
Unicef And The Diffusion Of Innovations Theory

In the present times, the world is developing at a fast rate as such we see the formations of organisations that take it upon themselves to participate in the overall development of the world. Because of the above mentioned fact, we find that there is a response to everything that happens regardless of whether the catalyst is good or bad. However, this essay is going to be focused a project that was to aid the nation of Pakistan from the effects of the 2010 floods done by an organisation called United Nations Children's Fund in short called UNICEF. The essay is going to feature what UNICEF is all about, explain in brief what the diffusion of innovation theory is. After that it is going to go on to focus on how the project was carried out, why and what exactly was done. Thereafter the essay will look into relating the whole process of the project with the diffusion of innovation theory.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is a non-governmental institution (NGO) that is entirely focused in children. It is an organisation that works towards the wellbeing of a children by providing services that help children through hardships from early childhood until adolescence. UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation and AIDS (UNICEF, n.d.). The organisation receives their entire funding through volunteerism of individuals, businesses, foundations and even governments.

The diffusion of Innovation theory is a concept formulated by Everett Rodgers. He describes it as a product's innovation life cycle in which he distinguishes between five stages that a product or idea may find itself with five different user groups that accept that product or idea and how this determines the success of that idea or product (Mulder, 2012). This theory clarifies the rate at which an idea spreads around and eventually accepted thereby classifying the consumers into five classes. The five classes are brought into existence by the time taken by a group of people to buy into an idea and eventually use it to benefit themselves. This theory focuses on how, why and the rate at which new idea spread among consumers. Rodgers believes that the spread of a new idea is entirely dependent on four factors namely the innovation itself, communication channels, time and a social system all of which is entirely dependent on human capital (Rodgers, 2003).

In late July and early August Pakistan experienced floods which saw to the destruction of infrastructure and the deaths of many people. After the floods many people were left homeless and children without schools, the conditions of living deteriorated tremendously and there was an outbreak of malaria because whatever little food and water they had was contaminated. The outbreak which was registered in large numbers from different districts led the Pakistan government to declare the situation a state of emergency. This is where UNICEF came in but they collaborated with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the government to provide food and vaccinations as aid and this carried on for the next six months. It was then established that the situation had subsidised, however this meant the damage of home destruction and infrastructure destruction could not be reversed. A total of 14 million people had been affected and the aid was received in Karachi at first and areas of Sindh Province where the impact was much greater (Niles, 2010). So UNICEF and other partners took the tasks of child protection and education. The task was in motion after the first six months of battling to reduce matters

from state of emergency to an environment that could be useful in terms of executing these two ideas.

This is where now the application of “diffusion of innovation theory” was applied. So in terms of the innovation itself, UNICEF was to teach or educate people about hygiene so as to avoid re-infection and new infection, they also provided shelter to the homeless so as to protect them from the dangers of being stranded out in the open with nowhere to go nowhere to sleep and from any other harm. These ideas are the innovations that UNICEF had for the people and they were in the right because of the fact that at that particular time the society needed them. The theory was not misapplied because the availing of such services was forced by the conditions that the affected Pakistan population were faced with. The innovation itself goes a long way into ensuring that there is no wastage of time and resources looking at the fact that, people would not buy into the idea of being given shelter if they had their own homes and they would also ignore the teachings that were forced by the nature of the environment if they had their own homes and resources that were pure enough to not pose risk for them. It is also very important such that it has to pinpoint and address a particular problem that people are in dire need of because in that way the consumers will buy into it (Rogers, *New Product Adoption and Diffusion*, 1976).

Another aspect of diffusion of innovation theory is that of the communication channels. This is to say it entails the choice used by an organisation to communicate as far as mass media is concerned. In this manner, this factor is vital because it is used to inform people about the innovation so that they buy into the idea more so that they know what it really is and what it is really about. People will never buy into the idea of a product that they are not informed about. In this regard UNICEF uses the CD4 communication strategy which they describe as an evidence-based process to promote measurable behaviour and social change to accelerate programme results (UNICEF, n.d.). The CD4 uses proven change theories, evidence and findings from formative research (Rosenberg). The flood was a national disaster and because of the collaboration of UNICEF with the government, information was disseminated through Radio and Television and through print whereby pamphlets with information about hygiene and where and how one could get help were being circulated. UNICEF also bases most of their communication through social media with a motto “social media is your embassy; a good website is your home country” and for their part Facebook and Twitter play an important role (Rosenberg). This is where they interacted with the community such that they could assess how far they have gone and what they need to do and most importantly where to do it. So the information could be accessed through website, mobile phones and they were in the form of reports, videos and photos (Wejnert, 2002).

The last two aspects of diffusion of innovations theory are intertwined such the other is dependent on the measure of another. This would be time and a social system. Time being a measurable aspect relates to how long it takes for the ideas to reach people and how long it takes them for them to accept the ideas. The social system will then come into play now in terms of who adopted first followed by who (Zimmerman, 2012). It took about a year for the ideas of UNICEF and partners to be fully utilised. This is because the innovations at first were introduced particular places which automatically made the people to be helped first innovators since they were willing and needed the help provided. As far as the social system is concerned the innovators would then help in terms of spreading the message about the innovation that is those who received would go on to tell and encourage others in similar situations who were not aware, then those people would now be the early adopters who would also help into bringing in

the early majority who take some time because their situation is not far worse but still help here and there. As the aid spread country wide we could now pick the late majority and the laggards which in our case was encouraged by the fact it took time for them to be reached and that their situation was not dire as such they could manage to survive without much of the help.

What can be noted is that The Diffusion of Innovations theory was not originally made for assessment of situations like this however due to its nature we can use it to see its applicability in situations of this magnitude because it gives allowance for that to happen. It proves to be one of the powerful theories as far as development continues to grow worldwide.

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