which in turns facilitates change and development at all levels.

The advent of community radio in South Africa is reflected by a number of success stories as community radio stations have in many ways ensured aspects of the development of the communities, improved service delivery and facilitated empowerment of the people (Olorunnisola, 2000; Bamigboye & Osunkunle, 2020). It should be noted that effective communication takes place specifically when the message is received by the receiver as intended by the sender, and when the communication channel through which it is received also provides opportunity for feedback. This process underlines the nature of communication as a two-way and interactive process, which is possible with community radio. As noted by Kanyegirire (2002), this also means that both 'access' to and 'participation in' the communication process are important for effective communication to take place. The above discussions suggest that success stories of the media as catalyst for development in our society, are particularly evident when media outlets are able to provide listeners with platforms to interact among themselves as well as with policy makers to deliberate on real community development issues that affect them.

It is therefore important to note that if the disadvantaged, the marginalised and the poor are to improve their lives and the lives of others, they must be able to have access to good, relevant and suitable information and knowledge (Abdul Rahim, Walderburger & Muinde, 2005). Interestingly, and as this paper seeks to find out, community radio is one of the many tools through which related information and knowledge are passed to the listeners. The provision of relevant information is therefore an important contributing factor if development is to take place in any society. It must be noted that the availability of needed and relevant information removes uncertainty and ignorance and also creates awareness of possible actions to be taken by people to solve their various problems (Rasmussen, 2001). This is where community radio is very important as a tool to keep the people informed, engage them in dialogue on issues that affect them and then elicit or create solutions that will bring progress to the communities.

### Participatory Communication and Development

Alfonso Gumucio Dagron (2001), in a report titled *'Making Waves. Stories of Participatory Communication'* compiled for the Rockefeller Foundation, notes that participatory communication experiences in Latin America, which started in the late 1940s, set the pace for the use of communication for development. Various studies by the scholars mentioned in this report have also documented an increasing understanding of the role of communication in social change, which is now spread among development organisations, particularly in developing countries and among academics in industrialised countries. All these point to the fact that communication is instrumental in social change, and to the relevance of participation in economic and social development. Dagron (2001) observed that participatory communication has been very useful in establishing a dialogue with beneficiaries of various development projects as these projects are conceived, planned, implemented and evaluated. Paying attention to dialogue and participation has therefore made implementers understand that beneficiaries should not just be passive but be actively involved in the activities leading to social and economic development of a community. This is therefore necessary for the purpose of building up a sense of ownership within the community and for the recipients of change and development to identify with it. This view is supported by Libiero (1993) and Manyozo (2007) who note that development would not be possible or completed if the beneficiaries do not have influence on the decisions made or contribute to project planning before a particular project started.

As also noted by Dagron (2001), when for example, there is a need to decide where to dig a borehole and place a hand pump in a community, this could reveal the complexity of internal relations within a rural community as the various interest groups and cultural complexity need to be understood beforehand. This is necessary otherwise latent tensions may well lead to the new facility being rejected or causing conflict. It is when their thoughts and suggestions are considered and harmonised that real development will take place and be sustained in the community. The act of engaging various parties in dialogue therefore calls for a proper handling of the communication process, which means that the concept of participatory development demands a greater level of understanding of the role of communication for development. Since the focus of this paper is to look at the essence of participation and its benefits in community radio broadcasting, it must be understood that radio gives voice to development projects. Radio therefore makes it possible for listeners to hear about the lives and circumstances of the poor and by its nature, gives us the ability to "hear" content, context, passion and pain (Manyozo, 2007).

### The Essence of 'Participation' in Participatory Communication

It has been established by several scholars that 'participation' and most appropriately 'popular participation', is necessary and must be ensured if development dialogue is to proceed and be successful (Freire, 1973; MacBride, 1980; Marchant, 1988; Sonderling, 1996; Oyero, 2003; Netshitomboni, 2007; Manyozo, 2007; Banda, 2010; Bamigboye and Osunkunle, 2020). This in essence will involve sensitizing community members about the planned development projects and infusing them with a sense of ownership of the development meant for them. This also means that a majority of the community must be encouraged to participate in the dialogue and identify developmental needs such as road construction, sinking a borehole, provision of basic health facilities, just to mention a few.

Another crucial element that will determine the success of any development initiative is that development communication strategies must be well planned using appropriate channels and methods to ensure that communication and dialogue have indeed taken place. In relation to this paper, this means that community radio stations cannot merely come up with programmes that suit the producers, but need to devise programmes that suit the community or listeners. This also means that community radio stations must be able to involve the listeners in popular participation and dialogue, knowing their needs and what they would want the radio station to address on air. It must be noted that when topical community issues are discussed and addressed by community radio stations with the aim of proffering solutions, then are indeed serving as the voice of that community, thus enacting participatory communication. As also noted by Osunkunle (2008), unless people are involved with appropriate media being used and the messages reflecting community needs, development through communication will be unrealistic.

As further noted by Osunkunle (2008), related policies and development projects should therefore take into consideration the fact there can be no proper development without involving the beneficiaries of planned development as they themselves know what is needed by them and good for them. There is therefore an increased need to have sound and suitable communication strategies in place to ensure dialogue and implementation. This also means that community radio stations need to know the needs of the community and urgent matters to be addressed in the community and then translate this into action through well-packaged relevant programmes with which the community will identify to find solutions to their problems. In essence, this paradigm recognises and emphasises the crucial importance of the audience and highlights the fact that they should initiate, have control and access to communication rather than accept and consume information passively (Netshitomboni, 2007).

It must also be noted that involving the listeners ensures a full consideration of the context, culture, belief systems and practices of the local communities, which also prevents misunderstandings and helps to ensure the success of the communication process and hence the development initiative. This also means that it is very important for community radio stations to involve their listeners in programme content development so that these programmes are able to benefit the listeners. In essence, community radio stations must be able to do research in the communities they are located and get to know the needs of the communities or their supposed listeners or issues that affect those communities. The data collected should then be used to develop radio programmes to address such community needs or issues and this is only when development will take place and community needs and issues well addressed through well-tailored programming.

## Theoretical Framework

This paper is underpinned by theories associated with participatory communication. While the study builds mainly on the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1973), a Brazilian education expert and philosopher, the democratic-participant theory was also considered. These theories have helped to evaluate the valuable role of the media as agent of social change and also the importance of community participation towards ensuring development

### Participatory communication from Freirian perspective

The literature reviewed in this paper suggests that activities of community radio may be best understood through the theoretical lens of Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire, who in his popular book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, explained the notion of dialogic communication as a normative theory of participatory communication. In this book and from his research work, Freire (1973) argued that total or complete development would only take place when people are involved in their own development. He points to a development process that involves traditional participants or community members being given the opportunity or platform to deliberate on issues that affect them personally or their community in general. Freire was of the view that development initiatives must not be conceived for people or packaged and dumped at their doorsteps without involving them in the development process. The idea here is that people or community members know their own issues and probably the best way to address these issues. He therefore stresses the importance of local communities' participation in developmental processes at all levels, be they international, national, local or individual (Osunkunle & Wozniak, 2015). Freire (1993) notes that this process gives the right to all people to individually and collectively speak their mind as they engage with community issues among themselves and possibly with policy-makers as well towards finding lasting solution to topical societal issues and problems.

In the context of this paper, radio provides the platform for the targeted audiences to participate in their own development as they are able to produce radio programme content that would be geared towards addressing issues like gender-based violence, crime, drug abuse, lack of service delivery among others. This aligns well with the views of Mawokomayi and Osunkunle (2019) who note while reflecting on Freire (1973), that to share information, knowledge, and to bring about trust, commitment and success in development projects, participation is very important. They further noted that this process must give opportunities to individuals and the general public to be part of decision-making processes and development initiatives that would benefit them. This view is also shared by Osunkunle (2008) who notes the importance of communication and participation by radio listening club members in community radio. As further noted by Osunkunle (2008), when planning development initiatives, it is important to respect the views and thoughts of the beneficiaries and thus listen to them as this leads to mutual trust, which is very vital to any meaningful development process in the society. As noted earlier on, this would enable the citizens to address issues that affect them and to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes. Also, while reflecting on Freire's (1973) work, Osunkunle (2014) notes the importance of participation for development to occur. He notes that for complete development to take place in any community or among listeners of any community radio station, development initiatives planners must not leave the intended beneficiaries out of the process. As stated by Freire (1973), this important stakeholders should be consulted for necessary inputs to know their needs and thus be made to be actively involved in their own development. In this regard, Osunkunle (2008) and Osunkunle and Wozniak (2015) further note

that development efforts should be moored in faith in people's capacity to discern what is best for them as they suggest the kind of development that they want or how best to address their problems. In the context of this paper, this means that community radio stations should not operate in isolation but seek to engage in research to identify listeners or community needs. These needs or inputs will then be used in programme content development to address these needs. This in essence shows the link between participation and development. In addition, community radio stations could provide platforms through appropriate radio programmes for listeners to dialogue and engage with policy makers towards finding solutions for developmental community issues. As noted by Freire (1993), this in essence would lead to liberation, empowerment and the transformation of the communities where these radio stations broadcast from.

### Democratic-participant theory

This paper also builds on the democratic-participant theory, which postulates that individual citizens and minority groups have rights of access to media and information with a right to communicate, and with a right to be served by the media according to their own determination of needs (McQuail, 2000: 123). This also has impact on the way programmes are produced so that the needs of the listeners are met. The theory further outlines that groups, organisations and local communities should have their own media such as community radio stations with the aim of addressing developmental issues that affect communities. This means that listeners are to be involved in identifying their own perceived needs, dialogue with policy makers and come up with solutions, using community radio as a platform for achieving this (Yarhere, 2003). The focus of democratic-participant theory, therefore, lies in the needs, aspirations and interests of the receivers of information. This in essence also shows the link between participation and development, meaning that development is easily enhanced when there is stakeholders' participation in planned development initiatives. The democratic-participant theory further postulates that the media should provide relevant information to their audiences, give them the right to answer back, and, most importantly, provide an avenue or medium to use the means of communication for interaction in small-scale settings of community, interest group and sub-culture. McQuail (2000: 239) further argues that this theory opposes any alleged need for uniform, centralised, high-cost, highly-professionalised, neutralised, state-controlled media, which are identities of a public broadcaster and devoid of participation. Instead, the democratic-participant theory supports multiplicity, smallness of scale, locality, de-institutionalisation, interchange of sender-receiver roles, horizontality of communication links at all levels of society, interaction and commitment, which are attributes of a community radio station. Community radio should therefore aim to promote these principles so that there is interaction and continuous interchange of information between radio stations and their listeners, which points to participatory communication and involvement of listeners. It must be noted that through this, several opportunities are offered to enhance the development of people and communities.

## METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this paper, Radio Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa was used as a case study and a qualitative research method was adopted. Subsequently, focus group discussion and in-depth interview were used as data collection tools. A section of the station's listeners' club consisting of 10 participants were purposively selected to participate in the focus group discussion as well as the station's manager to know their views on the link between participation and development. One focus group discussion was deemed enough as the participants are ardent listeners of the

radio station. The focus group discussion and the in-depth interviews were recorded on audio tape to ensure the accurate capturing of information and the recording was subsequently transcribed. It must be noted that qualitative research is relevant for this study in many ways as it is usually used when dealing with several types of inquiry to help in understanding and explaining the meaning of social phenomena (Berg, 2004). As also noted by Mawokomayi and Osunkunle (2019), qualitative research design usually helps to discover underlying motivations, feelings, values, attitudes and perception of participants in a research setting. This method therefore enabled this paper to identify the feelings, values, attitudes and perceptions of the participants as they reflect on the station's participatory communication practices and how it enhances community and listeners' development. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data as the themes that emerged from the data collected are analysed.

### Data Analysis

Data collected from the focus group participants and the radio station's manager are combined for analysis, especially where same theme applies.

#### Listenership in the radio station

It was important to establish that the selected participants listen to the radio station and all the participants noted that they listen to Radio Grahamstown regularly as they are members of the station's listening club. Most of them also confirmed that they listen very often to the radio station.

A participant noted that "I listen to Radio Grahamstown regularly and feel a connection with Radio Grahamstown because it is a radio station in my community. I also feel a connection with the programmes as it relates to me and my environment unlike these other radio stations....".

Another participant stated that "I listen regularly to this radio station. It is in our community and it addresses our community needs"

#### Listeners' participation in the radio station

All the participants said that they do get opportunity from the radio station to participate in the activities of the community radio station. Some of the participants noted that the radio station gives them platforms like being called to a meeting, the annual general meeting, and phone-in programmes.

One of the participants said that "We attend meetings at the radio station... we are called to these meetings from time to time to contribute to how the station should work better"

Another participant stated that "The Station Manager send notices out when there are issues that affect the radio station and we are asked to meet"

#### Station Manager's Response

It was important to know the station manager's views if the station involves listeners in its programming and daily activities. In response to this question, the station manager noted that the station involves the listeners in its activities regularly and that the belief of the station is that the listeners are very important stakeholders in the radio station.

The Station Manager noted that "We cannot but involve the listeners regularly as it is a community radio station. The station belongs to the community and so we have to involve them. We involve them in programme content development and we also provide opportunities for them to make contributions to what they want to see in their radio station".

The Station Manager also added that involving the listeners in non-negotiable as the Station needs to know what is on their mind and what they want to see or hear from the radio station. She added that unlike the commercial or public broadcasters who have their own broadcasting agenda or are controlled by the government or advertisers, community radio is different and that the interest of the community is what they serve at all times. Continuous involvement of listeners and community members is therefore very important to us"

The above view corroborates the opinion of Fraser (2001) and Bamigboye and Osunkunle (2020) who note that community radio cannot thrive without the involvement of the community and listeners. These scholars are of the view that community radio is for the listeners and the listeners are the community radio.

#### Radio station's platforms for listeners to engage, create and share ideas that will enhance the growth and development of the community

All the participants agreed and noted that Radio Grahamstown has enough platforms for listeners to participate, engage and share ideas that will enhance the growth and development of the community and that the station does this through its various programmes.

One of the participants noted that "The station has programmes that allow us to phone-in to contribute to issues that affect the community such as service delivery, HIV/Aids, crime, abuse and others. We learn a lot from these programmes".

One of the participants noted that "The station has listening club which allows the listeners to meet regularly to engage themselves in radio issues and also share ideas concerning Radio Grahamstown and the development of Grahamstown community".

The participants were also of the view that the station on air encourages the listeners to phone-in or visit the station in case there are issues of concern to be raised for the attention of the community. These participants also mentioned that the station organises road shows that take the station into the community and allow for the station and the listeners to interact and share ideas. All these show the link between participation and development as noted by Bamigboye and Osunkunle (2020) who note that development initiatives are better simpler and possible too when would-be participants.

#### Station Manager's Response

The Station Manager noted that the Station has various ways in which it involves the listeners in its programming and other activities. The Manager stated that the station organises road shows, which gives opportunities to the station to visit the listeners in their living areas. The Manager further added that

"We go into the community to meet with our listeners. We want to know their needs and help in our little way to address these

community needs. We also ask them to visit the station and also get in touch with us regularly because it is their radio station”

This in many ways confirm the radio station’s commitment not to operate in isolation from the community or area where it is situated.

### **Towards ensuring participation: Meetings between Radio Grahamstown and its listeners in the community**

All the participants affirmed that while they are not so sure of any fixed meeting dates between the station and the listeners, they can say that the station meets with the listeners in various ways.

A participant noted that

“One of the ways through which the station meets with the listeners is the occasional road shows that afford the station the opportunity to meet with the listeners and interact with the community as a whole”.

Another participant however mentioned that

“There is always the Annual General Meeting (AGM) that takes place and where listeners and community members are invited to listen to the reports of the station and also deliberate on issues that affect the radio station”.

Another participant added that

“We are also encouraged to visit the radio station and make them to be aware of any community needs that we want the station to address”

All the above show that the station is doing its best to ensure community participation. This is what community radio is all about; a radio for the people and by the people (Osunkunle, 2008; 2014).

### **Listeners’ involvement in programme content development of the station**

On the issue of listeners’ involvement in programme content development, all the participants noted that the community radio station do involve the listeners in programming and other related issues. They further noted that involving them as listeners helps them to make useful suggestions that will help the station to know their needs and seek to address such needs through suitable programmes.

A participant even noted that

“Yes, we do give suggestions to the radio station on issues that are affecting us in the community, such as crime, gender-based violence and others”.

Another participant also added that

“...Yes, we know what is going on in our community..... and we can tell our stories better....So, we do inform the radio station”.

Another participant stated that

“This is what I like about community radio, it addresses issues in our community, unlike these other radio stations that only tell us about government and issues that do not apply to us”

All the participants mentioned that the station normally announces that listeners should phone in or write to suggest what they want on air and how programming can be improved. All the participants further reiterated that the radio station is doing enough to involve them in its programming. They noted that the station publicises its programmes very well before time and encourages listeners to be ready to participate in it. A participant also noted that the station regularly links

the station with the people by reminding them that the radio station belongs to them and that the community must take ownership of the station. These views are supported by Manyozo (2012) who notes that community radio belongs to the people, the listeners and that every community radio station must make effort to operate in the interest of the community it serves.

### **Community radio as a tool for representation and participation in the development of communities**

All the participants noted that radio station serves as a tool for representation and participation in the development of communities as it brings developmental information into people’s homes to let them know what is going on around them.

A participant noted that

“As listeners and community members, we hear a lot of community development projects on Radio Grahamstown and we are usually encouraged to be part of that project. For example, they tell us about crime awareness, service delivery, gender-based violence, sports, education and others and they encourage to be part of these things”

Another participant noted that

“The radio station provides regular platform for issues affecting the community to be publicised and also for government officials to be aware and seek for find solution to that problem. For me, I can say that the radio station contributes a lot to the development of our community”

### **Station Manager’s Response**

It was important to ask the Station Manager why it was necessary for listeners to be involved in the station’s activities and also to know if and how the station contributes to the development of the listeners and the community as a whole. In response to this question, the Station Manager confirmed that the radio station regularly contributes to the development of the community in many ways by addressing development-related issues through its programmes. For instance, she noted that

“Radio is powerful and can help to bring about change in any community and to the listeners. The station regularly covers moral issues in the community and listeners are given the opportunity to phone in live on air and debate issues that affect the community. In the process, the presenters, callers and invited guests such as opinion and community leaders, religious leaders, listeners and other significant speakers dialogue on topical community issues and come up with advice and solutions towards solving personal and community problems”.

The Station Manager also mentioned that

“Radio Grahamstown regularly covers developmental issues in the community through programmes like People’s Parliament, where the listeners are given the opportunity to dialogue with law-makers towards finding solutions to community problems and also assess the level of development in the community, and identify what further measure are needed for development”.

In addition, she asserted that the station even partners with government establishments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as developmental issues are tackled in the community. These fora, according to her, allow Radio Grahamstown to reach out to the communities, especially the disadvantaged audience segments, with the aim of bringing development to the communities. She also mentioned that programmes like “Masabelane” brings the Municipalities on air to dialogue with the citizens and address topical

developmental issues and that health issues such as the TB Week and Breast Cancer Awareness are also given prominence in the programming. In addition, she noted that

“Service delivery concerns are addressed continuously towards making life better for the citizens and also holding the government accountable to its responsibilities. Listeners and community members are able to report service delivery lapses and we give them the opportunity to engage with municipality officials and how and when these problems will be solved”.

This points to the power of community radio as a tool for local people to address issues that affect them, in the spirit of what Da Costa (2012) see as the uniqueness of community radio.

## DISCUSSION

Various literature have emphasised the importance of participation in the success of any development initiatives or projects with scholars like Osunkunle (2008), Bosch (2010), Manyozo (2012), Osunkunle and Wozniak (2015) and Bamigboye and Osunkunle (2020) all emphasising the importance of paying attention to inputs from the would-be recipients of development initiatives. As noted by Freire (1973; 1993), tangible or real development will only take place in the lives of people or community when people are involved in their own development. Freire was of the view that people must be given the opportunity or platform to discuss issues that affect them or their community with hope of coming up with lasting solutions to such problems. This means that development initiatives or projects must not be conceived for people and dumped on them without their involvement in the conceptualization and actualization of such projects (Mawokomayi and Osunkunle, 2019). This therefore shows the link between participation and development as most development projects usually fail in situations where the would-be beneficiaries are not involved. In such cases, projects that are not relevant are usually dumped in communities and community members fail to take ownership of such projects since they are not geared towards meeting their needs. Considering the thrust of this paper, it is important that community radio stations always ensure that listeners are not left behind when radio programmes are being packaged for listeners' pleasures and development (Jallov, 2012). Since community radio is much closer to the people or listeners unlike the public broadcasters, and with a better agenda to serve the communities where they broadcast from, then it is important that they do continuous research and get inputs from the communities and listeners to know their felt-needs and address such needs through well-packaged radio programmes. This will make such programmes to adequately educate and inform the listeners and thus bring about the desired development (Fraser, 2001). Reflecting on the data collected and analysed in this paper, it became very clear that there is a link between participation and development as the participants confirmed the benefits of these programmes. This is because community radio provides the platform for the listeners or targeted audiences to participate in their own development as they are able to produce or contribute to radio programme content that would be geared towards addressing development-related issues like gender-based violence, crime, drug abuse, lack of service delivery among others.

## CONCLUSION

Having reviewed related literature and analysed data, this paper concludes that development-related projects will not succeed if planned and executed in isolation from would-be beneficiaries of such projects. As noted in the literature review and the data analysed, it is

important to first do research and get inputs from these would-be beneficiaries to know their felt-needs and involve them in the conceptualization and eventual execution of such projects. This allows the people to take ownership of such projects and run with it. In the context of this paper, community radio stations should always remember their mandate of being a radio by the people and for the people, thereby tailoring their programmes to address issues that affect the people or listeners or communities where they are situated. Through this, developmental radio programmes would be able to benefit the listeners and thus contribute to their overall development, which shows a link between participation and development. This in essence also leads to the empowerment and the transformation of the communities where these radio stations operate.

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