



***STRATEGIES AND PROCESS IN APPLYING PARTICIPATORY  
COMMUNICATION FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMMES IN THE PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA***

**ANNA BENSON KIGBU**

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By

**ANNA BENSON KIGBU**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**April 2019**

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## **DEDICATION**

To the whole of humanity



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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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By

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**April 2019**

**Chairman : Akmar Hayati Ahmad Ghazali, PhD**  
**Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication**

In recent times, participatory communication for development has globally been considered as an important factor in development projects. This development approach in theory is an approach which is meant to carry the people along in every stage of a development project through dialogic communication so as to enhance the success of that particular project. Even though a number of development agencies proclaim this approach (the participatory approach) as an objective, they do not fully apply this approach as they wish to. Due to the fact that a number of development projects label themselves “participatory projects” and do not fully engage in an authentic one, there is a need to understand how these development projects perceive the participatory approach in whole, and in specific, participatory communication for development. More so, the study focused on exploring how participatory communication for development is applied in terms of process and strategies by agricultural development agencies. In order to achieve the objectives of the current study, qualitative multiple case study approach was used, and semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted among agricultural development program managers in two agricultural development agencies in Plateau State, which were selected using purposive sampling. The data obtained from the field was analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, and a rich and thick description of the studied phenomena was given. Findings of the study revealed that the two agricultural development agencies perceived participatory communication for development as a communication approach that enhances sustainability through empowerment, knowledge co-sharing and participation of farmers. The findings also revealed that in agricultural development projects dialogue and monologue are the main strategies used during development projects. Findings the strategies of participatory communication and the process involved when this communication approach is being applied in agricultural development programmes. The factors which challenge the application of participatory communication for development in agricultural development projects

were revealed by the findings of the study. In a nut shell, the findings showed that the two agencies use two main strategies of participatory communication, which dialogue and monologue. However, it was observed that the use of dialogue was more prominent in the first case study, while the second one use more of monologue in its agricultural development programmes. In terms of the process, it was found that the process is a three-stage process, and the three stages include participatory needs assessment, planning stage, and implementation stage. The study concluded by suggesting that one of the main ways through which development agencies can strengthen the use of this approach, is by making conscious efforts to understand the key principles of the approach so that it can be used to facilitate the sustainability of development projects, especially agricultural development projects



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**STRATEGI DAN PROSES DALAM MELAKSANAKAN KOMUNIKASI  
PATISIPATORI BAGI PROGRAM PEMBANGUNAN AGRIKULTUR DI  
PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA**

Oleh

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Pada masa ini, komunikasi penyertaan untuk pembangunan merupakan satu faktor yang penting dalam projek-projek pembangunan. Teori ini menggunakan pendekatan komunikasi berdialog antara mereka yang terlibat dalam setiap peringkat projek pembangunan untuk meningkatkan tahap kejayaan projek. Walaupun terdapat beberapa agensi pembangunan yang meletakkan komunikasi penyertaan untuk pembangunan sebagai satu objektif, pendekatan tersebut tidak diaplikasikan sepenuhnya. Oleh kerana terdapat beberapa projek pembangunan yang melabel diri mereka sebagai “projek penyertaan” tetapi tidak melaksanakan pendekatan tersebut secara menyeluruh, terdapat keperluan untuk mengkaji bagaimana projek-projek pembangunan ini mentafsir pendekatan penyertaan khususnya komunikasi penyertaan untuk pembangunan. Fokus kajian ini tertumpu tentang bagaimana komunikasi penyertaan untuk pembangunan dilaksanakan dalam aspek proses dan strategi oleh agensi-agensi yang terlibat dalam pembangunan pertanian. Bagi mencapai objektif kajian, kaedah kajian kes kualitatif telah digunakan dan temu bual semi berstruktur yang mendalam telah dijalankan. Ia melibatkan pengurus program pembangunan pertanian di dua agensi pembangunan pertanian di Plateau State yang dipilih menggunakan kaedah persampelan bertujuan. Data kemudiannya dianalisis menggunakan kaedah tematik kualitatif diikuti oleh penerangan yang mendalam tentang fenomena tersebut. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa kedua-dua agensi pembangunan pertanian tersebut menganggap komunikasi penyertaan untuk pembangunan sebagai satu kaedah komunikasi yang meningkatkan kelestarian melalui kemapanan, perkongsian pengetahuan, dan penyertaan oleh golongan petani. Kajian ini turut mendapati bahawa dialog dan monolog merupakan dua strategi utama yang digunakan dalam projek pembangunan pertanian. Kajian ini turut mengenal pasti beberapa faktor yang mempengaruhi pelaksanaan komunikasi penyertaan untuk pembangunan dalam projek-projek pembangunan pertanian. Secara keseluruhan, hasil kajian mendapati bahawa kedua-dua agensi mengaplikasi kaedah dialog dan monolog

sebagai strategi dalam melaksanakan komunikasi penyertaan. Walau bagaimanapun, penggunaan kaedah dialog lebih menonjol dalam kajian kes pertama manakala kajian kes kedua menggunakan lebih banyak monolog dalam proses pembangunan pertaniannya. Proses yang terlibat juga merangkumi tiga peringkat utama iaitu penilaian keperluan penyertaan, tahap perancangan, dan tahap pelaksanaan. Kajian juga mencadangkan bahawa pelaksanaan komunikasi penyertaan untuk pembangunan oleh agensi pembangunan boleh dimaksimumkan melalui pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang prinsip-prinsip utamanya agar ia boleh digunakan untuk meneruskan kemapanan projek-projek pembangunan, terutamanya yang berkaitan dengan pertanian.





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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Agricultural development programmes
CS1&2	Case study 1&2
IADA	International Agricultural Development Agency
NAFPP	National Accelerated Food Production Programme
NALDA	Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority
NFDP	National Fadama Development Project
NSPFS	National, Special Programme on Food Security
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
OPFN	Operation Feed the Nation
PSOADA	Plateau State-Owned Agricultural Development Agency
RBDA	River Basin Development Authority
RTEP	Root And Tuber Expansion Programme
T&V	Training and Visit
VEA	Village Extension Agents

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, limitation of the study and definition of keywords.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In the last two decades, several project proposals have focused on the concept of “participation”, which is considered as an approach that is people-oriented, instead of technology-oriented. It has been argued by proponents of participation, that this approach can be used as a tool for achieving social, economic and environmental sustainability (Van de Fliert, 2007). Theoretically, participation is aimed at empowering individuals and groups to be in-charge of their own process of development. This means that the individuals or groups are empowered to design their development objectives, and make their decisions in relation to their set goals. In this approach, individuals should be able to collectively set their goals, take action towards achieving the set goals, monitor the process and evaluate the outcome.

However, in practice, the existence of several non-participatory development programmes is observed, while it is also difficult to find interventions that genuinely apply the participatory approach (Bessette 2004). In fact, it is challenging to achieve genuine participation because of several factors that have been observed by researchers. Some of such factors are presented in the second chapter of this thesis.

Since development agencies find it difficult to evaluate the impact of the participatory approach, they do not consider making financial and human resource investment in the application of the participatory process as an important element of their development initiative. This could mean that the development agencies do not perceive the benefits of the participatory approach worth the investment. It is observed that many projects that use the participatory approach attribute their positive outcomes to the use of the approach, but rarely, are the strategies and process are involved in the application of participatory approach clearly articulated. It is based on this that the current study is carried out to explore the strategies and process used in participatory development initiatives.

It is often seen that the participatory approaches are used as a means to an end, instead of an end itself. This implies that the approach is used to achieve development goals instead of as a means of empowering. According to Cleaver (1999), when participation is used as a means to an end, it is used as a method of increasing the impact of a programme that is introduced by an external agent through the involvement of the people. Several times, participatory processes are designed in a way that it serves as

an end, but merely executed as a means. Such scenarios are more prominent within the development context that is driven by the modernization approach to development that focuses on economic growth instead of multiple aspects of human.

In spite of the benefits of the participatory approach, several development projects that attempt to use the participatory approach are caught up in the web of complexities that emerges when the different stakeholders are allowed to participate equally in every aspect of the development initiative, instigating fear to lose control. Furthermore, one main issue associated with the application of the participatory approach is that, professionals do not acquire academic training generally on “participatory research and development methodology”, and as such are sometimes unable to effectively use the approach in a way that facilitates the process of participatory development. Thus, it is important to explore the strategies and process involved in the application of the approach so that such professionals will be able to gain insight on ways through which they can effectively apply the approach.

It has been observed that in the literature of participatory development, a key element is participatory communication, which involves the use of different communication approaches to engage the stakeholders in the process of their own development. However, the use of the participatory communication is limited, with more attention given to informational approaches. This inadequate use is due to the presence of some factors, and one of those factors is associated with the institutions. Waisboard (2008) has highlighted institutional factor as a major factor that influences the selection of communication approaches. According to this author, the potentials of participatory communication are undermined by institutional dynamics. It is important for development professionals and researchers to broaden their horizon in relation to international development communication.

Within the academia, the conventional idea of diffusion of innovation is no longer dominant, because the idea has been challenged by the participatory communication and other critical approaches. These recent approaches propose that communities should be active beneficiaries. Theoretically, the main principles of the participatory approach are adequately discussed and covered in the literature of participatory development, but such has not been able to change the perceptions and practices within development organizations. Thus, providing a more practical and holistic perspective of the participatory approach may help in changing the way these development agencies perceive and apply the approach in their development initiatives.

More so, in order to strengthen the genuine use of the participatory approach, technical staff of organizations can be enlightened about the benefits of participatory approach to the development. In addition, practitioners and researchers should be able to embrace an analytical view which examines how the participatory approach can be effectively institutionalised in development agencies, so as to facilitate sustainable development.

## 1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Today, the word “Participatory” is being applied in different fields (participatory media, participatory democracy, and participatory management e.t.c), because it has been identified as a tool that supports sustainable development (Huesca 2002; Mefalopulos 2005; Vaidya & Mayor 2013; Imoh 2013; Ali & Soderling 2017). This is described as a new paradigm which is used in supporting development projects because there is a gradual drift from the conventional practice of the modernization and dependency era where development projects were promoted through the mass media using a one-way flow of information approach (diffusion of innovation) with the project beneficiaries as the passive recipients of the message; they were just passive recipients. The aim then was often to persuade the local people to adopt new practices and ideas that can improve their lives (Rogers 2006). The predominant practice and role of communication was the same even though strategies of development were different in developing countries; it was basically all about informing the beneficiaries about the project, describing the benefits of the projects to the people and soliciting the beneficiaries support for the development project through radio and television broadcast, pamphlets and posters. This approach was often used in advocating the adoption of new agricultural and health innovation, practices and ideas (Servaes & Malikhao 2005).

On the other hand, participatory communication for development advocates for a dialogic approach which is defined as “any negotiated exchange of ideas opinions” (Kent & Taylor, 1998). This approach allows both sides (benefactor and beneficiary) an equal chance of influencing the other (Ali & Sonderling 2017; Burger 2015; Jacobson 2003; Melkote 1991; Waisboard 2008). This approach allows for exchange of ideas and information between the benefactor and beneficiary; it offers the benefactor rich information from people at the grassroots. “Participation is a process whose course cannot be determined from outside- it is generated by the continuing praxis of the people, i.e by a rhythm of collective action and reflection. This is what makes the process people’s own as opposed to the people being mobilized, led or directed by outside forces” (Rahman, 1981).

However, having looked at the benefits of this approach, it is expected that development agencies will take full advantage of this approach in order to obtain desired positive outcomes in their development projects. On the contrary, findings of previous research have shown that even though a number of development agencies proclaim this approach (participation) as an objective they do not fully apply this approach as they wish to (Ali & Sonderling, 2017; Fraser & Restrepo-Esra 1998; Imoh, 2013; Kilewo & Frumence, 2015; Luecke, 2012; Sackey, 2014). In other words, based on the theoretical assumption of participatory communication for development, which entails the involvement of people in the whole process of decision-making, implementation of programs, sharing in benefits of development and their involvement in the evaluation of such development programs through dialogue (Barasa & Jelagat, 2013), development agencies do not fully implement the participatory communication for development.



Ali & Sonderling (2017) stated that, the application of participatory communication for development can be shaped by the way the concept is interpreted. However, a look at these previous studies showed that despite the proclamation made by development agencies, they have failed to clearly provide their interpretation of the concept of participatory communication for development as practically applied. Although, a number of studies have been conducted in this area, most of such (Aminah, 2016; Fraser & Restrepo-Esrada, 1998; Kheerajit & Flor, 2013; Kim 1996; Kilewo & Frumence, 2015; Melkote, 2006; Servaes & Malikhao, 2005; Sackey, 2014), focus on how this communication approach can be used for supporting development projects by virtue of its dialogic nature. However, only few of these studies have focused on how the development agents interpret this development approach and how their interpretation influences the implementation of participatory communication approach (Mefalopulos, 2003). Examining their interpretation of the concept will help in providing an understanding on whether the partial implementation is influenced by their interpretation of the concept or other factors. This will also expose some of the gaps that exist between the theoretical assumption and practical application of participatory communication approach.

Therefore, it is important to determine how these development agencies interpret the concept of participatory communication for development, because Ali & Sonderling (2017), stated that the application of participatory communication for development can be shaped by the way the concept is interpreted. This is the reason why this study investigates how the relevant stakeholders conceive, define and understand the participatory communication for development, as well as how it has been applied in the different phases of the development project cycle. It is hoped that the selected development agencies that use participatory communication approach will be able to provide insights on the issues raised here. This leads the researcher to ask the question; how do development agencies interpret the concept of participatory communication for development?

Again, another issue related to this study is the fact that most of the development communication studies conducted in Nigeria have only focused on advocating for the adoption of participatory approach in resolving the problems faced by rural communities in Nigeria (Imoh, 2013; Ikechukwu-Ilomuanya, Omeje, Oyeoku & Eseadi, 2016) and exploring how participation, interest and involvement of community members/beneficiaries in the planning and execution of development programmes can accelerate the process of development (Gambo & Simon, n.d) as well as how participatory communication can be used in conflict resolution in Northern Nigeria (Smith, Kabir & Felicia, 2016). This shows that the few studies conducted in Nigeria in the area of participatory communication have not explored how participatory communication for development is applied in development projects in Nigeria, in terms of process and strategies of participatory communication used in development efforts. Therefore, the researcher raises the question, how is participatory communication for development applied in agricultural development projects in terms of process and strategies of participatory communication?

Furthermore, findings of previous studies conducted in different contexts and locations have revealed that, the partial implementation of participatory communication for development approach is also influenced by some factors such as, administrative obstacles (Servaes & Arnst 1999), institutional factors (Ali & Sonderling 2017; Tufte & Mefapulus 2009; Waisboard 2008), governance factors (Muro & Namusonge, 2015), cultural factors (Claramita, Nugraheni, Dalen & Vleuten, 2012). Some researchers in the field of development communication regard this partial implementation of the approach as low participation therefore tagging it as “Pseudo participation” (Tufte & Mefalopolus 2009). This lack of genuine participation in development process through communication of the local community can significantly influence the failure of development projects (Ali & Sonderling 2017; Imoh 2013). According to Babalola (2017), complete involvement of the local communities is required for the sustainability of such agricultural development projects, because the failure of such agricultural development projects can be caused by the partial implementation. Servaes (2000, p.84) concludes that communication and people's involvement in development process could be two central factors that determine the successes and failures of most development projects across the developing world.

Therefore, it becomes extremely important to understand the factors that challenge the genuine participation of the local community in development efforts in the Nigerian context, particularly in agricultural development projects which are being viciously implemented nationwide as a means of reviving the nation's economy, which has been hit by economic recession since the last quarter of 2014 (Babalola, 2017). An understanding of the main factors that challenge the application of participatory communication in development projects, will help in minimizing or avoiding the problems while promoting genuine participatory approach. Based on this, the question, what are the factors that challenge the total application of participatory development communication in agricultural development projects in Plateau State, Nigeria? is raised.

The researcher thinks that this research is timely and crucial because of the level of underdevelopment and poverty in developing countries and especially in Nigeria which is the country where the current study is conducted; there is the need to learn how to properly implement sustainable and effective participatory development projects in various contexts through which the lives of marginalized and poor people can be transformed.

More so, findings of this study will help other development agencies that intend to use the participatory communication approach to understand the factors that influence the application of this approach in the context in which it is studied. To this end, the following research questions were raised to help in bridging the gaps identified by this study and to provide an in-depth understanding of how participatory communication for development is applied in real life situations and the factors that challenge the total application of participatory communication for development all through the cycle of agricultural development projects.



### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. How do agricultural development agencies perceive participation, participatory communication and the roles of participatory communication in relation to their agricultural development programmes in Plateau State?
2. How is participatory communication for development applied in terms of process and strategies?
3. What are the factors that challenge the application of participatory communication for development throughout the whole cycle of agricultural development projects in Plateau State, Nigeria?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The specific objective of this study is to explore, understand and describe how the theory of participatory communication for development is applied by agricultural development projects in terms of strategies and process. This description will help development agencies to have a more realistic view of the theory, thereby helping them to make informed decisions in terms of applying the approach. More so, an insight on the issues surrounding the practical application of this approach, will help agricultural development agencies to effectively apply this development communication approach in their development endeavours. The following are the specific objectives of the research. It is hoped that the study will be guided by the objectives, thereby providing answers to the research questions raised in this study.

1. To explore how agricultural development agencies perceive participation, participatory communication and the roles of participatory communication in relation to their agricultural development programmes in Plateau State.
2. To explore how participatory communication for development is applied in terms of process and strategies.
3. To explore the factors that challenge the application of participatory communication for development throughout the whole cycle of agricultural development projects in Plateau State, Nigeria.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

#### **Policy Makers**

The study will help in broadening the understanding of policy makers about how participatory communication for development is interpreted and applied in agricultural development projects. It will help other organizations working in similar context understand the factors affecting the application of participatory communication for development so that the problems can be minimized and if possible avoided while promoting the adoption of genuine participatory approach. Integration of participatory communication for development in development efforts can also be enhanced through the findings of the study.

In addition, findings of the study shall provide an understanding to development agencies which include non-governmental and governmental agencies as to the role which participatory communication plays in development projects. This understanding shall help development agencies and policy makers involved in development works which are similar to that of this study, take a better approach in the implementation of participatory communication for development in development projects to avoid futile investment.

The researcher thinks that this research is timely and crucial because of the level of underdevelopment and poverty in developing countries, especially in Nigeria which is the country under study; there is need to learn how to properly implement sustainable and effective participatory development projects using participatory communication in various contexts through which the lives of marginalized and poor people can be transformed.

### **Theory Contribution**

Compared to other approaches of development communication, participatory communication is still a relatively new field which requires much work, so as to enable the refinement and improvement of its theories and practices. It is hoped that this work will be able to make little contribution towards that step. Therefore, understanding how participatory communication is conceived and applied in real world settings will help in providing better understanding of its practical application which could be incorporated in the theories of participatory communication. Incorporating the practical aspects of participatory communication into the theoretical explanations, will further strengthen the theory of participatory communication as a practical theory that is capable of explaining the issues related to its practical application in real life projects, rather than just the theoretical explanations which are not based on practice.

Theoretically, the potential of participatory communication for sustainable development has been over-emphasized. Participation has become an axiom in the development discourse which is presented as the only route to sustainable development. However, at the practical level, its potential is challenged by some factors which are not captured in the theory of participatory communication for development. It is hoped that the findings of this study will reveal some of the factors that challenge the application of this approach in the context which this study is carried out. This knowledge will contribute to the future growth of the participatory communication theory. More so, it is hoped that the findings of this study will make meaningful contribution to the growing body of literature regarding the studied phenomena. The findings of this research shall also reveal the gap that exist between the theory and practice of participatory communication for development, and why this gap exists as there is just little literature on the difference between the theory and practice. More so, findings of the study shall reveal the factors that challenge the partial application of participatory communication in development programs.

More so, findings of this study will serve as a baseline study for future research in this area.

### **Methodological Contribution**

Even though, different models of participatory communication have been proposed by development scholars and researchers, a framework for the implementation of this approach will be provided by this work to support such participatory communication models.

Based on the findings of this study, a practical framework for the implementation of participatory communication in the context of the study will be proposed. This framework can be tested in other contexts similar to that of the study context. The framework shall contain the criteria for the use of participatory communication in projects design, implementation and evaluation, because majority of the studies on participatory communication for development only highlight its potentials (Jacobson & Storey, 2004) without defining the criteria for its application (Chang, 2006; Jacobson & Storey, 2004). The criteria will be provided based on the factors that influence the application of the approach. However, the researcher does not claim that the framework will be suitable for all development projects and context, but it is just to help practitioners in the field of development understand certain factors that are crucial to the implementation of participatory communication in development projects. The framework will be open to improvement by other researchers who find more relevant aspects that should be incorporated into the framework, so as to strengthen its transferability to other development projects and contexts.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The current study which is meant to be exploratory only covers a specific scope which is the application of participatory communication for development in agricultural development programs in Plateau State Nigeria. This study will be conducted in Plateau State Nigeria because it is one of the states in Nigeria with significant agricultural activities therefore attracting the interest of more agricultural development agencies. This may affect the generalizability of the findings. In other words, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other development context, such as health, education or environmental development.

The participants for this study were project coordinators of development programs that are directly engaged in the field with the farmers; this way, rich data was obtained. The farmers were not included, despite their participation in the development programmes. The contribution of farmers in this study may have provided more insight on the phenomenon under study, in the sense that, the farmers would have been able to provide more insight on their participation based on their own perspectives. This way, the researcher would have been able to compare the data obtained from the

project coordinators and the farmers, thereby allowing the provision of richer description of the phenomenon.

Another limitation of this study pertains to the data collection process. During the collection of data in this study, the researcher planned to have one-on-one personal interview with the project coordinators, but on getting to the field, slight changes occurred. In the first organization, the researcher was assigned one project coordinator to participate in the interview, as planned. However, on getting to the second organization, the researcher was assigned a group of respondents, thereby making it a group interview, which was contrary to the initial plan of the researcher. This occurrence in the data collection process, limits this study in terms of the depth of data obtained. There would have been balance in the data obtained if a group interview was also conducted in the first organization; this may lead to a concern of bias in the study, even though it was not planned occurrence.

## 1.7 Definition of Keywords

**Participatory Communication for development:** is defined in this study as the use of interpersonal, mass and traditional means of communication to involve communities which are beneficiaries of a development project in decision-making of their own development process (Servaes, 2001).

**Development:** in this study development as an idea is defined as improving the well-being of individuals and the whole society through the provision of facilities that meets their needs (Naomi, 2005).

**Development Agency:** is defined in this study as government or non-government organizations that support social, political and economic development within a particular location (country, state, city or district) through the provision of resources and assistance (Economic Development Agency n.d).

**Development Projects:** in this study development project is defined as a set of connected activities which are carefully and strategically planned in order to facilitate social, political or economic development in a specific location within a given time frame and budget.

**Paradigm:** In the context of this work, paradigm is defined in its common connotation as stated by Guba (1990, p. 17) in Mefapulos (2003) as “a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry.”

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