

Report

EPIDASA Workshop, Nijmegen (Studiecentrum Soeterbeek)

September 2004-09-21

Comment

I have written 13 pages of notes, but given the number of contributions, the extent and quality of discussions and many other factors, this may still not be enough to capture what has happened at this excellent workshop of ours. What I have done, is to state the title of the presentation with a reference to the PowerPoint Presentation related to it. To this I have added some comments on the most important issues discussed in the presentation and during question time. Obviously there will be things that I have missed – please forgive me for that!

Tuesday

Welcoming word by Carel Jansen.

General Introduction – Piet Swanepoel

Gives an overview of the project as a whole.

PowerPoint presentation: Swanepoel, Piet. The EPIDASA project: Informing, instructing and persuading people in a culture of denial.

Piet says something about the history of the process and the initiatives that lead up to the present project. He relates the project to the huge problem that HIV/AIDS poses in Southern Africa and presents the audience with some statistics to prove the point.

He reflects on the absence of effective communication campaigns, relating the problem to the American and South African experience. A lot of the documents are designed in a haphazard way and more often than not they have a negative impact or no impact at all.

In South Africa a lot of material is simply copied from abroad and they do not take into consideration that there is a need to deal with very specific issues in document design, e.g. little theory, problems with the process, problems with audience segmentation, research on different persuasion strategies (for instance: fear appeals or not?), lack of testing (both formative and summative), to name but a few. He discusses the loveLife billboard campaign as an example.

We need a best practices approach to come up with campaigns that might have the desired outcome.

He then gives an overview of the focus areas in the EPIDASA project.

State of the Art in the Research on HIV/AIDS Education – Herman Schaalma

PowerPoint presentation: Schaalma, Herman. State of the art in research in HIV/AIDS education.

Herman was a guest speaker from the Maastricht University, Department of Health Education and Promotion.

He started out with the questions: Why is the topic a “mission impossible”? What do we mean with health education? What do we understand health education to be? He then gave an overview of what we do and don't know, focusing on intervention mapping, and reflecting on some of the programmes with a focus on HIV/AIDS prevention.

One of the important points to make is that it is not as easy as some people may seem to think. It is not simply a matter of ABC, that is abstain, be faithful, condomise. You are dealing with various target groups, various behaviors, various contexts and cultures, various educational strategies, etc.

He then discussed health education, departing from the following definition: a planned combination of learning experiences designed to predispose, enable and reinforce voluntary behavior conducive to health in individuals, groups or communities (Green & Kreuter 1999). He relates this to health promotion and health promotion tools (education, resources and pricing, regulation, etc.). You can link this to different situations and strategies in different contexts for HIV/AIDS intervention (e.g. when dealing with drug addicts). The problem is that we cannot change the behavior by law. So we have to think of those tools that will have an effect.

We need to think about the objectives that we have with our promotion strategies: primary prevention, early detection and treatment (VCT), patient care and support (to improve quality of life of those already infected) being the obvious ones.

He then discusses the developments:

- planned activity (the view to have better careful planning of intervention campaigns); understanding the problem before

- collaborative planning ; don't do it in the office; work with the target (involve your target group in the planning) and with other role players (educators, policy makers, health care workers, etc)
- ecological approach: it is hardly ever the case that it is simply a matter of individual behavior; there is a whole context (school, neighbourhood, work, area, etc.) with factors that may influence the health problem and the ways in which to deal with it. It may be the case that you have to intervene at a level higher than the individual level.
- theory-based research and planning: programmes are more effective if they are more theory-based

In the rest of his presentation he focuses on the state of the art, discussing things such as needs assessment, program development, implementation and evaluation.

He then describes program design and production of Intervention Mapping programmes, reflecting on the different steps. In the process a number of methods are discussed (e.g. methods for individual change and methods for environmental change).

Discussion

Issues raised during the discussion session:

- What kinds of theories are used in these theory-based programmes? There seems to be a strong link especially with social cognitive theory, with a strong skills training component as a focus. Other theories that are important include protection motivation theory and health belief theory. Schaalma specifically refers to the work by Kirby.
- Why do programmes not work, especially those that are theory-based? Sometimes this can be very puzzling. Schaalma refers to an example by Gilmore, a good programme that was not successful. Maybe target collaboration is one of the reasons for lack of success.
- We focus on documents. What do you think of the fact we restrict ourselves to documents? We do not focus on programmes as such? The general opinion is that the effects of documents are limited. We need to do a lot more. You have to be realistic about the effects of the documents themselves. It does play a role, not only at the individual level but also at the higher levels. For example: They can play a role in the diffusion of programmes.
- There has to be a strong collaboration between the different experts. We hope that all these expert resources are good!

- Studies show that document design is an embedded process. There are studies where the text writer/document designer throw things back to say that the programme as a whole is not properly designed. Within the EPIDASA project one could also refer to the project of Kramer.
- We leap from health promotion to document design. Collaborative planning: How does it fit in with the whole process of document design? Audience analysis as important part of the process.
- There are no good heuristics in involving people in the design process. We also have questions about research methods in this regard, eg. the card sorting method.

Session: Research into Stigmatisation

General Introduction – Arjan Bos

Arjan Bos was another of our guest speakers. He is from the Open University of the Netherlands.

PowerPoint presentation: Bos, Arjan. Social stigma.

In his presentation Arjan starts with a definition of stigmatization and then discusses the determinants, the consequences, the role of social interaction, methods to reduce stigmatization, and AIDS-related stigma.

In defining stigma it is important to know that the devaluation always happens in a certain context or situation. One also needs to understand the difference between stigmatization and stereotyping.

Other aspects of stigmatization dealt with in this presentation include:

- manifestations of stigmatization
- dimensions of stigmatization
- determinants of stigmatization
- consequences of stigmatization
- coping with stigmatization
- reduction of stigmatization

He also discusses the position of people with HIV/AIDS, focusing on the reduction of stigma using interaction strategies. He reviews a few interventions that have been effective in the past. He also focuses specifically on the problem of stigma in developing countries.

He ends his presentation with a few comments on current research.

EPIDASA Presentation – Piet Swanepoel

PowerPoint presentation: Swanepoel, Piet. Messages to redress (fear of) AIDS-stigma as barrier to VCT: strategies, pitfalls and research areas.

Piet presented us with a very detailed PowerPoint presentation. I little to add to that.

Discussion:

Issues raised during the discussion session:

- Are there any studies on contact with PLWA through the internet? Not as far as Arjan knows. It could be an interesting environment to research – using the internet as contact zone; virtual contact in chat rooms, for instance. Carel refers to an example in the Sowetan – column by someone with aids, using the column to generate understanding and empathy.
- There was a discussion on how people relate to brochures.
- Is anything known about the history of people who have already been tested? Very little is known. We know very little about the profiles of these people. There are some indications at the demographic level (age, sex, ethnic group, etc.). Henk Boer indicates that this may be an interesting field to explore. Carel Jansen refers to work by Van Dyk and Van Dyk: people do not report because they fear that health workers will not stick to the principle of confidentiality. And these fears often prove to be warranted. We therefore need to change the behavior of the health care workers themselves. Piet Swanepoel refers to research on the website of Khomanani. Piet Swanepoel also refers to an article by Stein on the coping with stigma of people after being tested.
- Antiretroviral therapy - available to all? Only 8 000 people have been on the programme, one reason (major) being fear of stigma. A number of studies suggest fear of stigmatisation.
- Personal contact as good method. What makes it work? It increases more positive emotions. It creates more empathy. It does not affect factors like seriousness, etc. For instance using role models (Mandela holding a child infected by aids).
- If it is true that contact works it should have an effect on things like solidarity - we need to look at social, cognitive and emotional factors.
- We need to take note of research on correlations between pity and stigmatization in different groups.

Wednesday

Session: Methods for Text Evaluation

General Introduction: Menno de Jong

Our guest speaker, Menno de Jong (University of Twente), introduces the topic.

PowerPoint presentation: De Jong, Menno. Document evaluation methods: General introduction and some recent developments.

Menno gives an overview of different text evaluation methods. He then discusses a recent study where culture is an important variable and presents us with a “menu” of important issues that still need more attention, including, among others, things like evaluation in a multicultural context, extending the methodology to less literate groups and the evaluation of visually presented information.

Discussion

- There was extensive discussion on the problem of positioning people on the IND COLL scales. Problems both in research that Menno referred to and research done in Stellenbosch and elsewhere in SA. Also the problem of cultural difference as opposed to other factors such as higher prior knowledge that might neutralise one another.
- Should't experiments tap into the cognitive processes of participants while evaluating others? This could be a way of exploring cultural differences. Michaël Steehouder refers to work by Jan Spyridakis on Japanese ways of accessing information, using more inductive vs. more deductive ways of thinking.
- We have the problem that quite often we formulate hypotheses by going much further than the cultural dimensions would suggest.
- The problem of evaluating visual information is discussed. It is very complicated to elicit information. Respondents find it difficult to explain problems, their likes, dislikes in visuals - more than with the verbal part of the document.

EPIDASA Presentation – Leon de Stadler

PowerPoint presentation: De Stadler, Leon. Designing and testing public information documents on HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

This presentation takes the form of a report on projects related to the development of evaluation instruments for use in a multicultural setting. The focus is on the development of a text-focused evaluation instrument. A few projects in which this

instrument is used and improved are also discussed and two new projects are introduced.

Discussion (because I presented I did not make extensive notes on the discussion related to this presentation):

- A question was posed on the theoretical basis of this instrument. Obviously a number of theories play a role in the development of an instrument of this kind (e.g. theories of persuasion, theories related to the use of fear appeals, and theories of text analysis) but there is still some work to be done on the impact of a number of theories (for example the theories that were presented during the workshop and in other subprojects of the EPIDASA project).
- There was some discussion on the usability of the instrument and on the knowledge base relevant to the development of the instrument. There are problems with the usability of an instrument of this kind (for instance the fact that it is an extensive checklist and therefore very lengthy).
- Elvis Saal also made a strong point about the collaboration between projects.

Session: Using Theory to Design Effective Health Behavior Interventions

General Introduction – Marco Yzer

The guest speaker in this session was Marco Yzer, from the University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam School of Communication Research.

PowerPoint presentation: The integrative model of behavioral prediction as a tool for designing STD prevention messages.

In his talk, Marco Yzer presents the integrative model developed in collaboration with Fishbein and associates. He specifically explores the potential of the model for developing STD prevention messages.

In discussing the model he stresses what the model is and what it is not: that it is not a tool for crafting the message itself (that is, the message format), but that it is a tool for identifying the crucial behavioral determinants that play a role. In that sense it is a theory of message strategy and it does place the focus on the content of the message.

After presenting the model itself he discusses the recommended uses of the model, that is defining the target group and the salient beliefs of the target group, determining crucial psychosocial behavioral predictors and identifying beliefs that discriminate between those who do and those who don't.

He ends the discussion with some unresolved issues.

Discussion

Here I have to apologise: I had a problem with my computer and seem to have lost the file in which these notes were kept. I therefore had to rely on what Carel and I could remember. If anyone has something to add to this part of the discussion (your own questions and comments, for instance), please send them to me or to Fons Maes so that we can incorporate them in this report.

The following issues were discussed:

- The relationship between efficacy beliefs and self-efficacy does not seem to be clear. More specifically, efficacy beliefs do not have an evaluation component attached, whereas behavioral and normative beliefs do. The question does, however, arise whether these evaluation components are at all important.
- We do need to measure (by means of questionnaires) the distal and proximal variables for each target group. By means of regression analysis one should then determine the importance/weight of these variables in relationship to other variables and to different forms of behavior.

EPIDASA Presentation – Lilian Birir and Fons Maes

Fons and Lilian report on Lilian's PhD project.

PowerPoint presentation: Gangla-Birir, Lilian. The effectiveness of presentation format in instructional documents for low literate HIV positive patients and their caregivers.

The focus in the presentation is on the role of visuals in documents. They look at the value but also at the obstacles in researching visuals in these contexts (eg finding material for low literates; determining and measuring competencies, etc.).

Discussion:

On the basis of some of the examples that Lilians has shown, there is a discussion on the possibility/usability of visuals to depict more abstract concepts, the fact that the visuals are not well interpreted but that they might not be meant as an instrument of full interpretation, and the idea that they may act as recall instruments.

EPIDASA Presentation – Carel Jansen

Carel Jansen presents a study done by one of the students in the EPIDASA project (Marjolein Croonen) that was reworked into an article.

PowerPoint presentation: Jansen, Croonen, De Stadler. 'Take John, for instance.'
Effects of exemplars in public information documents on HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

The research is about the possible impact of exemplars on reader's ideas about responsibility of the group to which a protagonist belongs, reader's attitudes about this group and reader's behavior towards this group. It is based on research done by Hoeken & Hustinx on the use of the desert heuristic.

Discussion:

- Might it not be the case that the fact that the exemplar is male might influence the reactions of women? It is a valid point and might lead to further study. Carel discusses research to follow by Eliane Swinkels that might provide the opportunity to resolve some of these issues.
- Then there is the question of what realism actually is. And what about the baseline measurement? Attitudes may be pre-existing. Especially in the case of black respondents where people have a tendency not to consider people living with aids to be responsible at all.
- There was a question about the nonresponsible version with the male being cheated by his wife and not the other way around. The choice was made so that it compares to what Hoeken and Hustinx did. It is still a valid question, however. Another option is also to consider a non-responsible version where the relational aspect does not play a role at all, e.g. being infected by blood transfusion.

Thursday

Session: Methods for (Quasi-) Experimental Research into Language Behavior

General Introduction – Roeland van Hout

The guest speaker in this session was Roeland van Hout, University of Nijmegen.

PowerPoint presentation: Van Hout, Roeland. Methods for (quasi-) experimental research into language behaviour.

He discusses different methods and problems with some of these methods, specifically relating his presentation to the work done within EPIDASA by people like Elvis Saal. His talk is presented from the perspective of sociolinguistics and

social psychology of change. In the process he focuses specifically on Communication Accommodation Theory and the issue of the measurement of attitudes.

He very specifically discusses some of the problems related to the use of CAT and the reasons why CAT failed.

He then discusses the minimalist program. How do we manipulate our materials? He refers to techniques of matched guise with variation manipulated as little as possible. You can also manipulate the context: random vs fixed. In the end this approach is minimalist in the sense of minimal variation in the material.

Some of the other important viewpoints that came up in this presentation include:

- We need to think more about more general language variables as opposed to linguistic variables.
- There are no really appealing larger projects on style shifting. Control factors that influence style shifting.
- Network analysis: You are not studying at what's happening when individual people speak but what is happening at a more general network level.
- Also look at change models - who is instigating the change, what effect does it have, eg does it have some covert prestige value, etc.
- Quite often what you are measuring is not attitude but stereotypes. It could be that people react very "mechanically" to different variants presented to them.

He says something about statistical assumptions that we make: the three most important ones are mentioned on the relevant slide, stressing the point that the one that needs more attention is independent observation - he considers this to be the most important one.

He then refers to the important work by David Kenny on dyadic analysis. You need to take care of situations where people are interacting and therefore influencing one another. See Kenny's website (see hand-out that Roeland provided us with).

Discussion

When advising us to use designs we have to deal with more and more variables. But what then about the practical implications, e.g. the number of participants in different cells. This is a problem. We are often working with too many variables. You have too many uncontrollable things. Be careful of so-called hit-and-run-designs. So one has to decompose into different designs. But that compounds in a different direction. Trust more on random factors, e.g. more examples to see if predictions come out. The kinds

of stimuli we work with is different in many ways compared to those of psycholing. We have to do between subjects design, therefore. Roeland also suggest that one ask fewer questions.

We do not want to test the theory or generalise to all contexts.

EPIDASA Presentation – Elvis Saal

In his presentation Elvis Saal reports on progress with his PhD project.

PowerPoint presentation: Saal, Elvis. To ‘slang’ or not to ‘slang’: That is the persuasive question.

In this research Elvis works with the loveLife material, departing from the goal stated by loveLife “to speak in the language that young people relate to”. He uses the Communication Accommodation Theory, rooted in similarity-attraction research.

He deals with the problem of defining the concept slang and the measurement of the effect that slang has on the persuasion process. In the process he focuses on the mediating factors in language attitude formation.

Discussion:

- Roeland van Hout feels that you do not need CAT to judge the results. In many cases cited, the studies were conducted before CAT. They of course did not investigate accommodation but issues of similarity or not.
- What is the trad. method for eliciting responses on attitudes. Giles and others do not ask questions the way Elvis asks them. So we need to find out what the effect of this methodological changes would be. In this project they have to reflect more, you do not have immediate responses. One should have questions about how you come to be having the feelings, attitudes that you do have, and then have questions about your attitudes on the text itself.
- About the goal of the study. Does the lingo have an effect on persuasion? Made it clear that familiarity might override the choice of lingo. When you are not familiar with the person behind the text you may be influenced more by the choice of language. What happens now when someone e.g. from Eersterust reads the slang text. It could then be that such a person may have some ideas about the writer of the text. For instance that it cannot be someone from Eersterust (these teenagers don’t write things for loveLife!). We guess that it is someone who is not a teenager and therefore they won’t believe a word of the style. So the conclusion is actually predictable before doing any research.

Elvis feels that you can still find a teenager behind the text - that should be possible. So it is not that predictable.

- There is also the matter of responding to the peer group. In these texts there are a lot of teenagers being quoted, for instance. It is possible that an older writer is writing and creating a new reality by using these peer group responses. The readers may know that it is a fiction being created but they still respond to the persona(s) created in this way.
- There was a question about the knowledge about the written language, using a style normally associated with spoken language and the effect that this may have on the text. It is important. And furthermore you have to look at the status of languages.
- Non-standard varieties are often not written. Readers are therefore not used to seeing it in written form. And furthermore one never stays up to date on the development of the variety. It changes all the time. And furthermore the reading process may also play a role since you are reading what did not expect to see. But a lot of the forms are standardised and are well-known. So the problem that Roeland mentioned may be a lesser one.

Session: Research into Fear Appeals

General Introduction: Rob Ruiter: Effects of fear appeals

Rob Ruiter, the last guest speaker, is from the University of Maastricht. He introduced the session on fear appeals.

PowerPoint presentation: Ruiter, Rob. The effects of fear appeals: an overview.

He discusses the definition of fear appeals, the cognitive basis for precautionary motivation, the tension between research and proactive and defensive processing. He shows examples and discusses the effectiveness of different messages. He also shows the results of some experimental work on attention for fear messages, suggesting defensive processing as response.

He comes to the conclusion that it is questionable whether health-related fear appeals are evidence-based to the extent that they should be. More often than not, they do not reflect the research findings on the use of fear appeals.

EPIDASA Presentation – Dineke Ehlers

Dineke reports on the progress with her PhD project.

PowerPoint presentation: Ehlers, Dineke. The effectivity of fear appeals in South African HIV/AIDS campaign texts.

In the presentation she discusses the results of a pilot study and the content analysis of existing texts.

Discussion:

- Are children of age 12 aware of AIDS? Can they answer the different questions? Yes they can. Most of them are slightly older than 12, in any case.
- Females fear of rejection. Would you advise the use of this as fear appeal? There are ethical questions of course, so it is a problem.
- Results were for total group? It might give different results when considered in subgroups? If you divide them you will get more pronounced differences.
- Is there a solution to the problem of myths? We should learn from anthropologists using emersion strategies and cultural brokering, etc. In that way we should be able to elicit responses on these beliefs. Using these techniques should help us to neutralise certain cultural effects, e.g. the need to satisfy someone with an answer that would please the person in the higher position.
- Does low susceptibility arouse fear? Should'nt we have questions on beliefs of susceptibility?
- Discussion on the idea that young people do not fear many of the things that others are fearful of.
- Does the use of the word aids evoke fear?

Round-up

Piet Swanepoel did the round-up, thanking the colleagues in Nijmegen for all the planning that they did. He also thanks the guest speakers for their participation.