Evaluation, communication, participation - theory and practice of risk communication

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Risk Communication

Communication

nice to talk about or strategy?

Participation

Acrobatics, alibi or interaction?

Evaluation

Actionism or reflection?
Risk Communication in comparison to press relations

message

sender

recipient

information

participatory dialogue
Communication of risks

- multi-dimensional, participative, transparent, proactive
- targeted, **stepwise** involvement of different **stakeholder** groups
- strategic use of **multipliers** (physicians, pharmacists, teachers, educators)
- multiple **ways** of information (leaflets, internet, TV, cinema)
- consideration of different modes of risk **perception** and **irrational** reactions

**Building up confidence takes long – losing it happens abruptly**
Stepwise and strategic involvement of stakeholders

- **consumers, media**
  - *round tables, consumer conferences, open door events*

- **politics, unions, non-profit org.**
  - *stakeholder conferences (platform)*

- **experts (economy, authorities)**
  - *workshops, status conferences*

- **experts (science)**
  - *expert meetings, scientific symposia*
Accessibility of target groups apart from demographic factors

Frustrated Frederic
- avoids conflicts
- rarely turns to a doctor
- ‘what can be eaten anymore?’
- no active reception of informations

Anxious Anne
- weighs pros vs. cons, prevers to ask
- makes use of all medical screenings
- ‘only tested goods are acceptable’
- ‘sucks in’ informations

Daredevil Dragon
- lives for amusement
- likes to pop a pill
- intensive user of the internet
- ‘what doesn’t kill me, makes me stronger’

consideration of role heterogenities (e.g. father, manager, extreme sport athlet)
Risk perception: over- and underestimation of risks

Differences in risk perception depend on media reports, usualness or dreadfulness of risks

- **risk compensation**: traveling by car instead of using flights

  → 1.500 more people died from car accidents in the following 12 month in the USA

- **4,477 persons** died by road accidents in Germany in 2008 (= **12 dead persons per day**)

  ‘that happens to others, but not to me’

- **optimistic bias**: under-estimation of individual risks, often regarding unhealthy behaviour (smoking, unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity)

- **defensive optimism**: to deny hazards, believe in mother nature (safe and gracious)

- **functional optimism**: over-estimation of own (re)action possibilities (illusoric control)
Confidence in information depends on the communicator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Absolute Confidence</th>
<th>Some Confidence</th>
<th>Little Confidence</th>
<th>No Confidence at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public funded consumer organisations</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Stiftung Warentest, Consumer Centres)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientists</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs (Greenpeace, Foodwatch)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorities f. health &amp; occupational safety</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business leaders</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government representatives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BfR, 2007, repres. survey on nanotechnology
Participation as process - examples

Aim
establishment of networking, publicity, public confidence in decisions

Consumer conference
Consensus, respectively constructive dissent regarding a controversial subject, opinion poll, concluding vote (n = 15 - 30 laymen)

Delphi procedures
Explanation of opinions and options at complex matters, multilevel questionnaires with feedback, compilation of future trends (n > 100 experts)

Focus groups
Moderated, structured opinion exchange (n = 4 – 12 Stakeholders/consumers per group), protected environment

Limitations and possibilities of participation (democracy awareness)
Participation as process - critical points

Disadvantages
• high level of expectations
• pre-programmed disappointment
• participation as artificial laboratory experiment
• self-expertization of laymen combined with social romantics
• marginalization of important scientific contents (only process in function)

Criteria for positive evaluation of participation
• confidence in sociopolitical decisions
• tolerance and consensus on existing dissents
• generation of publicity
• changes in behaviour of involved persons

→ Participation means joint consultation and configuration, but not collective decision and regulation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Go for</th>
<th>No go</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• consideration of subjective fears</td>
<td>• medial self control because of lacking willingness for dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• information about the level of uncertainty, risks and benefit</td>
<td>(wait and see)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• high level of transparency to build up trust</td>
<td>• appeasement or generating panic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• participation as real challenge</td>
<td>• unfair comparisons of risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• consideration of sociocultural criteria of risk perception</td>
<td>• participation as acrobatics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• acceptance and enabling of constructive dissent</td>
<td>• disrespect of sociocultural criteria of risk perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• targeted use of multipliers and trustworthy institutions</td>
<td>• exclusive search for consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• transfer of knowledge and empirical formula already in school</td>
<td>• illusion of direct transfer of scientific knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• multimedial translation of science</td>
<td>• hope for self-regulation of the topic ('good thing')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning from failures of the past (BSE, gene technology)</td>
<td>• persistance in own community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• high level of transparency to build up trust</td>
<td>• user-defined use of the precautionary principle</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Thank you for your attention!

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