

Impact of education and communication on behaviour change

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Abstract - This paper delved into the intricate relationship between educational interventions and communication strategies in the context of fostering significant behaviour change. With a focus on comprehensive exploration, the investigation aimed to uncover the synergistic effects of these two key components in influencing individuals' behaviours positively. Through an extensive literature review, various educational interventions and communication strategies were identified, ranging from traditional didactic methods to innovative technology-driven approaches. The study explored how these interventions were strategically communicated to target audiences across diverse settings, including healthcare, education, and environmental conservation. The study underscores the pivotal role of effective communication strategies as a catalyst for enhancing the impact of educational interventions on behaviour change. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between these two components and offer valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers seeking to design and implement comprehensive behaviour change initiatives.

Keywords: education, communication, behaviour change, awareness, knowledge acquisition.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of education and human development, the quest to induce meaningful behaviour change stands as a paramount endeavour. The dynamic interplay between educational interventions and communication strategies emerges as a cornerstone in the pursuit of fostering such transformative shifts. As societies grapple with multifaceted challenges and opportunities, the need to comprehend and harness this interplay becomes increasingly essential (Ngigi & Busolo, 2018). This comprehensive exploration embarks upon an intellectual odyssey that delves deep into the intricate synergy between educational interventions and communication strategies, unraveling their combined potential to shape and steer individual and collective behaviours.

In this intricate tapestry of knowledge, the threads of educational interventions are woven with precision, informed by pedagogical expertise and a profound understanding of human cognition. From traditional classroom settings to innovative digital platforms, these interventions encapsulate a spectrum of methodologies aimed at instilling knowledge, honing skills, and shaping attitudes. Concurrently, communication strategies wield their influence, transcending mere information transmission to become conduits of persuasion, empathy, and engagement. The art of effective communication, infused with rhetoric, psychology, and sociocultural nuances, as Abamecha et al (2021) observe, has the power to not only disseminate information but also to spark inspiration, challenge preconceptions, and ignite the flames of lasting behavioural transformation.

This exploration transcends disciplinary boundaries, drawing from the realms of psychology, education, sociology, marketing, and beyond. It unveils the synergistic potential that arises when these seemingly disparate domains converge, shedding light on how tailored communication strategies amplify the impact of educational interventions. Whether orchestrating public health campaigns to combat endemic diseases, instigating environmental consciousness, or fostering inclusive and equitable societies, the nexus of education and communication emerges as a formidable force for driving societal progress (Nwagu et al, 2020).

Amid the digital age's rapid proliferation, the exploration takes into account the transformative power of technological innovations. Digital platforms, social media, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, among other tools, wield the potential to reshape educational interventions and communication strategies, thereby reshuffling the cards in the behavior change paradigm. The exploration, therefore, engages with the fluidity and dynamism of contemporary mediums, charting their integration into the fabric of meaningful behavior change endeavors.

Education and communication are closely intertwined and often go hand in hand. Nancy and Dongre (2021) point out that effective communication is crucial in conveying educational information, while education provides the knowledge and understanding necessary for effective communication. Here's how they interact:

- a. **Information Dissemination:** Education involves the imparting of knowledge, skills, and values to individuals. Communication is the vehicle through which this information is shared. Effective communication ensures that educational messages are clear, accurate, and comprehensible to the intended audience.
- b. **Two-Way Exchange:** Communication allows for a two-way exchange of information. Educators can gather feedback from their audience through communication channels, such as discussions, surveys, or interactive sessions. This feedback informs the adaptation and improvement of educational content.
- c. **Engagement and Participation:** Effective communication strategies, such as active listening, engaging storytelling, and interactive presentations, enhance learner engagement and participation in educational activities. Engaged learners are more likely to grasp and retain the information being conveyed.

- d. **Contextualization:** Communication helps contextualize educational content by relating it to real-life situations, personal experiences, or societal issues. This aids in making the educational material relevant and relatable to the learners.
- e. **Behavioural Change:** Communication plays a vital role in motivating and inspiring behavioural change. Well-communicated educational messages can influence attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, fostering positive change in individuals and communities.

Behaviour change is a complex process that can be influenced by various factors. Some key factors include:

Knowledge and Awareness: Education provides individuals with the necessary knowledge and awareness of the benefits and risks associated with certain behaviours. Without proper understanding, behaviour change is unlikely to occur (Anonim, 2017).

Motivation and Incentives: People are more likely to change their behaviour when they are motivated by personal or external incentives, such as health improvements, financial gains, social recognition, or rewards.

Perceived Benefits and Barriers: Individuals assess the perceived benefits of adopting a new behaviour against the perceived barriers or obstacles. Behaviour change is more likely when the perceived benefits outweigh the barriers.

Social Influence and Norms: Social interactions and the influence of friends, family, peers, and cultural norms play a significant role in shaping behaviour. People often conform to social norms and seek approval from their social circles.

Self-Efficacy: A person's belief in their own ability to successfully carry out a behaviour change greatly impacts their likelihood of success. Higher self-efficacy leads to increased confidence and persistence in adopting new behaviours.

Health Beliefs and Attitudes: Individual beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding health and well-being can impact the willingness to change behaviour. Positive health beliefs can encourage proactive behaviour change (Gurupada & Kola, 2019).

Access and Resources: Availability of resources, such as time, money, facilities, and support, can either facilitate or hinder behaviour change. Limited access to resources may act as a barrier.

Cues and Triggers: Environmental cues or triggers, such as reminders, prompts, or situational cues, can prompt individuals to engage in a desired behaviour.

Stage of Change: Behaviour change often follows a series of stages, including precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. Tailoring interventions to the individual's current stage of change enhances the likelihood of success.

Reinforcement and Feedback: Positive reinforcement and constructive feedback can reinforce desired behaviours and sustain behaviour change over time.

Understanding these factors and their interplay can help educators, communicators, and behaviour change practitioners design effective strategies to convey information, inspire change, and promote positive outcomes.

In today's rapidly evolving world, the empowerment of individuals and societies is closely intertwined with the acquisition of knowledge. Education stands as a powerful catalyst for change, enabling people to acquire skills, information, and perspectives that shape their attitudes and perceptions (Nyunt et al., 2015). This interconnected process is pivotal in driving progress, fostering innovation, and promoting positive societal transformation.

Education as a Catalyst for Change:

Education is a potent catalyst for change, serving as a cornerstone for personal and societal advancement. It equips individuals with the tools needed to adapt to a changing landscape, enabling them to confront challenges and embrace opportunities. Through education, people are empowered to challenge the status quo, question assumptions, and drive innovation. By fostering critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and creativity, education empowers individuals to become active participants in shaping the world around them.

Acquiring Skills and Information:

The acquisition of skills and information is a fundamental outcome of education that empowers individuals to succeed in various spheres of life. From practical vocational skills to advanced academic knowledge, education equips people with the competence to navigate complex professional environments. These skills not only enhance employability but also instill a sense of confidence and self-efficacy. As individuals become proficient in diverse areas, they gain the autonomy to make informed decisions, pursue their passions, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Shaping Attitudes and Perceptions:

Education is not limited to the transmission of facts; it also shapes attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives. Exposure to diverse cultures, ideas, and viewpoints encourages tolerance, empathy, and a broader understanding of the world. Education cultivates open-mindedness and encourages critical engagement with societal issues. By challenging biases and fostering inclusivity, education empowers individuals to become agents of positive change. Furthermore, education enables individuals to recognize the importance of ethical considerations, promoting responsible and compassionate decision-making.

The empowerment facilitated by education is a multi-faceted process, encompassing the catalyst for change, the acquisition of skills and information, and the shaping of attitudes and perceptions. As individuals and societies embrace education, they gain the tools to overcome challenges, contribute meaningfully, and create a better future. By recognizing education's transformative potential, we can collectively work towards a more inclusive, innovative, and enlightened world (Edgar, 2012). Empowering through knowledge is not only a pathway to personal fulfillment but also a driving force behind positive societal evolution.

Effective communication, as Arlinghaus and Johnston (2017) explain, plays a crucial role in various aspects of human interaction and behaviour. The following points highlight how communication can influence and shape individual and collective behaviours:

i. Communicating Intentions and Goals:

Communication is a powerful tool for conveying intentions, objectives, and goals. When individuals or groups clearly communicate their intentions and goals, it helps create a shared understanding and alignment among stakeholders. This alignment can drive cooperation, collaboration, and coordinated efforts toward achieving common objectives (Suleiman, 2022). Whether in personal relationships, business settings, or social initiatives, transparent communication about intentions and goals fosters trust and reduces misunderstandings.

ii. Influencing Social Norms and Expectations:

Communication plays a pivotal role in shaping and reinforcing social norms and expectations. Norms are unwritten rules that guide behavior within a society or group. Effective communication can influence these norms by promoting certain behaviours, values, or beliefs. Through media, advertising, public messaging, and interpersonal interactions, communication can challenge existing norms and introduce new perspectives, eventually leading to shifts in collective behaviour. For instance, public health campaigns can use communication strategies to promote behaviours like wearing seatbelts, quitting smoking, or adopting healthier diets, ultimately altering societal norms.

iii. Overcoming Barriers to Behaviour Change:

People often encounter obstacles when attempting to change their behaviour, whether it's adopting healthier habits, embracing sustainable practices, or making other positive changes. Effective communication can help overcome these barriers by providing information, motivation, and support. By addressing concerns, providing clear instructions, and offering incentives, communication campaigns can empower individuals to make desired behavioural changes. Tailored messaging, feedback loops, and social support networks can reinforce these efforts and assist individuals in navigating challenges on their path to behaviour change.

Effective communication serves as a catalyst for various aspects of behaviour, ranging from personal intentions and goals to societal norms and expectations. By conveying messages clearly, influencing perspectives, and addressing obstacles, communication plays a pivotal role in guiding individuals and groups toward positive behavioral outcomes.

1. Extent of Behaviour Modification

Behaviour modification is the process of systematically altering an individual's behaviour through various techniques and strategies. The extent of behaviour modification can vary based on several factors, including the degree of change, the duration of impact, and the ability to sustain new behaviours over time (SNV, 2016). Let's explore each aspect in more detail:

a. Gradual vs. Radical Changes:

Gradual Changes: This approach involves making small, incremental adjustments to a person's behaviour over time. Gradual changes are often easier to implement and sustain, as they allow individuals to adapt slowly to new habits and routines (Onuekwe, 2015). This approach is suitable for long-term changes and is less likely to result in resistance or relapse.

Radical Changes: Radical behaviour modification involves making significant and swift alterations to behaviour. While this approach can lead to rapid results, it might also be more challenging to maintain over the long term. Radical changes may be suitable for specific situations that require immediate shifts in behaviour but may require extra effort to ensure lasting effects.

b. Long-Term vs. Short-Term Impact:

Short-Term Impact: Some behaviour modification techniques may produce rapid changes in behaviour, but these changes may not be sustainable over the long term. Short-term impact can be useful for addressing immediate concerns or crises but may require additional strategies to ensure lasting change.

Long-Term Impact: Effective behavior modification aims to create lasting changes that endure over time. This often involves a more comprehensive approach that considers the underlying causes of the behavior and focuses on addressing them to ensure lasting and meaningful change.

c. Sustaining New Behaviours Over Time:

Sustaining New Behaviours: One of the key challenges in behaviour modification is maintaining the new behaviours once they have been established. Strategies for sustaining new behaviors include reinforcement, social support, goal setting, self-monitoring, and creating a conducive environment that supports the desired behaviours.

Relapse Prevention: Relapse is a common concern in behaviour modification. Techniques for preventing relapse involve identifying triggers, developing coping strategies, and providing ongoing support to help individuals overcome challenges and setbacks.

In many cases, a combination of gradual changes and a focus on long-term impact tends to be most effective in behaviour modification. Rapid, radical changes might be appropriate in specific situations, but they often benefit from ongoing reinforcement and support to ensure sustained success (Sullivan, 2011). Ultimately, the extent of behaviour modification will depend on the individual's goals, the complexity of the behaviour being modified, and the resources available to support the change process.

2. Successful Behaviour Change Campaigns in Nigeria

i. Polio Eradication Campaign:

Nigeria successfully tackled the challenge of polio through a comprehensive behavior change campaign. The Nigerian government, along with international organizations like WHO and UNICEF, launched awareness programs and engaged with local communities to address vaccine hesitancy. This campaign led to a significant reduction in polio cases and contributed to the eventual eradication of the disease in the country.

ii. HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention:

Nigeria has implemented successful behaviour change campaigns to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and promote safe practices. These campaigns have utilized various communication channels, including mass media, community outreach, and peer education. As a result, there has been increased awareness, improved condom use, and a decline in new HIV infections.

iii. Almajiri Education Initiative:

The Almajiri Education Initiative focuses on providing formal education to out-of-school children, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Through this initiative, many Almajiri (Quranic school students) have been integrated into the formal education system, improving their access to quality education and enhancing their future prospects.

iv. Girl-Child Education Initiatives:

Several organizations in Nigeria have worked to promote and support girl-child education. One example is the "Girls' Education Project," which aims to improve girls' enrollment and retention in schools. Through targeted campaigns and community engagement, the initiative has led to increased enrollment and reduced dropout rates among girls.

v. Teacher Training and Capacity Building:

Various educational initiatives in Nigeria have focused on improving teacher training and professional development. The "Teacher Development Program" by the Nigerian government and partners has led to better-trained teachers, resulting in improved learning outcomes for students.

vi. STEM Education Programs:

Organizations like the "Bridge International Academies" have introduced STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education programs in Nigeria. These initiatives have enhanced students' skills in these fields, preparing them for future careers in technology and innovation.

vii. Nutrition Education and Behaviour Change:

The "Alive & Thrive" program in Nigeria has successfully combined education and communication to improve infant and young child feeding practices. Through various media channels, this initiative has promoted exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding, resulting in improved child nutrition.

viii. Financial Literacy Campaigns:

The Central Bank of Nigeria's financial literacy campaigns have aimed to educate citizens about responsible financial practices, banking services, and entrepreneurship. These campaigns have empowered individuals to make informed financial decisions and improve their economic well-being.

ix. Voter Education and Civic Engagement:

Ahead of elections, Nigeria has seen successful voter education campaigns that use various communication channels to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities as voters. These campaigns have contributed to increased voter turnout and civic engagement. These examples showcase how behaviour change campaigns, educational initiatives, and the education-communication nexus have been effectively leveraged in Nigeria to address various social and developmental challenges.

3. Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Balancing Persuasion and Autonomy:

Ethical Consideration: When aiming to change behaviour through education and communication, there's a delicate balance between using persuasive techniques and respecting individual autonomy. Persuasion techniques can be powerful tools for promoting positive behaviour change, but they should be used responsibly and transparently. It's crucial to avoid manipulative tactics that infringe upon people's ability to make informed choices ([Edberg, 2015](#)). Striking the right balance involves providing accurate information, acknowledging individual agency, and allowing individuals to make decisions aligned with their values.

Addressing Misinformation and Miscommunication:

Ethical Consideration: Education and communication efforts can inadvertently contribute to misinformation or miscommunication if not handled carefully. Ethical responsibility involves ensuring the accuracy, credibility, and transparency of the information being communicated. Efforts should be made to correct misinformation and provide well-researched, evidence-based content. This requires

ongoing monitoring, fact-checking, and a commitment to rectify any unintended spread of false or misleading information.

Ensuring Inclusivity and Accessibility:

Ethical Consideration: Education and communication campaigns aimed at behaviour change must be designed with inclusivity and accessibility in mind. It's essential to consider the diverse needs, backgrounds, and abilities of the target audience. This includes using inclusive language, providing content in various formats (such as audio, visual, and written), and ensuring that communication is culturally sensitive. Failing to address these considerations can lead to marginalization and exclusion of certain groups, perpetuating inequalities rather than promoting positive change.

In all these challenges, a set of ethical principles can guide the development and implementation of education and communication strategies for behaviour change:

Transparency: Clearly communicate intentions, sources of information, and potential biases to foster trust and informed decision-making.

Respect for Autonomy: Empower individuals to make their own choices by providing accurate information and avoiding manipulative tactics.

Accountability: Take responsibility for the content and impact of communication efforts, correcting misinformation and addressing unintended consequences promptly.

Inclusivity: Ensure that education and communication efforts are accessible and relevant to a diverse range of individuals, accounting for cultural, linguistic, and accessibility considerations.

Continuous Evaluation: Regularly assess the effectiveness, impact, and unintended consequences of behaviour change campaigns, adjusting strategies as needed based on feedback and evidence.

Collaboration: Involve relevant stakeholders, including community members, experts, and representatives from different backgrounds, to ensure well-rounded and ethical communication strategies.

Empathy and Empowerment: Approach behaviour change communication with empathy, understanding the perspectives and challenges of the target audience, and empowering them to make positive choices aligned with their values.

Addressing these challenges and adhering to these ethical considerations can help ensure that education and communication efforts effectively promote behaviour change while respecting individual autonomy, combating misinformation, and fostering inclusivity.

4. Education and Communication in Various Contexts

i. Health and Lifestyle Behaviour Changes:

[LaMorte \(2016\)](#) observes that education and communication play a crucial role in promoting positive health and lifestyle behavior changes. This can involve informing individuals about the benefits of healthy behaviors such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, stress management, and avoiding harmful habits like smoking or excessive alcohol consumption. Effective communication strategies may include:

Public health campaigns: Government agencies, NGOs, and healthcare organizations often launch campaigns to raise awareness about specific health issues and promote behaviour change.

Personalized interventions: Tailoring messages and interventions to an individual's specific needs and preferences can enhance the likelihood of behaviour change.

Health education programs: Schools, community centers, and healthcare facilities can provide educational programs to teach people about healthy behaviors.

ii. Environmental and Sustainable Practices:

Education and communication are essential for encouraging environmentally friendly and sustainable practices. People need to understand the impact of their actions on the environment and be motivated to adopt more sustainable behaviors. Effective approaches include:

Environmental education: Schools, museums, and community organizations can educate people about ecological systems, climate change, and the importance of conservation.

Public awareness campaigns: Governments and environmental groups use communication campaigns to raise awareness about issues like recycling, reducing plastic use, and conserving energy.

Corporate sustainability initiatives: Companies can educate their employees and customers about their efforts to reduce their environmental footprint and encourage similar actions.

iii. *Societal and Cultural Influences on Behaviours:*

Society and culture play a significant role in shaping individual behaviours and choices. Education and communication can help address societal and cultural factors that influence behaviour:

Cultural sensitivity: Communication efforts should consider cultural norms, values, and beliefs to effectively resonate with diverse audiences.

Social norms: Education campaigns can challenge negative social norms and promote positive ones, encouraging behaviours that are beneficial to individuals and society.

Peer influence: Peer networks can be harnessed to promote desired behaviors, such as healthy habits or sustainable practices.

Media and entertainment: Movies, TV shows, and social media can influence behaviours and attitudes. Positive portrayals of desired behaviours can lead to emulation.

In each of these contexts, effective education and communication strategies involve clear messaging, engaging content, targeted outreach, and a deep understanding of the specific audience's needs and motivations (Milgrom, 2015). Collaborations between government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, businesses, and community organizations are often necessary to achieve widespread behaviour change and create a positive impact on health, the environment, and society.

5. Collaborative Approaches for Lasting Change

a. *Partnerships between Educators and Communicators:*

Collaboration between educators and communicators can lead to more effective and holistic strategies for behaviour change. Educators possess expertise in curriculum development, pedagogy, and understanding learning needs, while communicators excel in crafting messages, reaching diverse audiences, and utilizing various media channels (CDC, 2018). By working together, educators and communicators can create educational content that is engaging, accessible, and tailored to the target audience's preferences and learning styles.

Benefits:

Effective Messaging: Communicators can help educators translate complex concepts into clear and relatable messages that resonate with the audience.

Wider Reach: Utilizing various communication channels and platforms can help disseminate information to a larger audience.

Behavioral Insights: Collaborative efforts can incorporate behavioral science principles to enhance the effectiveness of behavior change campaigns.

b. *Harnessing Technology for Amplified Impact on Behaviour Change:*

Technology plays a pivotal role in behaviour change initiatives, offering innovative ways to engage, educate, and track progress. From mobile apps to virtual reality experiences, technology can create interactive and immersive learning environments that encourage behaviour change.

Potential Approaches:

Mobile Apps: Develop apps that provide personalized recommendations, reminders, and progress tracking related to behaviour change goals.

Gamification: Integrate game elements into educational platforms to make the learning process more engaging and motivating.

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR): Use VR/AR to simulate real-life scenarios and allow users to practice desired behaviours in a controlled environment.

c. *Building Resilient Communities through Knowledge Sharing:*

Knowledge sharing and community engagement are essential for creating resilient communities that can adapt and thrive in the face of challenges (Laverack, 2017). Encouraging dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas within communities can lead to shared learning and collective action.

Community-Centered Strategies:

Workshops and Trainings: Organize workshops and training sessions where community members can learn about relevant topics and share their experiences.

Community Forums: Create online or offline platforms for community members to discuss challenges, solutions, and success stories related to behaviour change.

Local Champions: Identify and empower local leaders or champions who can drive behaviour change initiatives within their communities.

Incorporating these collaborative approaches can contribute to lasting change by combining the strengths of educators, communicators, technology, and communities. By working together, these stakeholders can create impactful and sustainable strategies for behaviour change and community resilience.

6. Looking Forward

a. Evolving Strategies in Education and Communication:

In the digital age, education and communication are rapidly evolving. Technology has transformed how we access information and learn. Online platforms, interactive content, virtual reality, and AI-driven personalized learning experiences are changing the landscape of education. As we move forward, the focus will likely be on creating more adaptive and engaging learning environments, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and ensuring equitable access to education for all.

b. Future Trends in Behaviour Change Research:

Behaviour change research plays a crucial role in areas like public health, sustainability, and personal development. In the future, we can expect advancements in understanding human behavior through a combination of psychology, neuroscience, and data analytics. Technology will likely enable more targeted interventions, such as personalized apps and wearable devices that promote healthy habits. Ethical considerations, privacy concerns, and cultural sensitivities will need to be carefully navigated as behaviour change strategies continue to evolve.

c. Cultivating a Positive and Empowered Society:

Creating a positive and empowered society involves addressing social and cultural issues, promoting inclusivity, and nurturing a sense of community. As we move forward, there may be a shift towards emphasizing emotional intelligence, empathy, and mindfulness in education and communication. Promoting positive narratives, highlighting success stories, and encouraging active citizenship can contribute to a more empowered and united society. Collaborative efforts between governments, organizations, and individuals will be crucial in shaping this future.

In all these areas, collaboration, innovation, and a holistic approach to addressing challenges will be key. It's important to consider the ethical implications of technological advancements and to ensure that progress is inclusive and beneficial for all members of society. As we look forward, it's essential to stay adaptable and open to new ideas, while also being mindful of the potential impacts of our actions on the future of education, behaviour, and society as a whole.

4. CONCLUSION

The profound impact of education and communication on behaviour change cannot be overstated. Through the dissemination of accurate information, thoughtful persuasion, and the cultivation of critical thinking skills, education equips individuals with the tools they need to make informed decisions and adopt healthier, more responsible behaviors. Effective communication, on the other hand, bridges gaps, dispels myths, and fosters understanding, facilitating the transition from old habits to new, positive patterns of behavior. As Martin and DiMatteo (2014) explain, the symbiotic relationship between education and communication creates a powerful synergy that drives societal progress, empowers individuals to take control of their lives, and ultimately paves the way for a more enlightened and harmonious world. As we continue to harness the potential of these dynamic forces, we unlock endless possibilities for personal growth, social transformation, and the betterment of our global community.

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