

EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND MASS COMMUNICATION means

Conducting a campaign involves using different information media and means of creating awareness and disseminating knowledge in a coordinated manner, with their respective roles and uses carefully defined.

The aim of a campaign is to focus public attention on a particular frequently arising problem and to solve it effectively. A campaign is usually undertaken whenever an important problem affects a large number of people and an attempt is made to solve it without forcing those concerned to change their way of doing things or to use new means or procedures.

The various types of campaign

Awareness Campaign: putting people on the alert and predisposing the public towards more comprehensive information and instructions for action;

Information Campaign: familiarising the public with a discovery, innovation or technique by describing them analytically, convincingly and in a favourable light.

Animation methods may also be used in a campaign for direct encouragement and mobilization of the public to undertake specific action.

A campaign must be time limited and cover clearly defined topics. The organisation of a campaign must be governed by appropriate rules and methodologies. It is therefore recommended that , once the formal decision has been taken and the subject defined, a committee composed of representatives from all sectors concerned should be set up.

This committee should specify the objectives of the campaign and how it is to be organised, and select the methods best suited to the nature of the topic and the target audience.

The cost of the various operations involved should be calculated according to the choice of means to be employed in terms of both human and material resources.

The means of communication to be used are generally classified in three groups:

1. Mass Communication means - radio, press, posters:

Mass communications is undiscerning. Those who express themselves on a subject often do not know their listeners, the target population. The messages are disseminated at random, often unplanned and anonymously. The use of mass communications, therefore, needs knowledge and expertise. Used in the correct way, it stimulates the interest of the listeners by relaying useful information which can be used in conjunction with other methods, either individually or in a group. For example, posters are among the most frequently used methods to put across an idea, a practice, or information concerning an emergency situation. Hence, we will insist on certain rules for their use as a means of illustration.

Posters aim to attract the attention of passers-by, to make them assimilate an idea or a fact, and to urge them to favour this idea, to seek information or to act in some particular way.

An average person only glances briefly at ordinary objects, just long enough to identify them. But if something in these objects attracts his attention or stimulates his interest, the passer-by frequently looks at them a little while longer. The concept and illustration of posters is prompted by this principle. Your poster will perhaps only be favoured with a single glance; its message should therefore be simple and clear.

- Determine exactly what audience you aim to reach.
- Know what you wish to achieve vis-a-vis your audience.
- Use a concise and striking formula
- Formulate or express graphically the basic central idea of your message.

The words and image should be perceived in just one glance and should provoke a reaction in the passer-by.

Posters normally complement other methods of communication, they do not replace them. They are often used to launch a campaign. They may also serve to reinforce an educational programme, prolonging its impact.

Making and using posters requires qualities of exactness and precision to avoid doubt and ambiguity. It is recommended that a sample of a poster be tried out before a large number is run off.

A good poster should take its inspiration from the reference system and symbolic representation of the milieu for which it is intended, to assist rapid and accurate understanding.

2. Group Means - organised group visits, demonstrations, meetings:

Group means allow people to analyse, appreciate and decide issues amongst themselves according to internal and external factors which affect the group's dynamism. The decisions made in a successful group meeting must reflect the different positions of the participants, their aspirations, ways of thinking of doing things, and, above all, their interests. Conflicting ideas and differences of opinion are easier to resolve when the members of a group realise that any decisions taken respect individual interests or succeed in bringing about improvements and changes sought by the group. Any group, formal or informal, holds meetings to reach objectives, to determine ways of action to organise plans of action, and to make people understand the risks, advantages and results of projects to be implemented or already in hand.

The meetings are therefore arranged according to their objectives, their nature and the status and duties of those motivating the group.

The meetings constitute an efficient means of communication. The important point is to persuade a group member to participate, as the more members who participate, the more favourable their attitude towards the group will become, and the more they will want to identify with the group. It has also been proved that the most effective groups are those which have a more satisfactory system of communication than others.

Other group means include simple visual or audio-visual aids such as flannelgraph, the blackboard or slides, or the flip-chart.

3. Individual Means - household visits, circulars, face-to face encounters:

People generally listen to advice and suggestions from those who know and appreciate their problems and so they respect this knowledge. This is why personal and direct contact can be of very great importance in putting across new ideas, for obtaining the cooperation of opinion leaders, decision makers and those with influence, to encourage people to adopt practices which are essential to the changes you wish to make.

Personal visits are frequently used as a method of communication. They are, nevertheless, of a delicate nature, as the visitor to enter a private domain in order to relay a message which might not have any relevance to the inhabitants' immediate concerns. The response and cooperation of those visited will depend on how information and new ideas are put over by the visitor. A visit must therefore be well thought out so that the objectives of the visit can be attained. Also, the visitor, who is a type of messenger trying to reach a target, must make sure his message is in understandable language in order for it to be accepted. Language, here, not only means verbal expression, but the whole range of terms in the vernacular, specific to the culture of those concerned.

The choice of means must be guided by the nature of the target group and the conditions in which it will be employed in the field. It is also important to evaluate the impact, and to design supporting actions to consolidate the effects.

Boubacar Sock,

UNICEF Regional Advisor in Social Communication.-



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Notes

Paper (possibly presented at the Swaziland workshop) by Boubacar Sock, Regional Adviser in Social Communication, UNICEF EARO, Nairobi. The paper discusses various types of communication campaigns, including mass media: radio, press, posters; organized group visits, demonstrations and meetings; and household visits, circulars, face-to-face encounters.

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