Development Issues Management in Representative-Constituents Communication Relationship: A Study of Edo State House of Assembly

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Abstract
This study examined the communication relationship between members of Edo State House of Assembly and their constituents in terms of how development issues are managed for the benefits of the constituents. The objectives of the study are to ascertain the frequency of communication and patterns of information flow between members of Edo State House of Assembly and their constituents; identify the development issues involved in the flow of communication between members of the Edo State House of Assembly and their constituencies and how they are managed; and to find out the level of constituents' participation in development bills and community projects. The study was anchored on Equity and Relational Maintenance Theory. The mixed research design was used to generate data from a sample of 400 respondents purposively chosen from a population of 1,242,353 people. The result of the study showed that there is poor communication flow between the members of Edo State House of Assembly and their constituents. There is more of upward communication than downward communication. Infrastructural development and human empowerment remain the top most critical development issues between the representatives and their constituents. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that Representatives should make their constituency consultation on important issues all inclusive in order to reduce cases of political leaders hijacking the process to their benefit.

Keywords: Development, Issues Management, Representative, Constituents, Communication, Relationship, Legislature

Introduction

Since the return to democratic government in Nigeria in May 1999, there are provisions about constituency projects in both the annual national and state budgets. These provisions continue to create problems on what should be the development needs of the people. Constituents alleged that projects are initiated and sited by their representatives without due consultation with members of the communities on what their priority projects are and how the projects can be executed. Even when consultations are done, it is usually with those who will promote the political interest of the representatives alone. Community participation in such decisions appears not to be considered by them (as part of the decision making process).

These problems stem from the poor information culture requirements of the democratic process. Ayedun-Aluma (2008) suggests that an appropriate information culture in a democracy respects, promotes, and safeguards information disclosure; regards information as a vital factor in the pursuit of the collective well-beings; discourages and sanctions behaviour that (i) hinder information disclosure (ii) foster information closure (iii) foster disinformation (or misinformation) disclosure and rewards and celebrates excellence in knowledge and skills of information production, management, distribution and consumption.

The seeming gap in knowledge between members of Edo State House of Assembly and their constituencies on the value of information sharing and disclosure appears a missing link in their relationship. This is because there has been a perceived 'cartel' that decides who gets what, when and how, hence loyalty to such people not the electorate, is the rule rather than the exception.

Ikpe (2010, p.178), in painting this scenario drew inspiration from the work of Schumpeter (1952) on elitist conception of democracy. According to him "democracy is nothing else than a process for selecting rulers and constituting governments; it is neither a characteristic, nor a requisite set of values of government, nor is it a pattern of conducting the business of government". Building on Schumpeter's thought on the role of the people in a democratic society, he observes that the role of the people is not to govern, or even to be magically involved in general policies and political issues, but that such issues are normally raised and decided for them by their representatives. He notes that attempt by the unenlightened masses to control the leaders is a complete negation of the concept of leadership.

This position is based on the elite theory of decision making in politics. The theory contends that a policy making/policy executing elite is able to act in an environment characterised by apathy and information distortion, and thereby govern a largely passive mass. This theory further asserts that, policy flows downward from the elite to the masses. Society is divided according to those who have power and

those who do not. Elites show common values that differentiate them from the mass, and prevailing policies reflect elite values which may be summarised as preserving the status.

Although scholars like Dalh (1989), Downs (1957) disagreed with Schumpeter's position, the realities of the Nigeria democratic culture reaffirms Schumpeter's conception of elitism and democracy. Political scientist may conceive Nigeria as an emerging democracy, the three pillars on which a democratic culture rests (a well-informed citizenry, freedom of participation and accountability of those elected) need to be built on through communication.

Murdock and Golding (1989) have long drawn attention to the three types of relationship between communication and citizenship thus:

> First, people must have access to the information, advice and analysis that will enable them to know what their rights are in other spheres and allow them to pursue these rights effectively. Second, they must have access to the broadest possible range of information, interpretation, and debate on areas that involve political choices, and they must be able to use communication facilities in other to register criticism, mobilise opposition, and propose alternative courses of action. And third they must be able to recognise themselves and their aspirations in the range of representations offered within the central communication sectors and be able to contribute to developing their representation (p.183).

In spite of the functional relevance of communication in a democracy, it appears that there is a deliberate misuse of communication. This is what Wilson (2002) calls communication for the elite within the Nigeria state. His argument is that communication is not used with the intent of reaching the masses of the people; as a result of the language used in communication, a neglect of the cultural sensibilities of the generality of the people and the focus on 'massness'-reaching everybody. This is particularly manifest when the peoples representatives call for constituency meetings only on National Television and newspapers without consideration for the rural dwellers who are not learned enough or have access to these channels of information. The resultant effect is that where attempts are made at all to communicate, the wrong approach is often adopted in providing the right information for citizens' participation in the political process. Where this is the case, the representative may be perceived as ineffective by those lacking access to information about his or her activities.

Against this backdrop, it is difficult to ascertain how development issues that confront the constituents are managed. The complaints and commendations from

some members of the constituencies present mixed feelings on how development issues management between elected representatives and their constituents are resolved. This is what the study seeks to unravel.

Statement of the Problem

In a well-established democratic culture with strong traditions of civic involvement and engagement, communication between legislators and constituents on policy issues will stress on the idea of obtaining input from citizens on important matters before decisions are made on them. In such a democratic climate the input of the constituents is vital to building consensus on issues. In Nigeria's democratic experience with elected representatives there is a perceived feeling of alienation between elected representatives and their constituents in matters regarding their involvement in legislative input, constituency projects, and legislator's accountability to the constituents among other issues. For instance, Sani (2015) and Idike (2014) re-echo this views in their study. Cases of complaints and commendations of some members of the representatives by the constituents presents mixed feelings on how development issues are managed between elected representatives and their constituents.

Since it is difficult to ascertain the development issues involved in the flow of communication between members of Edo State House of Assembly and their constituencies, it becomes pertinent to evaluate how this is managed. This study therefore seeks to unravel development issues management in elected representatives-constituents communication relationship with a particular focus on Edo State House of Assembly.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Ascertain the frequency of communication and patterns of information flow between members of Edo State House of Assembly and their constituents
2. Identify the development issues involved in the flow of communication between members of Edo State House of Assembly and their constituencies and how they are managed.
3. Determine the effectiveness of the members of Edo State House of Assembly based on developments projects attracted to the constituency, empowerment and communication interaction.
4. Find out the level of constituents' participation in development bills and community projects.

Hypotheses

The study will test the following hypotheses.

H₁: The interactions of a representative with constituents on development issues that affect them will have positive impact on the constituents' perception of the representative's effectiveness.

H₀: The interactions of a representative with constituents on development issues that affect them will not have any impact on constituents' perception of the representative's effectiveness.

Issues Management in Political Communication Relationship

Communication is at the heart of the relationship between elected representatives and their constituents. It provides a bridge between the needs of the constituents and action plans of the representative, which must be harmonised. This could be inferred from Wilson and Ekanem (2006, p. 23) conception of communication. According to them,

> Communication is the basis in which man establishes a relationship with himself and things in his environment. It is the current which runs through all human history. We use it to reduce uncertainty in a vast and challenging world. Communication is the engine that powers every human activity. Through it, we exchange symbols, establish relationships, banish fear and 'blast off the barriers to oneness and understanding.

For instance, as a strategy of building stronger relationship with the electorate, the 2008 presidential campaign of the Democrat candidate Barack Obama was embedded within a social networking application built within his campaign website, called *My Barak Obama.* According to the *Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet (*2008, p.5) the site "collect information about the issues people care about, how often they donate to the campaign and in what amounts, what causes them to donate, whether any of their friends and neighbours have donated". The essence was for the campaign team to address issues of diverse concerns and develop messages that address such. This approach to communication relationship makes it a transactional process, in which case, both the sender and receiver of the information stand a chance of reaching a common understanding and meaning.

The *Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet (*2008, pp.6-8) draws on the principles of relationship management suggested in the book 'Constituents Relationship Management: The New Little Black Book of Politics' as crucial in

communication relationship. They are:
1.   Make constituent interaction accessible.
2.   Know your constituents.
3.   Deliver good service.
4.   Build your office and
5.   Plan ahead.

The basic thrust of the principles is that communication relationship helps in understanding the constituents, anticipate their needs and enable the representative act in an efficient way to the satisfaction of the constituents.

Copeland and Patterson (1994) identify the cardinal functions of a representative in a democracy as; linking citizens to government, legitimising government actions and making decisions. The strength of these functions in an ideal democracy lies in the communication relationship. Kurtz (1997, p.11) reiterated this when he contends that "in well-established democracies with strong traditions of civic involvement, communication between legislators and constituents on policy issues emphasises obtaining input from citizens on pending matters before decisions are made. This occurs both in the capital, when committees hold public hearings, and in the districts, when legislators send out newsletters, conduct surveys of their constituents or listen to public input at a town meetings". This is what Trenz (2011) calls 'discursive representation'. According to him, "Discourses build representative links not only by enhancing justification and the quality of arguments but also through public reception and resonance" (p, 3). He had earlier noted in (2009) that discursive representations are useful not only to determine the representatives' respective mandates but also to deliver accounts of possible principal-agent relationships in a context where clear templates are lacking and organisational forms of political representation remain heavily contested.

The value of communication relationship in a democracy can be inferred from the submission of Congressional Management Foundation (2011, p. 1) " effective communications and interactions between citizens and elected officials are essential to the democratic process, both to sustain the credibility of government and to maintain a free flow of ideas which can be integrated into policy decisions".

Equity Theory and Relational maintenance

 Equity theory according to Floyd (2009, p.307) is "a theory predicting that good relationships is one in which your ratio of costs land rewards is equal to your partner's". Eh Paw contends that "Good friendships have to have benefits for each other, the benefits must be equal. If one person is over-benefited or under-benefited, the friendship will not last. For example, you always listen to your friend's problem.

But when you have problems, they never listen to you. In this case, you are under-benefited and you friend is over-benefited. If this continues, the friendship will not last because one person is not completely satisfied in this relationship".

Eh Paw suggested five primary relational maintenance behaviours that an individual can practice for mutually beneficial relationship; they are positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and sharing tasks. According to the scholar

> Positivity is using happiness around your friendship. For example, always smiling and giving positive feedback. Openness is being able to talk about your relationships. Assurance is showing your friend that you will always be there for them. Social network is sharing with your friend your family and other social networks. Sharing task is helping each other equally. When your friend needs help, always be there for her. If you can do these things, this friendship can last forever.

Although the basic thrust of this theory is mutually beneficial friendship, it is, however, relevant to this study. An effective representative is one who upholds the suggested strategies of positivity, openness, assurance, social networks, and sharing of tasks. These approaches create avenues for the bond between an elected representative and the constituent members to thrive. Where this is the case the activities and effectiveness of the representative will be well felt.

Methodology

The study used the mixed research design with a particular focus on triangulation. Qualitative data were obtained using in-depth interview, focus group discussion and document analysis. The survey technique was used to generate quantitative data from respondents in the sampled wards. A sample of 400 respondents was chosen for the study.

The population of the registered voters in the six constituencies was (1,242,353) one million, two hundred and forty-two thousand, three hundred and fifty three registered voters in the twenty-four constituencies as at 2007. To determine and select the 400 respondents, the researcher randomly selected six constituencies out of the twenty-four state constituencies with two constituencies representing each senatorial district, the constituencies are Akoko-Edo 1, Etsako West 1, Esan West, Esan South East, Oredo East and Egor. Then, the stratified random sampling procedure and purposive sampling was used in selecting sample from the strata. As a result of the population imbalances, demographic characteristics, and the heterogeneous nature of the sampled constituencies, respondents were first stratified

along wards and then major communities. Respondents were then selected using the purposive sampling technique.

Furthermore, the purposive sampling technique was also employed to select opinion leaders, party leaders, chiefs, women leaders, and youth leaders who constituted the groups for the focus group discussion. They were selected based on their knowledge of representative governance, involvement in politics, opinion leadership traits, and residence in the constituency. Three focus group sessions were conducted in each of the senatorial districts of the state to enable the researcher gather a variety of views regarding the management of development issues in the constituencies especially between constituents and elected representatives in Edo State House of Assembly.

Description of Instruments

The research instruments for data collection were the questionnaire, interview schedule guide, and focus group discussion guide. The questionnaire was subjected to a reliability test, using the test re-test method. Reliability test is concerned with the degree to which results obtained in a study agree, when it is used more than once. The reliability of the quantitative instrument was assessed with a trial test conducted in Orhionmwon1 state constituency. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the pilot study. The administration of the instrument was done and the scores obtained were used to establish the reliability coefficient using Cronbach's coefficient alpha method, which stood at 0.84 and this value was considered an acceptable reliability for the study.

Data from Survey

The analyses below emanated from the questionnaire administered on respondents from the six state constituencies chosen as target population for the study.

Table 1: presence of communication

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Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	231	60.3
No	146	38.1
Undecided	6	1.6
Total	**383**	**100.0**

Responses from Table 1 above indicate that majority (231) respondents, representing 60.3% agree that the Honourable Members of Edo State House of Assembly do relate with them through communication. However, 146 respondents, representing 38.1% of the total respondents did not share this view but reasoned that they do not relate through communication. Only 6 respondents were undecided.

It means that there is a communication relationship between members of the Edo State House of Assembly and their constituencies. Nevertheless the percentage of respondents who felt their representatives do not communicate suggests that efforts need to be improved to reduce this figure.

Table 2: Rating of the frequency of communication relationship

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	85	22.2
Average	158	41.3
Very low	137	35.8
Undecided	3	.8
Total	**383**	**100.0**

Table 2 which summarises constituents rating of the frequency of communication relationship between them and members of the Edo State House of Assembly indicates that almost half of the respondents representing 41.3% of the respondents rated their frequency of communication interaction as average. Eighty-five respondents representing 22.2% rated the relationship as very high. On the downside, one hundred and thirty-seven respondents representing 35.8% rated the relationship as very low. Those that held no opinion on the frequency of communication relationship were few.

The analysis shows that a sizable number of the respondents adjudged the frequency of communication relationship to be average 41.3%. Given the result it can be concluded, therefore, that the elected representatives in Edo State House of Assembly are not doing enough in terms of the frequency of their communication interaction with their constituents.

Table 3: Pattern of information flow

Responses	Freq	%
My representative initiates the flow of information	104	27.2
We initiate communication with our representative	139	36.3
We discuss and interact	126	32.9
Undecided	14	3.7
Total	**383**	**100.0**

The data in Table 3 was designed to find out the pattern of information flow in the constituencies. The analysis shows that 139 respondents believe the communication flow is more of bottom up. However, 126 respondents representing 32.9% feel that the communication flow is balanced, since they and their representatives interact as stakeholders. This position differs considerably from 104 respondents representing, 27.2% who opined that the flow of communication is top down, i.e, the representative initiates the communication.

The above analysis therefore means that the constituents initiate the flow of communication more than the representatives. This is obvious from 36% of the total respondents who shared this position. It also suggests that it is the constituents that seek the need for interaction. The close margin between this position and those who believe that the pattern of information flow is horizontal did not negate the assumption.

Table 4: Development Issues that dominate interactions

Responses	Freq	%
Social infrastructure	119	31.1
Human Capacity Development	101	26.4
Self-help Effort	71	18.5
All of the above	78	20.4
Undecided	14	3.7
Total	**383**	**100.0**

Information was sought to determine the issues that dominated the communication interactions between members of the Edo State House of Assembly and their constituencies. As indicated in Table 4, of the 383 respondents, 119 constituting 31.1% said social infrastructure was the most dominant issue. Similarly, 101 respondents representing 26.4 contended that human capacity development was the most dominant issue. Meanwhile, 71 respondents representing 18.5% of the total respondents point to self-help effort as most dominant issue. From a holistic position, 78 respondents, representing 20.5% point all the above issues as subjects that dominated their communication relationship.

From the responses generated, social infrastructure scored highly, to the tone of 31.1% as the major issue that occupies their interaction. The survey result thus indicates that social infrastructure remains the most felt needs of the constituents.

Table 5: Constituents' level of participation in development related legislative processes.

Responses	Freq	%
Public Bills	27	7.0
Constituency Projects and Programmes	110	28.7
Constituency Briefing	53	13.8
All of the above	49	12.8
None of the above	140	36.6
Undecided	4	1.0
Total	**383**	**100.0**

The analysis from the above table shows that a greater majority of the respondents 36.6% feel they were not involved in public bills, constituency projects and programmes and constituency briefing. Conversely, 110 respondents representing 28.7% of the total respondents opined that they were involved in in decision regarding constituency projects and programmes.

The import of the above analysis suggests that good number of the constituents were not carried along in decisions regarding the activities of the representatives in their various constituencies. It also implies that a section of the constituents are in the know and are involved in legislative processes within the constituencies. This could be inferred from the summary of respondents who participated in one or two of their representatives' activities.

Table 6: The stage of constituents' participation in legislative processes

Responses	Freq	%
Only at the briefing stage	198	51.7
Project implementation	137	35.8
Undecided	45	11.7
No stage	3	.8
Total	**383**	**100.0**

Responses from the question seeking to know at what stage constituents participate in legislative processes are provided in Table 6 above. Majority of the respondents (198) representing 51.7% of the total respondents noted that it is only at the briefing stage that they are involved in their representatives activities while 45 respondents, representing 11.7% were undecided. However, 3 respondents,

representing 0.8% believed at no stage are they involved in the process.

This means some of the representatives do consult with their constituents before reaching decision on matters that affect the people. Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals that consultations are not made with the people until projects are been executed. The import of these is that there is a level of involvement of the people in legislative processes.

Table 7: Agreement on the effectiveness in managing issues

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	54	14.1
Agree	129	33.7
Undecided	24	6.3
Strongly disagree	144	37.6
Disagree	32	8.3
Total	**383**	**100**

The question that generated the data in Table 7 was designed to find out constituents agreement on the management of issues that emanated from their interactions with their representatives. The manifest data show that 144 respondents strongly disagree with the views that representatives make effort to manage the issues that emanated from the interaction. This suggests that most the issues raised in the interactions between the representatives and their constituents are not well managed.

Table 8: Areas in which representatives are most effective in managing issues

Responses	Frequency	%
Constituency briefing	87	22.7
Consultation with the constituents	34	8.9
Development Projects and Empowerment	178	46.5
Development of bills	43	11.2
Undecided	40	10.4
None of the above	1	.3
Total	**383**	**100**

Table 8 provides responses to the question which sought to find out areas Edo State House of Assembly Members are more effective. The responses presented in the above table indicate that 178 respondents, representing 46.5% believed that they are more effective in developments projects and empowerment. Twenty-two per cent of the respondents felt they were more effective in constituency briefing, 11.2% in

development of bills, 8.9% in the area of consultations with constituents, while 40 respondents representing 10.4 were undecided.

The implication of the above analysis is that members of Edo State House of Assembly that served between 2007 and 2011 were more effective in development projects and human empowerment.

Hypothesis 1

H_0: The interactions of a representative with constituents on development issues that affect them will not have any impact on constituents' perception of the representative's effectiveness.

Table 9: Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis of the interactions of a representative with constituents' members on development issues that affect them and the impact on constituents' perception of the representative's effectiveness

Responses	Issues in interaction	Perception on effectiveness Y	X^2	Y^2	XY
Social infrastructure	119	54	14161	2916	6426
Human Capacity Development	101	129	10201	16641	13029
Self-help Effort	71	24	5041	576	1704
All of the above	78	144	6084	20736	11232
Undecided	14	32	196	1024	448
Total 5	? x383	? y 383	? x^2 35683	? y^2 41893	? xy 32839

r calculated=0.392, 0.05 alpha level, r, critical .113, 381 degree of freedom

Data from Tables 4 and 7 provided the fillip for the data used in testing the hypothesis in Table 9 above using the Pearson-product moment correlation coefficient. Data presented in Table 9 indicate that the calculated r-value of 0.392 is greater than the critical r-value of .113 at 0.05 alpha level with 381 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that, the interactions of a representative with constituents' members on development issues that affect them will not impact on constituents' perception of the representative's effectiveness is rejected. The alternative hypothesis which states that the interactions of a representative with constituents' members on development issues that affect them will impact on

constituents' perception of the representative's effectiveness is accepted.

This implies that constituents' members consider the interactions of their representatives in matters that affect them as a measure of their effectiveness. The strength of representative interactions with constituents in an ideal democracy lies in the communication relationship. Kurtz (1997, p.11) reiterated this when he contends that "in well-established democracies with strong traditions of civic involvement, communication between legislators, and constituents on policy issues emphasises obtaining input from citizens on pending matters before decisions are made. This occurs both in the capital, when committees hold public hearings, and in the districts, when legislators send out newsletters, conduct surveys of their constituents or listen to public input at a town meetings".

This is also in line with the submission of Trenz (2011, p.3) on his 'discursive representation'. According to him, "Discourses build representative links not only by enhancing justification and the quality of arguments but also through public reception and resonance". He had earlier noted in (2009) that discursive representations are useful not only to determine the representatives' respective mandates but also to deliver accounts of possible principal-agent relationships in a context where clear templates are lacking and organisational forms of political representation remain heavily contested.

Discussion of Findings

This section of the study is a discussion of findings that were arrived at from the data collected through the instruments used in the study. The major aim of the study was to show constituents perception of the communication relationship between them and members of Edo State House of Assembly. The discussion therefore addresses the four (4) research questions raised and the hypotheses tested. In addition, the discussion was aligned to the theoretical framework as well as the review of related studies designed to realize the objectives of the study.

Research Question One: What is the pattern of information flow between members of Edo State House of Assembly and their constituencies?

The analysis in Table 3 helps to answer this question. The analysis as presented on Table 3 means that the constituents initiate the flow of communication more than the representatives. This is obvious from 36% of the total respondents who shared this position. It also suggests that it is the constituents that seek the need for interaction. The close margin between this position and those who believe that the pattern of

information flow is horizontal did not negate the assumption.

The data from the focus group discussion show that majority of the respondents maintained that since there are no formal interaction, it is difficult to gauge the pattern of information flow. Nevertheless, participants who shared the view that their representatives do interact with them formally noted that some party leaders are the channels of passing information to constituents members. This finding reinforces the position of Rommele (2003) citing Sarcinelli (1998) who ascribes a 'communicative hinge function' to parties in the democratic process. She posits that they perform a reciprocal middlemen service in the communication between state agencies and citizens, in both the process of opinion formation and the process of interest mediation.

A few of the discussants noted that there were occasions in which they participated in meetings with them on development issues before actions were taken on them. The manifest data from the in-depth interview also reinforce the pattern of information flow. For instance, some of the Honourable members have regular meetings with their constituents. A few hold meetings with the council of chiefs every first Monday of the month. Constituents sometimes visit their representatives to table issues of urgent importance or follow up on previous discussions on development issues or problems that affect the people. Some of such meetings whether in Benin, at the constituency office or any other place are usually interactive and discursive. Besides meetings, letters, telephone calls help to facilitate information flow.

What is important from the above analysis is that opinion leaders' act as middle men in the flow of communication. The extent to which elected representatives interact with opinion or party leaders and the degree of the party leaders' commitment to addressing the needs of the communities will go a long way in fostering better communication flow.

Research Question Two: What are the development issues involved in the flow of communication between members of Edo State House of Assembly and their constituencies?

Information from Table 4 helps to answer this question. From the responses generated, social infrastructure scored highly, to the tone of 31.1% as the major issue that occupies their interaction. The survey result thus indicates that social infrastructure remains the most felt needs of the constituents. This finding finds support in Gallagher and Komito (1993), Bax (1976) studies, in their studies. Irish public expects its national representatives to respond to their constituents' personal

needs by intervening with central, or even local, administrative agencies, thereby ensuring that individuals receive the special treatment available only through legislator intervention.

In the same vein, the in-depth interview data also support the above assumption. For instance, the quest for development appears to be the most dominant issue that takes centre stage in constituents-legislator interactions. In some constituencies; infrastructural development, human empowerment and security seem dominant. In some others constituencies, unemployment and education are the dominant issues. The issues are managed within the limits of available resources. Some of the representatives noted that they have a comprehensive needs assessment of each community in their constituencies. Once an idea of what the constituency budget for constituency projects is known, projects are nominated to cover the budget for the period.

The quest for legislative intervention on the social and economic needs of the people emanated from the general state of poverty, lack of social infrastructure that can enable the people evolve ways of managing their development goals and needs. This is why constituents expect their representatives to champion their development cause and help in their empowerment. This suggests that constituents aim at domestic transformation of their constituency in all areas of development. Representative democracy can make better meaning to the people when their needs are meant through the provision of social infrastructures.

Research Question Three: How do the constituents perceive the level of effectiveness of the members of Edo State House of Assembly in the areas of development projects, human empowerment, attendance at plenary, bills and communication interaction?

The data in Table 7 provide answer to the effectiveness of the members of Edo State House of Assembly. The data suggests that the respondents considered them to be effective in their representative capacity. However, the close percentage of respondents who felt they were ineffective suggests that a sizable number of constituents' members are not satisfied with the level of the representatives' performance during the period.

In terms of the areas the representatives were most effective Table 8 supply the data. The responses presented in the above table indicate that they were more effective in developments projects and empowerment. This is supported from the hypothesis tested where the calculated r-value of 0.392 is greater than the critical r-

value of .113 at 0.05 alpha level with 381 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that, the interactions of a representative with constituents' members on development issues that affect them will not impact on constituents' perception of the representative's effectiveness is rejected. The alternative hypothesis which states that the interactions of a representative with constituents' members on issues that affect them will impact on constituents' perception of the representative's effectiveness is accepted.

This implies that constituents' members consider the interactions of their representatives in matters that affect them as a measure of their effectiveness. The strength of a representative interactions with constituents in an ideal democracy lies in the communication relationship. Kurtz (1997, p.11) reiterated this when he contends that "in well-established democracies with strong traditions of civic involvement, communication between legislators and constituents on policy issues emphasises obtaining input from citizens on pending matters before decisions are made. This occurs both in the capital, when committees hold public hearings, and in the districts, when legislators send out newsletters, conduct surveys of their constituents or listen to public input at a town meetings".

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1.   Report on the investigation into the crisis between the warring communities of Enwan and Akuku in Akoko-Edo local government area of the state.
2.   Report on the Udaba-Ekperi community threatened with communal war by Anegbette community over ownership of land.
3.   A bill for a law to establish the agency for the control of HIV/AIDS and other matters connected therewith.
4.   Matter of urgent public importance on the sale of government properties at give-away prices and issue for traditional stool which led to killings in south-Ibie. 30th October, 2007, 22nd October 2007.

5. Urgent of matter public importance; the state of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

6. A bill for a law to provide for the compulsory planting of flowers and trees around residential industrial and commercial premises in Edo Nov. 26th 2007.

7. A motion calling on Edo State and all local government councils to ensure that all government schools should have useable toilets for school pupils and their teachers, 14th April 2010.

8. Presentation and consideration of the report of the house standing committee an ethics and privileges on a petition titled: Oben-Geregu gas pipeline protest against oppression of Orhionwon youths.

9. A motion calling on the government to fund advocacy and literacy by radio project on 11th May 2010.

10. A motion calling on the eighteen local government councils of Edo State to create youth advisory centres in their local government areas on 26th April 2010.

11. A motion calling on the authorities of the eighteen local government councils in Edo State to sink boreholes in all their abattoirs slaughter on 10th September, 2007.

12. Amendment in the composition of some local government transition committees, 1st March, 2011.

13. A bill for a law to provide for the establishment of the Edo State Youth employment scheme (Edo yes) agency and other mattes connected therewith, 19th October, 2009.

14. Presentation and consideration of the report of the House Standing Committee on judiciary, human rights and legal matters on passed bill on community and social development project on 29th June 2009.

15. A motion calling on Edo State government and other relevant authorities to construct drainage on all road in their jurisdiction.

16. Presentation of the report of the Ad-hoc committee on Uzebu quarters, Erhunwunse and Siloko Road flood control contract.

17. Presentation of the report of the House Standing Committee on judiciary, human rights and legal matters on a petition titled: re-disappearance of water pumps for Okpella water project; PTF project.

18. A bill for a law to provide for the amendment of Bendel State criminal code 1976 as applicable in Edo State of Nigeria.

19. Appropriation bill 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011.

20. A motion calling on the government and the traditional council to call to order all land speculators.

21.   Request for job placements, appeals for aids, protest letter (from constituency log books,

The implication of the above analysis is that members of Edo State House of Assembly that served between 2007 and 2011 were more effective in development projects and human empowerment. Data from the focus group discussion also reinforce the survey data. In their response, on the level of effectiveness of the members, majority said that they know that the honourable members cannot deny their constituencies in matters that affect them.   But in the real sense, the effectiveness of the members is nothing to write home about since they do not know what they have done, what they are doing and their involvement in decisions regarding projects going on in their constituencies. A participant observes that when you are representing somebody, you must bring to the notice of that person, what is going on the house, what the people are supposed to benefit etc, where the situation is at variance with these, that cannot be taken as effectiveness.

A few of the participants who rated their honourable members to be effective also pointed to the number of projects they attracted to their constituency as a measure of their effectiveness. They see them as having positive disposition to the growth and development of the communities in their constituency. The participants said they were satisfied with the level of representation.

The Hon. Members of Edo State House of Assembly interviewed noted that the whole concept of representative government or the role of a representative in a democracy is often misconstrued when viewed from the various perceptions people hold about such. Some viewed an effective representative from the type of development projects attracted into the constituency; the level of interpersonal relationship. Others see effective representative from the rate of his/her personal spending on drinks and given of political scorecards to people.

They however contend that an effective representative is one who is accountable to the people from time to time, liaises with the people both by formal and informal meetings. They also noted that ideally the responsibility of the legislator is to make law, be the mouth piece of his constituents.

Although, the present results establish that representatives are effective, the number of respondents who think otherwise emanate from the fact that congressmen are not doing enough to publicise their activities in their constituencies and the involvement of the people in matters that affect them. As some scholars noted, without a frantic effort to understand and satisfy the needs of constituents his effectiveness will not be appreciated. Weissberg (1978) noted in his study that 'citizen satisfaction with legislators could very well be independent of satisfaction with

policy outcomes in general. In the same vein, Russo (2009) asserts that observing parliamentarians' activities is the most direct way to measure their strategic plans. He reasoned that a representative who decides to play the role of constituency servant will actually focus on his/her constituency with observable actions. He contends that variability in the behaviour of representatives can be understood by considering that parliamentarians have different objectives (individual preferences) and operate under different conditions (institution).

The result aligns with studies by Zappala (1998), McAllister (1997) Norris and Lovenduski (1995), on the constituency role of representatives, they found out that members of the House of Representatives spend a considerable amount of time dealing with individual casework, relating to immigration, family law, and social security issues. Furthermore, that evidence shows that Australian parliamentarians, like members of the US Congress, dedicate a considerable proportion of their time to constituency service. In addition, that in Britain, members of parliament have devoted a growing amount of time to 'service responsiveness', dealing with government departments on behalf of individual citizens and local groups, working with the community in their local area, holding surgeries, and attending constituency functions.

The import of these findings in relation to Nigeria's democratic expectation from members of Edo State House of Assembly and even those of the National Assembly cannot be over emphasised. First, Edo State House of Assembly members or National Assembly members need to regularly update their constituents with their activities on the floor of the house and how such responsibilities relate to the wellbeing of the people.

Second, they need to organise programmes that could improve the lots of the people as seen from the British experience. Programmes such as free medical health care, scholarship, economic empowerment, loans etc. should be organized to uplift the people. The essence is to bring the direct benefits of their representation closer to the people. Although the purpose of parliamentary democracy is for law making, increasing demands on the legislators suggest that they must find a middle ground between the business of law making to attracting opportunities that could help the social economic status of the people. This is particularly useful now with the growing emphasis on constituency projects which are largely not seen by the constituents' members. Even when such projects are executed, the quality is usually not worth the cost. In other word, an accountable representative must not only monitor projects in his area to ensure quality, he/she must at the same time ensure that the projects are not just drain pipe and status enhancement projects that have no direct benefits to the people.

Research Question Four: To what extent is the level of constituents' participation in development bills, projects design and implementation?

The analysis from tables 5 and 6 show that majority of the respondents 36.6% feel they were not involved in public bills, constituency projects and programmes and constituency briefing. Conversely, 110 respondents representing 28.7% of the total respondents opined that they were involved in in decision regarding constituency projects and programmes.

The import of the above analysis suggests that a good number of the constituents were not carried along in decision regarding the activities of the representatives in their various constituencies. It also implies that a section of the constituents were in the know and were involved in legislative processes within the constituencies. This could be inferred from the summary of respondents who participated in one or two of their representatives' activities.

Responses from the question seeking to know at what stage constituents participate in legislative processes indicate that only at the briefing stage were respondents they involved in their representatives' activities. Though a close percentage opined that at project implementation stage they were involved in the processes?

This means some of the representatives do consult with their constituents before reaching decision on matters that affect the people. The present result supports Coleman (2004) study connecting parliament to the public via the internet: two case studies of online consultations. Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals that consultations are not made with the people until projects are been executed. The import of these is that there is a little level of involvement of the people in legislative processes.

Data from the Focus group discussion show that some participants observe that there were consultations before such projects were decided and embarked upon; such consultations were usually at party caucuses. That is why it is rear to see a major project in a community without the knowledge of the community leaders. Some of the discussants were of the view that their representatives claim to have knowledge of what their problems were. The participants observe that a good number of the representative were foisted on them, hence, they make consultations with those who nominated them. A party leader said he has had consultation with the honourable member before some of the projects in his area were embarked on.

Some participants said that the honourable members meet only party leaders to decide on projects. A vexed participant observe that many borehole projects

executed in his constituency were cited in the different ward chairmen houses, as if they own them and some of the party chairmen now control the borehole as if it is their personal property. He observed that this sorry state of affairs emanated from the fact that other stakeholders were not involved in the decision regarding where a project should be sited.

However, interview with the honourable members align with views of the constituents surveyed. In that the level of consultation and involvement of the people was not a regular activity. The value of consultation in representative democracy cannot be over-emphasised. It provides avenues for the majority of opinions to be heard. Citizens' participation in democratic decisions makes the essence of democracy worthwhile.

This aligns with Mayhew (1974) study on 'congress: the electoral connection', Weissberg (1978) study on collective vs dyadic representation in congress. The participatory theory of communication supports this finding. This is why Christopher (2007) sees participatory communication essentially as a means towards a new development approach that emphasizes man's freedom from all forms of marginality and exploitation. He also observes that it is an education process that starts with an analysis of reality, rejects the ideology of the elite classes and motivates the underprivileged population towards concentrated action for social change. He goes further to say that it encourages more deliberate public debate and governmental inquiring about what kind of information the nation and its citizens need to decide their social, political and economic course on development.

He also notes that participatory communication allows people to identify or decide what their needs are, plan how to achieve their set goals, obtain whatever assistance or resource that may come from government and implement their plans on their own with the development communicator leading from behind. What is therefore required is the involvement of the people of the constituency in issues that affect their affairs. In this way, constituents will regard decisions regarding projects and bills that involve them as theirs'. This in line with what Diri (2010) advocates as a measure of citizens' political participation when he contends that citizen participation is:

1.   A right, not something handed out by the state.
2.   Must be long-term and not expert-driven
3.   About 'voice' and self-representation
4.   Participation is both institutional and non-institutional
5.   Participation as information sharing where communities become informed about the decision.

6.   Participation through consultation, where communities influence decisions.

7.   Public participation as collaboration, with joint decision-making and

8.   Participation as empowerment and self-determination.

Experience has shown a considerable number of community projects were abandoned or completed without being used. This is because such projects had no constituent input and the management of such projects did not incorporate the communities in the plan. This is one crucial factor that development studies emphasise in contemporary practice. Projects to be sited in communities must have inputs from such communities in order for them to feel a sense of ownership and therefore contribute to its successful implementation and usage. Indeed development communication preaches this too.

Against this backdrop therefore, the role of the legislator is to ensure that projects in his/her constituency align with the aspiration and desires of the people. This can be done through questioning of appropriate government agencies in charge for strict compliance with standards and also to ensure that such projects are not far from the community expectations. In this way they will not only serve as bridge with the people, but also act as the peoples' advocates for development.

Summary and Recommendations

This study examined development issues management between constituents' and members of Edo State House of Assembly. Specifically, the study was necessitated by the feelings of ambivalence by many Nigerians on the attitude of elected representatives to their constituents. In addition, it seems the perception of many is that elected representatives are not effective against the backdrop of the high level of profligacy in government and development concern begging for attention. The analysis of the survey question, interview schedule and focus group discussion present the following findings:

1.   Elected members of Edo State House of Assembly have a moderate informal communication relationship with their constituents.

2.   The communication flow is more of upward communication than downward communication.

3.   There are numerous development projects representatives can point to as measure of their accountability and effectiveness.

4.   Infrastructural development, human capacity development and financial aids are the dominant development issues in representatives' constituents' interaction.

5.   Party leaders mostly decide which projects should be sited in communities.

Such leaders most of the time are those that share the same level of agreement with the Representative. In other words, issues emanating from representatives interactions with constituents are managed between the elected representatives and their party leaders.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward.

1.   Representatives should make their constituency consultation on important issues all inclusive in order to reduce cases of political leaders hijacking the process to their benefit. This will help create proper understanding of the issues at stake and make for a proper sense of belonging.

2.   Constituents need proper orientation on the job and responsibilities of elected representatives to parliament in order to reduce demands on them and help them concentrate on the business of law making. This is because many uninformed members of the constituency erroneously think it is the responsibility of a legislator to provide roads, schools, jobs and other human development indices.

3.   Representative should make the quarterly constituency briefing a must hold. Invitation to such meetings should be all inclusive, so as to avoid complaints from opposition party that they are usually side-lined from constituency briefing.

4.   Elected representatives should try as much as possible to visit communities in their constituencies once in a year and clearly publicise their constituency offices in order to create the right awareness.

5.   The Assembly should always demand input of constituency members in public bills in order to make the resulting law the people's law.

6.   The communication pattern should create rooms where elected representatives and constituents can meet and deliberate on, projects and constituent policy issues. Such platforms should create avenue for constituents to voice their views on the performance of their representatives.

7.   Some respondents believe some representatives think they have 'settled' their political leaders; hence their accountability is to them not the electorate. Political parties should shun the imposition of candidates on the people; rather, political parties should allow the people decide who represent them, in order to reduce cases of elected representatives' lukewarm attitude towards their constituents.

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