

EVENT REPORT

WORKSHOP ON CAMPAIGN PLANNING

DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM

TEZPUR UNIVERSITY

On 11 November 2019, the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism conducted a day-long seminar with the third semester MCJ students on the topic “Campaign planning” in the department premises. The workshop was headed by Dr. Sanjeev Kumar, an independent consultant, trainer, guest faculty at IIMC, BIMTECH, Tezpur University, IIHMR, XIC, IIPA, NALSA, DLSA, FICCI and a national level resource person in advisory boards, think tanks and review committees.

Dr Sanjeev Kumar, PhD (JNU), MBA (MDI), PGD in Communication (XIC), has over 30 years of experience in the development, communication and media, research and capacity building arena working with Government (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation), the private sector (Medica Synergie) and national and international civil society (The Michel Group USA, HLSP UK). He has previously worked in senior and top management capacity full time with MOHFW, MWCD, NACO, Population Council, CARE India, HLFPPPT, PATH, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNDP, World Bank and PWC. He has worked with research organizations like AC Nielson, CMS, IPSOS, TNS MODE and VIMARSH. He has been a part of several large scale social campaigns, film production and communication campaign evaluations.

The purpose of the workshop was to help the students understand the concept of campaign planning to enable them to formulate successful communication campaigns on social issues concerning the communities in and around them. It was conducted over two sessions in which he discussed his experiences, did a few practical activities and interacted with the students to help them develop their understanding of the concepts.

SESSION I: INTRODUCTORY SESSION

In this session, Dr. Sanjeev Kumar introduced himself to the students attending the workshop. He then asked the students to introduce themselves in ways that highlight their hobbies and unique pursuits. In this session, he brought out the importance of situation analysis in a campaign plan. He talked about how conditioning of our minds tends to stop us from thinking differently. Conditioning is also a large part of the reason as to why most communities do not undergo a behavioral change despite having prior knowledge about it. Later he asked, “What is a message?”. To this, the students replied with variants like message is information, emotion, gesture, request, question, etc.

After a short tea break, the students were asked to sit in the groups in which they did their campaign planning. He taught the step by step process of campaign planning and emphasised on the importance of primary data in the formation of a baseline. Primary data can be collected in the form of surveys which can be a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) or a Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) survey. This formative research is done to know about the existing knowledge of the community. “Knowledge is not equal to doing it,” says Mr. Kumar. When the community situation is ‘I don’t know and I don’t do it’ it means the campaign has to focus on creating awareness but when the situation is ‘I know but I still don’t do it’ then the campaign will have to focus on behavioral change. Hence, finding out the reasons behind the existing behavior patterns is important. This is referred to as problem analysis. To explain this better, Mr. Kumar cited the example of the Swachh Bharat Mission in which he was an active member. To make the community realise that what they are doing is wrong, they have to be triggered using a visualization process that would help change their perception. He says, “Changing knowledge is easy but changing perception is not”. Finding out the underlying beliefs, perceptions, barriers, norms, opinions, ideas, myths and misconceptions within the community will help realise the reasons behind their current behavior which can only be found out by formative research. Only after this can a strategy be planned.

He then conducted the 3 circle experiment. Having shown 3 identical circles on the projector screen he asked the students to spot the differences between them. He later reveals that each of them was the shadow of a cone, a circle and a cylinder when seen from above. This shows that if we only look at the shadows, we will miss the reality behind it. Hence, it is important to look at a problem from all possible perspectives before setting out to find the solutions to it. “Formative assessment will give us all the blocks and research will give us all the keys”, he said.

Towards the end of the session, he conducted the rope experiment where he tied the hands of a pair of students and got them intertwined with each other. He then asked them to detangle without opening or cutting the rope. This exercise highlighted the fact that most times the solution of a problem lies elsewhere and not only in the affected area as the ropes could be detangled through one of the four nodes where the ropes were tied to their hands and not in the region where the ropes intersected.

The workshop then recessed for a lunch break of 40 minutes.



Figure: During the rope experiment

SESSION II: CAMPAIGN PLANNING SESSION

In the second half of the campaign post lunch, each of the groups were asked to give a three-minute presentation of their respective communication campaign planning progress detailing all the aspects like situation analysis, stakeholder and target group identification, communication objectives and strategies, campaign message design etc. As the groups presented one after the other, the workshop emerged as a forum for discussion for a range of topics of local significance like- awareness campaign on increasing total fertility rate (TFR), deprivation of basic needs of electricity in Amolapam village, campaign for spreading adult literacy, electricity conservation in Tezpur University campaign, safety of T.U students outside the immediate campus boundaries, facilitating employment opportunities amongst people of Napaam, body shaming awareness at Tezpur University campaign, mom-shaming awareness campaign, prenatal care campaign and gender sensitisation campaign.

With every topic, he suggested a few changes in the way to make the implementation crisp and efficient. In the case of the first group, he pointed out that they should aim to reduce the TFR and not focus on birth control, which was their earlier motive. He also narrowed down their target audience to newly married couples and couples with one or two children only as opposed to their earlier target of all adults. With the second group, he highlighted the importance of making informed choices. He said that in order to combat the problem of lack of electricity the people should be made aware of all the choices available to them (solar panels and the traditional electric lines) so that they can make the right choice and not regret it later. As far as the third group was concerned he brought out the difference between an intervention and a communication process. He said sometimes campaign planners may overstep their boundaries and propose an intervention instead of a communication campaign. During the presentation by the fourth group, Mr. Kumar asked the members to be specific about their output products whether it is in the form of posters, pamphlets, street plays, etc. During this discussion, he recommended the students that whatever data is to be collected must be as recent as possible and should always be verified from multiple sources.

The discussion was punctuated by a short tea break, where the students informally interacted with Mr. Kumar who gave them an interesting exercise to encourage analytical thinking. The students were asked to form a circular human chain and were then directed to face the opposite side without breaking the chain. The students tried a few solutions before finally making a breakthrough and solving the problem, thus marking the end of the break.

As the session resumed and the other campaigns were discussed, Mr. Kumar used his expertise and experience to identify the loopholes and gaps in the planning exercise and discussed possible solutions to bridge them. He invited the audience's intervention into this process in an attempt to gain a multifaceted understanding of the problem at hand. In the process, the students were also acquainted with technical terminologies and data gathering sources and procedures, focusing on understanding as to what will "trigger" a behavioural change in each case and how to fulfil the desired communication objectives.

Thereafter, he gave a brief presentation on 'SBCC- Social and behavior change communication' to explain the levels of campaign planning (self, interpersonal level, community level and the enabling environment) the cross-cutting factors to it (information, motivation, ability to act and norms), the strategies of communication (behaviour change communication, social mobilization and advocacy), the need for SMART (specific, measurable, attainable/achievable, relevant, timely) objectives, and finally, the need to see things from a different perspective. In this regard, he stated, "we fall into trap doing the obvious, see beyond the obvious, take a challenge", emphasising that the best solutions may emerge when we look at things from a different perspective; a point he proved further with a series of optical illusions. As the workshop neared its end, he appreciated the collective efforts of the students towards the planning of the campaigns that had been presented and further boosted them with the words, "behaviour change initiation is easy, but behaviour change maintenance is difficult, strive for both, best of luck."