TRAFFIC SAFETY EDUCATION AND CAMPAIGNS

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INTRODUCTION

Traffic safety authorities are well aware of the complexity of the persuasion task, which they face. Getting people to do what the authorities want them to do, i.e. adopt and maintain road behaviour, which will contribute to their safety, is no easy task.

To educate the road users and to get them to adopt safe road using habits, the South African Directorate of Traffic Safety makes use of traffic safety campaigns such as the pedestrian campaign, don't drink and drive campaign, seatbelt campaign and the holiday campaign.

Unlike marketing campaigns for consumer products such as soap, which take people as they are and offer them what they desire, marketing campaigns for traffic safety are aimed at changing people. Marketers of consumer products rarely have to create non-existent needs. They study ongoing action and design a proposition which chosen targets will find attractive. The persuasive message is: "carry on, but choose our proposition."

Traffic safety authorities usually have a different persuasion task. Instead of giving people what they want, the persuasive message is more likely to be: "do not continue what you are doing because you like it, but please change because it is good for you and others – even if you don't like it".

The road users are furthermore liable to be punished if they do not change their road traffic habits, while the consumers of other marketed products are rewarded for their choice.

Traffic safety campaigns can only succeed if the developers keep in mind that marketing products and services are different to persuading people not to do something they like doing, e.g. speeding. To ignore this difference will result in an ineffective campaign.

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THE TRAFFIC SAFETY CAMPAIGN AS A FORM OF INFORMAL EDUCATION

The influencing of traffic behaviour is an important prerequisite for the promotion of traffic safety. Measures taken to change road users' behaviour in traffic can either be direct or indirect. Indirectly the road user's behaviour can be influenced by the technological improvement of vehicles or the road environment. Examples are seat-belts, air bags and sophisticated braking systems of vehicles and rumble strips and speed limits on roads.

Measures aimed directly at the road user include formal and non-formal education and training programmes, informal education programmes (such as campaigns) as well as law enforcement.

The traffic safety campaign must be seen as an educational medium through which traffic behaviour can be influenced positively as long as the enhancement of the road user's knowledge, skill, cognition and attitude is included in the primary objectives.

Informal traffic safety education differs from formal and non-formal education in that it is not limited to a specific timetable. Furthermore, informal education programmes, such as campaigns, are more than likely the only forms of traffic safety education road users receive after leaving school. Informal education is also free of any testing or evaluation of the recipient. The road users are free to accept the information presented to them or to reject it. Informal traffic safety education is therefore not compulsory and it is very difficult to determine its effectiveness.

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE THROUGH CAMPAIGNS

According to McGuire (1981, as quoted by Rooijers, 1985: 17) behavioural change through persuasive communication takes place through a 12-step process (dependent variables). For an educational campaign to be effective, the people whom it is aimed at must go through the following steps:

- o   exposure to the message;
- o   pay attention to the message;
- o   be interested in the message;
- o   understand the contents of the message;
- o   have the necessary skill to perform the required behaviour;

o   change attitude in accordance with the message;

o   memorise the message;

o   recall information from memory;

o   decide to behave according to the recalled information;

o   behave according to decision;

o   confirmation of appropriate behaviour;

o   consolidation of behaviour.

McGuire, furthermore, identifies 5 variables, which may have an influence on the process of behavioural change by increasing the persuasiveness of the message:

o   the source of the message;

o   the message itself;

o   the medium used to convey the message;

o   the receiver of the message;

o   the objective of the message.

A major pre-requisite for behavioural change through educational campaigns is that the target person pays attention to the message.

In principle mass media must have the greatest effect, but people tend to be selective and it must not be taken for granted that they are interested in the message or that they will pay attention to it.

The message must furthermore be clear and understandable. The receiver must be in no doubt about the essence of the message carried by the campaign.

An important characteristic of McGuire's model is that it concentrates on the message.

Kok (1985 as quoted by Rooijens, 1985: 61) on the other hand, designed a model, which focused on the individual process of behavioural change. His model combines all the most important steps identified by McGuire in the following:

Attention	selectivity
Insight	comprehension
Change of attitude	advantages and disadvantages
Change of attention	social norms
Behavioural change	possibility, impossibility
Consolidation of behaviour	feedback, habits

According to Rooijers (1985: 62) an important link in the process of behavioural change is the comparison of advantages and disadvantages of the recommended new behaviour. The biggest problem traffic safety educators are confronted with is the fact that to most road users negative consequences of unsafe traffic behaviour seem to be a very unlikely probability, whilst positive consequences are often experienced directly.

Rooijers (1985: 62) designed the following model to demonstrate that making use of two different methods can bring about behavioural change:

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                  Attention              ◄────── Selectiveness

                   Insight               ◄────── Comprehension

  Attitude forming      Change of intention        Advantages and ◄──────
                                                                  Disadvantages
          │                                              │
          ▼                                              │        Social norms
  Change of intention                                    ▼
          │                                       Behavioural change ◄────── Possibility
          ▼                                              │                   Impossibility
  Behavioural change                                     ▼
          │                                       Change of attitude
          ▼                  ▼
          Consolidation of behaviour          ◄────── Feedback
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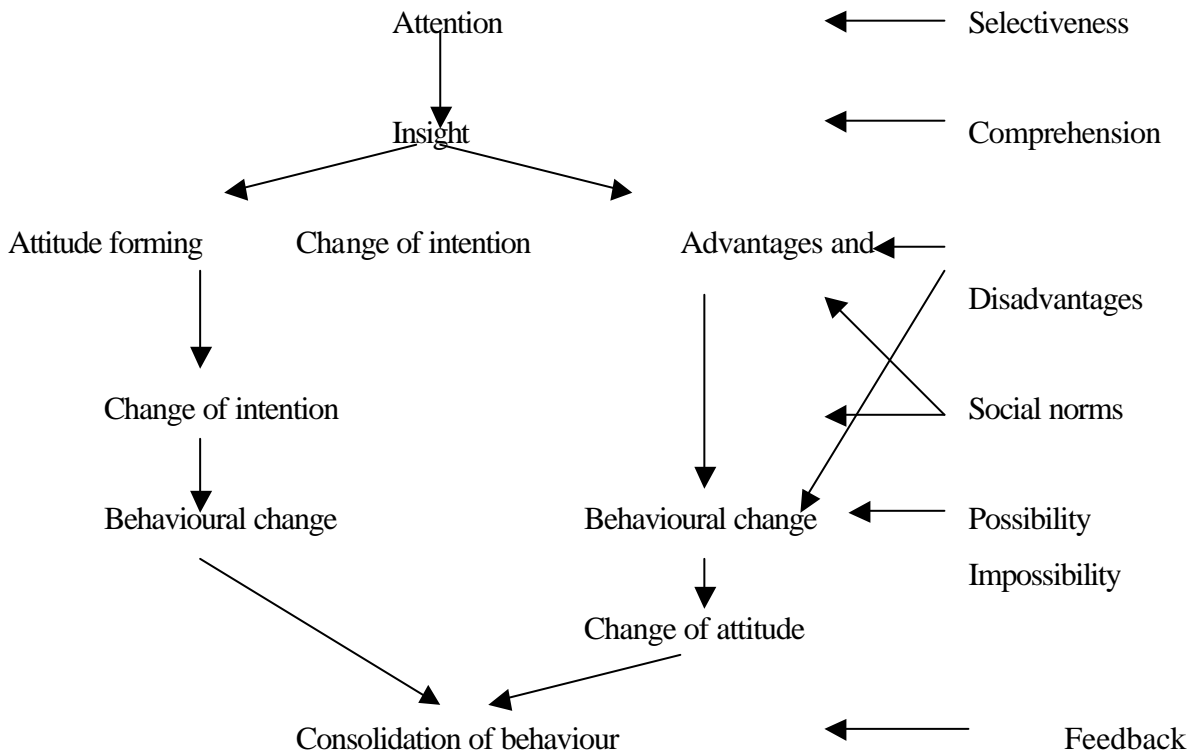
In the first instance efforts are aimed at providing the target group with the necessary insight into the negative consequences of undesired behaviour and the positive consequences of desired behaviour. In doing this the target group will become more aware of the consequences of attitude. The best results will be achieved when the target person is reached more personally. A change in attitude will in general lead to a change in behaviour, providing the behaviour in not influenced by social norms or physical/situational handicaps.

The second viewpoint is that it is insufficient to merely inform the target person about the importance of behaviour and the consequences thereof. A more direct approach to behavioural change is punishment for unwanted behaviour and reward for desired behaviour. Both punishment and reward will lead to behavioural change, although reward tends to have a stronger effect. Both forms have an influence on the target person's consideration of the consequences of the chosen behaviour.

If applied to the traffic situation, punishment may be in the form of fines for traffic offences and rewards in the form of discounts on insurance premiums in cases where vehicle owners have a collision free history or no claims for a certain period of time.

According to Rooijers (1986: 64) the most important objection against these methods is that individually they do not provide a strong enough basis for a permanent change of behaviour. According to Rooijers (1986: 64) a combination of the two methods will be more effective than the two another: the reward and punishment strategy forms the basis for a direct change in behaviour while the information strategy forms the basis for a change in attitude.

The final stage in the process of behavioural change is the consolidation of behaviour. The primary objective is that a positive attitude must form the basis of behavior. Behavioural change based purely on reward and punishment and which does not lead to change in attitude will only last as long as external measures are applied. This does not mean that external measures are not necessary for change in attitude. To be effective the educational message should therefore be repeated at regular intervals.

Another factor of importance for the consolidation of changed behaviour is "feedback". People are continuously looking for confirmation of their behaviour, firstly to measure their behaviour and the possible consequences against their expectations, and secondly to measure their behaviour against

that of others. In any educational campaign it is therefore of the utmost importance to provide information abut the changing behaviour of the target group, especially where it is clear that the majority of the target group has changed their behaviour favourably according to the message that was conveyed through the campaign. Information about the positive changes will assist the individual in the consolidation of the changed behaviour.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS A SUCCESSFUL EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

According to Rooijers (1986: 65) the following factors should receive attention in the designing and implementation of an education campaign:

o A reward system can contribute to the effectiveness of an education campaign. A punishment system's contribution will be less effective than that of a reward strategy. A reward aimed at future behaviour has a greater effect than an unexpected reward for past behaviour.

o A national campaign will be the most effective when it is divided into smaller regional campaigns, which are aimed more directly at the local population.

o In an education campaign a combination of mass media must be implemented.

o Each education campaign must be preceded by an investigation to determine the cognizance, convictions and values of the target group.

o A variety of "messengers" must be used to convey the uniform educational message. Especially, during campaigns running over a long period a variety of messengers will prevent the target group from becoming too used to and bored with the message.

o An education campaign is most effective when it conveys the message that the majority of the target group has already conformed.

CONCLUSION

The model designed by Rooijers has not yet been tested, neither have any of the suggestions mentioned in this paper. Experimental research will show whether they are of any value or not.

Furthermore, past effective traffic safety campaigns will have to be analysed to determine to what extent their success can be ascribed to the theoretical guidelines mentioned in this paper.

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Traffic safety education for final year teacher students
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PUBLICATIONS

$ The identification of criteria for an in-service training course in traffic safety education for teachers
$ An evaluation of the national cyclists training programme
$ An evaluation of the SA School Driver Education Programme (SDEP)
$ The development of a national curriculum for traffic safety education within the traffic management system
$ The development of a traffic safety training management plan within the traffic management system
$ The development of a driver training management plan within the traffic management system
$ The identification of guidelines for the development of a local authority=s traffic management plan