

Managing Organizational Change in a Crisis Situation: A Case Study of NIM Lahore

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Introduction

The National Institute of Management Lahore (NIM/L) conducts training of Pakistani civil service officers at the mid-career level. It operates under the umbrella of the NSPP (National School of Public Policy). The two major courses are titled Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC) and the Senior Management Course (SMC). Since the 6th MCMC, when the first course was conducted at the institute, more than a thousand officers from various service groups and government departments have received on-campus training at NIM. The COVID-19 pandemic presented NIM, like other training and educational institutions across the globe, with the challenge of converting on-campus training activities to online mode without compromising the quality and spirit of learning. This case study narrates the training mode transformation in the 29th MCMC at NIM Lahore from the point of view of the central character, i.e, the Chief Instructor (C.I.) It discusses how the NIM team responded to this challenge by building on their collective strengths in a time of crisis. It attempts to outline the training strategy, challenges and achievements in a chronological order. The themes explored include leadership, team building, change management, problem solving, decision making and use of technology. The ADDIE model will be used to describe instructional systems design framework.

Scene Setter

It was a cold February morning in 2020. The 29th MCMC was underway at NIM/L. The CI was busy in discussing hostel arrangements with a participant from Iran who was residing on-campus. The phone rang. It was a call from the Director General (DG): “*Can you please come to my office?*”

Upon entering the D.G’s office, the C.I. knew something was up. He looked grim.

“A directive has been received from NSPP stating that the course can no longer be conducted in the physical mode due to the emerging health crisis. We will have to suspend on-campus training activities and come up with an alternate strategy,” the D.G said.

¹ Secretariat Group, 115th NMC.

“*We’ll do our best Sir*” The C.I. replied, thinking about the options they had in the given situation.

So many questions were coursing through her mind. Will the training be completely online or hybrid? How will resource persons respond? Will all participants be able to adapt? What about the allied (foreign) participant? Will the faculty be able to handle the online training? Which platform should be used? What about the equipment and technology? Will the internet connection be stable? Will there be meaningful interaction between trainees and trainers? How could it be ensured that the training objectives are not compromised? How would participant performance be evaluated? What about discipline and rules? What would be the training SOPs? Was it even possible to bring about such a huge change?

It was an uphill task. A make or break situation. If done well, this would prove invaluable to the participants and increase the credibility of the institution. On the other hand, it was a long and arduous road to change and a breakdown in training could be disastrous. The C.I. was concerned and the key question in her mind was:

‘How to transform training mode in response to the emerging crisis without compromising the spirit and rigour of MCMC?’

Background

NIM Lahore had been conducting the MCMC since 2009. Stability, predictability and preparedness were hallmarks of the institution and NIM prided itself with pioneering many new initiatives in training content and design. Prior to the formation of NSPP, officers only went for an intensive training after almost twenty years of service when they did their ‘NIPA course’² (with the only prior engagement being the pre-service training at Civil Services Academy at the very start of their careers).

The MCMC tier of training was initiated by NSPP to address this huge gap. Initially, when the MCMC was introduced, it was considered an extra burden by trainee officers, a requirement that had to be fulfilled in order to get promoted. However, as the years went by and the course was conducted consistently across various NIMs, it gradually took root and was further refined and fine-tuned to respond to specific training needs at the mid-career level. The particular point in their careers at which MCMC engaged officers also contributed to its significance. Most of them were looking for answers to their emerging professional challenges. The average age of MCMC participants was 36 years. They had about 8-10 of years of service and most of them seemed hopeful about bringing about positive change in their respective fields. This was the right time for them to understand their role in implementation of policies and work towards improvement in service delivery.

² Officially named the Advanced Course in Public Sector Management, it was a mandatory promotion requirement from grade 19 to 20 which also required a minimum service of 17 years.

Before February 2020, the courses were conducted on-schedule and remained unaffected even in challenging times. MCMC, like other trainings imparted by different constituent-institutions of NSPP, was an intensive course. Various training methodologies like workshops, lecture discussions, panel discussions, simulation exercises, current issue presentations, analysis papers and tours were integral parts of the course offering and were not compromised even when external conditions in the country were rough. The destinations for inland study tours were selected keeping the law and order situation in mind. The local visits were carried out to provide hands-on learning opportunities to participants. Trainings at NIM Lahore went on despite all that was happening around it. Terrorism couldn't deter the trainers. While the incidents served as a reminder of the dangers lurking all around, but never did the training stop. Local visits and Inland Study Tours were conducted during every course. The destinations changed. However, not once were the visits cancelled.

After every MCMC, proposals were put forward by NIMs from all across Pakistan. The revised syllabus was approved in the training conference at NSPP chaired by the Rector.

The C.I. had been leading MCMC since August 2015. Prior to that, she had been associated with MCMC as a faculty member and had, during different times, looked after not only the T&C but also the administrative side. She had studied HR and Instructional Systems at the Pennsylvania State University as a Humphrey Scholar and had always been interested in training and capacity building. She acted as the lynchpin between the DG and the faculty and her role was of central importance in implementing any decision.

Over the years, she had seen a gradual but certain improvement in the way participants had responded to training. She gauged this from the seriousness with which they dedicated themselves to the training activities. The C.I. had seen how very challenging it had initially been to get participants in the '*training mode*'. However, as the training process had evolved so had the trainees. Now they came more prepared and were more willing to experience various activities. The quality of their outputs had also improved, both individually and collectively as members of groups. This point was shared by expert panelists who were routinely invited to review their reports and presentations in the 'Simulation Exercises' (SE) component. All this brought a lot of satisfaction to the faculty as this demonstrated that their efforts were bearing fruit. Things had evolved quite a lot as far as MCMC training content and design was concerned. However, no one had anticipated the kind of change that the pandemic now necessitated.

The Crisis & Emerging Situation

Since the start of the year, there was growing unease about the possibility of a global pandemic of the novel coronavirus strain that was said to have originated in China. The World Health Organization had declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of

International Concern on the 30th of January 2020 but it was not until 11th March 2020 that it was declared a pandemic. Since the first case of infection with this new coronavirus was reported in China in December 2019, SARS-CoV-2, or COVID-19, as we now knew it, had killed over 2.5 million people and infected at least 116 million.^{3,4} Beginning as an unexplained, pneumonia-like illness, it had since spread to almost every country, bringing life across most of the world to a near-standstill. World leaders had become ill, entire countries were locked down to prevent the spread of infection and international travel had ceased. As most governments struggled to contain the virus, scientists rushed to identify and find treatments that worked against COVID-19. As the disease numbers had surged worldwide, offices had been closed and remote work had started taking root worldwide. Schools, colleges, universities and training institutions had suspended classes and started adopting alternate ways of teaching and learning. The pandemic uncovered how interconnected and interdependent the world was. There was not a single country where life had not come to a standstill or where things were going on as usual.

By the end of the first week of the 29th MCMC, the virus had reached Pakistan. There was widespread fear and apprehension and partial lockdowns were imposed in different parts of the country. The 29th MCMC had 55 participants including 10 female participants and an allied participant from Iran. As the MCMC was a residential course, about two thirds of the participants including the allied participant were residing in the hostel. Prior to the outbreak, NIM was already using technology employing the E-portal for participant engagement. The E-portal made training effective and efficient by making it easier for participants to follow deadlines and submit reports. The use of paper and multiple hard copies had been drastically reduced. As all faculty members were equipped with laptops and internet devices, the cost of paper, toner and photocopy machine repairs was minimized further.

The pandemic had a huge global impact in every sphere of life. Short of being a ‘black swan event’,⁵ it was the closest to a global disaster that this generation had witnessed. Though global influenza was always a threat which was lurking in the background with breakouts like swine flu,⁶ bird flu and other scares. This time, however, it was different. What was required was a well-planned institutional response to the crisis. The

³ <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2270361-covid-19-the-story-of-a-pandemic/>.

⁴ In the end the pandemic would go on to kill more than 6.7 million victims: <https://covid19.who.int/> (accessed January 20, 2023)

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_swan_theory .

⁶ 2009 H1N1 Pandemic (H1N1pdm09 virus) <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/2009-h1n1-pandemic.html>.

challenges included deciding a course of action and overcoming resistance and hesitation. The question in C.I.'s mind was: Will everyone be able to adapt to a whole new training environment?

The C.I.'s concerns were mainly focused on meeting the objectives of the course. The question was not 'if' the training will be online, because that had been decided. It was 'How to optimize learning in an online environment?'

The possibility of not being able to conduct a course meant that officers in the promotion zone would suffer. Lack of training also meant that quality of HR in the public sector would be compromised. There were no projections as to when things would return to business as usual. NSPP therefore decided to suspend training activities in view of the emerging threat and review the training methodology.

The first speaker who came on campus wearing a mask in the second week of the course was viewed with much interest. It was highly unusual for anyone to wear a mask inside a training institution, or anywhere else for that matter, outside of a hospital. Little did anyone know that this was to become a norm in the days to come.

The Response-Transformation of Training Methodology

(i) Analysis Phase

As a consequence of the emerging threat and in response to the NSPP directive, ongoing training courses, including the 29th MCMC which was underway at NIM Lahore, were postponed until the 1st of June 2020. Out of a total of 14 weeks, 6 weeks of training (first term and one week) had been completed before the postponement. NSPP had directed all the training institutions under its umbrella to develop training content keeping the emerging coronavirus pandemic situation in the country in view. All the campuses of NIM were required to present their proposals in a training conference scheduled for later that month in NSPP.

Participants were informed about the decision to suspend the course and were told that the training would resume in July. The C.I. formed a WhatsApp Group of the participants and faculty to keep them in the loop in the meantime.

Of special concern in the prevailing circumstances was the allied participant from Iran. He was a member of the Iranian Foreign Service and had just joined the course when news started emerging from Iran about an exponential increase in infections and death toll. When on-campus training was suspended and participants were asked to go back, arrangements had to be made for the Iranian to continue living on campus as there were no flights to Tehran. Accordingly, administrative arrangements were made for his stay. His flight home was arranged as soon as air travel resumed between the two countries.

The first phase of the process was an examination of the existing situation, especially with reference to the infrastructure, equipment, software and HR.

Public sector organizations are usually considered to be inflexible and not amenable to change. However, NIM proved to be a learning organization with the ability to adapt to change quickly and effectively.

The C.I. called a meeting of the faculty to discuss possible options for conducting the training. With a mix of permanent faculty members and officers from various service groups who had an academic bent and had opted to serve in

NIM, the training team was well qualified. The overall response of the faculty was positive and they were willing to take on the challenge. However, things were very uncertain as far as the pandemic was concerned.

The emerging news in the media evoked fear and anxiety. Many people had fallen prey to the virus. News about fatalities due to the pandemic added fuel to fire. The faculty had considerable safety concerns. In an interconnected world, everything was felt deeply and shared freely on social media. There were many myths and misconceptions about the virus and how deadly it was. In this situation, it was not an easy task to bring about a major change in the existing work-style. It required extra effort and commitment. There was no question about whether the courses will be conducted or not. The only question was ‘How?’ There were no comparable examples as institutions all over the world were working on their strategies for change that met their specific requirements.

After consulting the faculty, the C.I. discussed the issue with the D.G. The faculty’s concerns were shared and suggestions to be considered in the training conference were jotted down. It was decided to propose that the remaining five (05) weeks may be conducted in the online mode. Training methodologies for hybrid learning had to keep in view that long spells of online sessions could lead to screen fatigue and therefore these had to be curtailed. More group work and interactive learning was to be promoted. Shorter lecture discussions with a considerable time for Q&A were important. Otherwise the participants would feel left out and not actually on board. All the training methodologies had to be customized to fit the online mode.

Of particular importance were the evaluation tests of which only one Analysis Paper had been conducted thus far. Proposals were framed for consideration in the training conference. There was constant collaboration between all the NIM campuses during this phase. At the end of the 'Analysis Phase', there was a clear understanding of the situation and the things that needed to be done. It was agreed in the meeting that as a first step, the remaining part of 29th MCMC may be shifted online on the lines suggested above. In subsequent courses, training methodology and assessment criteria could be further customized for online conduct.

The next step was designing the training activities.

ii) Design Phase

While designing proposals for online training, the following points were kept in mind.

Starting with the 29th MCMC, the main challenge was to shift classroom activities online while ensuring that the quality of discussion and active engagement of participants was least affected. It was also stressed that major training objectives were not to be compromised.

The scoring criteria had to be re-aligned to focus more on research and application; research based instruments were to be prioritized. Due to the nature of online learning environment, classroom content was to be reduced and content suitability was to be re-assessed in light of course objectives. It was decided that only selective topics will be retained (about 30%) and some Lecture Discussions (LDs) and Panel Discussions (PDs) would be converted into TDs (Tutorial Discussions) for online delivery. The NIM campuses were asked to consult resource persons and a select group of participants (comprising a representative group) before finalizing the proposals. In the initial design phase, the following proposals were put forward by the C.I.:

One of the foreseeable risks associated with online training was breach of privacy and out of context quotation of any guest speaker or participant. Detailed SOPs were therefore developed for an online version of the code of conduct.

- (a) ONLINE TRAINING DESIGN was discussed with the aim to achieve MCMC objectives, engage participants and at the same time avoid exposure to the virus. Various training methodologies were discussed including:
 - (i) Conventional: currently being used which required physical presence and attendance of participants.
 - (ii) Blended – currently being used in the BCURE teaching modules.

- (iii) E-Portal- currently being used to interact with participants, get their feedback, provide for online submission of written assignments by participants and faculty observations/comments on participant work.
- (iv) Online: physical presence not required/minimized. This was considered as the preferred method in the given situation.

The C.I. examined each and every remaining training activity and put up suggestions about how it would be customized for online delivery. The result was a thorough list of proposals which formed the basis of the revised syllabus.

(b) TRAINING ACTIVITIES to be conducted were discussed in detail. In the ongoing course (29th MCMC) one term had already been completed and all training methodologies (except Inland Study Tour) had already been employed in the course. It was discussed how the remaining training activities could be conducted online in the remaining two terms. Suggestions about the conduct of LDs, PDs, Case Studies, Simulation Exercises, Analysis Papers, Individual Research Papers and Workshops were debated and detailed SOPs were developed for each activity.

- (i) It was decided that for online sessions, secure platforms would be used instead of free sites to avoid any issues. It was also decided to give guest speakers the choice to join from their homes or workplaces as they deemed convenient.
- (ii) Essential and supplementary reading material was to be uploaded on the E-portal. Faculty members were asked to keep MCMC training objectives in view while selecting material. A complete course outline was to be uploaded with sub-topics. The topics were then to be linked to essential readings and supplementary readings with hyperlinks.
- (iii) As the online mode was a different ball game altogether, it was important that participants were kept engaged. For that they were supposed to submit synopsis of each activity using the E-portal.
- (iv) Case studies were to be uploaded 48 hours before the scheduled time on E-portal.
- (v) Discussion forums comprising syndicate participants and sponsoring Directing Staff (DS) will be formed for online discussion.
- (vi) SE material was already being shared via E-Portal and participant submissions were also received on the portal. It was decided that the presentation methodology would be reviewed. TDs (Tutorial Discussions) were to be conducted entirely online by providing videoconferencing facility in all syndicate rooms. As far as analysis papers were concerned, these were to be conducted online and would follow the open book method.

The actual challenge was how to conduct the MCQ (multiple choice questions)-based exams which were part of the term assessment as it was difficult to ensure transparency in the online mode. The faculty was of the view that term exams could be conducted through Zoom facility allowing the participants to download the examination paper at a given time, requiring them to sit in the Zoom meeting throughout the allocated time and uploading the answer sheet at a specified time. This necessitated that the exam be conducted in smaller groups to ensure close supervision by the faculty.

The C.I. considered the conduct of Analysis Papers and MCQs as the most challenging task in the online environment.

All the proposals were discussed in detail. The most suitable ones were selected for development. It was decided that the Zoom platform will be used to conduct online sessions. It was also agreed that the course contents would be kept focused and long online sessions would be avoided. Sports, co-curricular activities, local visits and Inland Study Tour had to be dropped. The only committee which could arrange a session was the Cultural Committee. As the COVID situation was still developing, no one had any idea about whether or not on-campus activities could be conducted. The C.I.'s mind was occupied with coming up with a suitable plan for the conduct of APs and MCQs. Transparency and fairness was to be ensured in the conduct of these graded activities. At the end of the design phase, there was a course outline and an overall design.

(c) DEVELOPMENT: Although the training design was in place, training activities had to be customized according to the new mode of delivery. Training for faculty and staff at NIM was arranged with a resource person from NSPP. A full time I.T instructor had been employed recently and it was a relief to have someone who had an in-depth understanding of the Zoom platform and its effective use for training. He held sessions and instructed everyone about online sessions. Zoom licenses were procured for all faculty members so that they could conduct their own uninterrupted Zoom meetings with their respective syndicate groups.

The C.I. understood that one of the most important things to be kept in mind while designing online training was that the sessions should not be very long as it could cause screen fatigue among participants. In addition, it was better if LDs and PDs were scheduled in the earlier part of the day with after lunch sessions focusing on team activities.

(i) Infrastructure and Equipment

Necessary equipment had to be procured for conducting online sessions. The DG, with the help of the C.I. and the administrative team, identified the required IT equipment.⁷ This was a challenge keeping the limited time in view. After the equipment had been installed and tested and NIM faculty and staff given an orientation about online training, the course resumed as planned in July. The C.I. saw challenges in actual conduct of various training activities and discussed these with the D.G. The following strategy was developed in response:

(ii) Potential Challenges & Proposals

In shifting to the online mode, the following issues were identified and proposals were given against each:

Issue	Proposal
i) Familiarity in use of online class applications by resource persons and participants (especially ex-cadre officers who had been working manually/ non-digitally for most of their professional lives).	As a preliminary exercise, and to familiarize participants with online activities, an active WhatsApp group supervised /regulated by one faculty member was to be formed. The group was also to have an IT expert as a member for educating participants about using various applications.
ii) Need for real-life interaction of participants (keeping some of the course activities interactive).	In case, participants are required to be called to NIM for any academic activity, they may be called in small groups and on different days and timings. Although this shall increase engagement of the resource person but that would be the safest mode in the current situation. This portion of course could be conducted during the last couple of weeks of MCMC.
iii) Assessment criteria	An assessment rubric may be developed for each activity to maintain uniformity and fairness. Weightage could be given to originality, analytical approach, identification of key issues, effective use of evidence to support answers, accuracy of information gathered and authenticity of primary and secondary sources used.
iv) Privacy of online data	To guard online privacy, resource persons and participants may be asked to use official emails to log in the interactive apps. Participants may also be

⁷ 4 HP Core i7 10th Generation laptops; 2 Samsung 82 inch LED; 2 Minrray USB camera 12 mega pixels; 3Logitech 5 megapixel cameras; 3 3KVA APC UPS.

	advised to create an email with their original names for identification and ease of the resource person and the faculty.
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Meetings were held to discuss and develop training SOPs in the online mode. The C.I. held separate meetings with the faculty to help them understand and implement change. One of the challenges was to equip officers with tools to carry out their work despite the pandemic. Working remotely in teams was one skill that NIM hoped to impart. NIM had to act as a role model to inspire trainees.

Training activities that were to be conducted were evaluated for conversion into online mode. The equipment required for online training was procured. Two syndicate rooms were converted into studios for online classes. LCD screens, cameras and mics were procured. The E-portal was strengthened. Zoom licenses for faculty were purchased. Internet devices were procured for all participants. The following online training requirements were identified:

- IT software/hardware. Directing Staff (Admin) required to review existing equipment.
- Tele-classroom/studio equipped with videocon equipment and dedicated bandwidth
- Syndicates to also be technologically equipped
- System protocols to be developed
- Internet devices for all participants
- Video recording
- Transcripts of discussion to be prepared
- Tele-attendance facility
- Wi-fi for participants
- LED video walls in classroom and syndicate rooms

In order to ensure a safe environment, the C.I. worked with her team to come up with detailed COVID- SOPs in addition to online classroom SOPs. The two designated studios for online training were regularly disinfected after each session.

The 29th MCMC Syllabus was reviewed keeping the above points in mind. C.I. ensured that the revised syllabus had shorter LDs and the online classes were not unduly long and time consuming. The syllabus and methodology proposals framed by NIM Lahore were presented in the training conference held in NSPP where these were approved. C.I. NIM Lahore was tasked to coordinate with all the other NIM campuses and share the proposed syllabus with them. At the end of the Development Phase, the entire online course had been planned. It was now time for implementation.

(d) IMPLEMENTATION: was the most challenging phase of the transformation and one about which the C.I. was very apprehensive. After resumption of the course, the training and COVID SOPs were followed meticulously. Despite the fact that all potential issues were examined in painstaking detail, there was always a possibility of something going wrong. Apart from the willingness of the trainers and the readiness of the trainees, quality of internet connectivity was crucial as everything depended on it in an online environment. Many challenges were encountered during the implementation phase. There were constant consultations amongst the C.I., D.G and faculty to respond to the developing crisis situation. They were always hands-on. Ready for any eventuality.

After a session with a speaker who delivered the lecture in NIM studio, The C.I. got a call from the D.G in the evening. *“Were you present in the session today?”* the D.G inquired. *“Yes Sir”*. Replied the C.I. *“Don’t panic,”* he said, *“but the speaker has tested positive for COVID-19.”*

(i) Escalation of the Pandemic & Increase in Infections

Before the start of the course it was planned that faculty and guest speakers will come on campus and participants will attend from their respective work stations. The course was conducted in this manner in the first week. However, in the second week, there was a sharp increase in the number of COVID infections in the country. Things got scarier when one of the guest speakers tested positive for COVID. The C.I. was alarmed. Although strict COVID SOPs were followed while conducting the sessions, this was a cause for concern. The whole IT team and administrative staff who had been associated with the session were tested and two out of the twenty officials tested positive for the virus. They were immediately sent off into quarantine. The procedures were made even stricter. It was decided that the faculty will conduct the training from home. Guest speakers were asked to conduct their sessions from their respective workstations. They were facilitated by NIM technical staff. At the same time, essential I.T staff was given food and lodging on campus to ensure smooth conduct of online training and maintenance of studios and equipment.

During the implementation phase, the C.I. ensured that all faculty members were on board and had received requisite training and orientation to conduct class sessions and syndicate exercises. She personally supervised tutorials and case study discussions in small groups.

On resumption of the course in the online mode, some participants found it difficult to concentrate in their home environment. They even requested to be allowed to come on campus and attend classes online in a separate room. However, they were informed that this was not possible in the given circumstances.

(ii) Internet Connectivity

Although all participants were provided internet devices yet some still faced connectivity challenges as they were in areas where service was not optimal. Disruptions due to internet connections though few, were there and had to be dealt with. The faculty was trained to be flexible and adaptive in such cases. Participants were encouraged to participate and ask questions. The C.I. made it a point to attend all the syndicate sessions and tutorials one by one to ensure standardization and fulfilment of basic training requirements. The faculty was required to monitor the classes closely. In case of any

disruption due to internet connectivity, the sponsor DS or C.I. intervened and took over. More than one host in the Zoom meetings ensured that if the primary host was disconnected, the session was not disrupted.

(iii) Participant Response

As this was the first online course, participants had to be given initial training and orientation of the online environment and the Zoom platform. All of them had laptops and were provided internet devices by NIM to ensure uninterrupted connectivity. The C.I. planned the 'Zero Week' in which it was ensured that all participants were at the same level of readiness to engage in online learning. In this week, participants were provided orientation and informed about the conduct of the remaining part of the course.

Once the course started, the sessions were monitored closely by the C.I. and her team. Initially, it was tiring for the participants to sit in front of their laptops for extended periods of time. Although the intensive sessions were mostly before lunch, certain activities had to be conducted in the afternoon. The C.I. realized that it was important to communicate with the participants about the requirements of the online course and the importance of covering the syllabus in the given time. Therefore, regular sessions were planned with the C.I. and faculty in which the participants gave their feedback and shared their concerns. It had a positive impact on participant responsiveness and also helped the faculty understand their viewpoint and adjust accordingly.

Another challenge was that some participants could not focus on the sessions due to disruptions in their home environment. This was more of a problem for lady officers who had very young children (who too were not going to school). They had to make an effort to insulate themselves from their surroundings. The C.I. realized that this matter also had to be handled with tact. It was easy to issue letters of violation but as

the whole concept was novel and the situation was still uncertain, some margin had to be given to the participants to get accustomed to the online mode. Participants were counselled by their respective syndicate advisors in case some disturbance was noticed during conduct of sessions. Due to this constant engagement, things smoothed out after the first week.

(iv) Role of Faculty

The other challenge for the C.I. was more complex: this was to convince her own team to put in extra efforts for the online classes. When the classes were conducted on campus the faculty had the facility (apart from the sponsor DS) to tend to other assignments related to the course. They could do this while sitting at the back of the classroom or in their offices. However, with conversion to the online mode, faculty members were asked to attend all sessions to monitor the class activity closely. Initially, all faculty members joined the classes but some started switching off their cameras once the sessions had progressed. The C.I. noted that this was counterproductive as the participants took this as a sign that online sessions were not as important as on campus training. Some of them started switching off their cameras as well and had to be cautioned to be more attentive. The C.I. decided to tackle the issue before it got out of hand or undermined the whole training activity. She convened an online faculty meeting. It was a sensitive matter and things had to be handled delicately. One way was to tell everyone to attend all sessions with their cameras on. No questions asked. The second approach was to take them on board and build consensus about the rationale for faculty members to be more involved and attentive. The C.I. decided to go for the second option. Although it was more difficult and took some convincing, faculty members were made to realize that they were role models for the participants and had to show more determination to make online sessions work. The collaborative approach proved successful in this case. With a more focused faculty, participation of trainees also improved.

(v) Facilitating Resource Persons

The third issue pertained to guest speakers. The team had to plan engaging them. Initially most of them came to the campus and conducted the sessions from NIM studio. However, as mentioned earlier, a problem arose when one renowned speaker who had just conducted a session at NIM tested positive for COVID-19. Thence onwards, speakers were asked to conduct online sessions from their respective homes/workstations. This posed two problems. Firstly, some of the guest speakers had poor connectivity and secondly, some were not familiar with the Zoom environment.

The C.I., in consultation with the D.G, decided to prepare a team of I.T professionals who would go to their homes/offices and help them conduct the session. The team also carried a Wi-Fi device and some other gadgets just in case. This worked very well in case of speakers who were in the same city. The problem arose when speakers were engaged from other cities. The C.I. decided to take the respective NIM team in other cities on board to facilitate the speakers. Resultantly, some speakers from Islamabad and Peshawar were given space by the concerned NIMs to conduct online session in Lahore from their campus. In response, NIM Lahore also facilitated their speakers who were based in Lahore.

A very positive point of online learning is the ease with which guest speakers could be engaged from anywhere and distances ceased to be a barrier.

As a result of the hands-on approach by the C.I. and her team, there were hardly any major disruptions and the course concluded successfully on the given date despite the multiple challenges that were encountered in its implementation.

(vi) Evaluation

The training of the participants of 29th MCMC was successfully completed on 3rd July 2020. The first six (06) weeks of the course had been conducted at the NIM Lahore campus. There was a break from 13th March till 31st May due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the course resumed on 1st June in the online mode (for five weeks). At the end of every course, the Course Review Committee (CRC) formed during the course comprising participants from the course was tasked with reviewing the course activities and giving suggestions for improvement.

The CRC members recognized the effort put in by the C.I. and her team in the resumption and successful completion of the 29th MCMC. They considered themselves fortunate to have met their course-mates at the beginning of the course as no one could say when things would improve; naturally, till that time, courses would have to be conducted online or in the hybrid mode.

The CRC of 29th MCMC evaluated various training activities, course contents and methodologies employed during the course. The C.I. carried out an analysis of the CRC's suggestions.

The CRC collected anonymous responses from the course participants by circulating questionnaires. The committee recognized that 29th MCMC was a unique course as it started with on-campus training and ended as an online course. Participants were satisfied that the course was resumed and then customized for the online mode.

Most of the questions were framed using the Likert Scale and were focused on the core competencies developed during the training as well as efficacy of various training methodologies, syllabus, administrative arrangements and online training mode. There were also comments and observations by the respondents which were made part of the report. The overall satisfaction of the participants can be gauged from the fact that 98% respondents indicated that the course fulfilled its stated objectives and that their expectations regarding personal and professional development were met. The core competencies participants rated the highest included team building, time management, presentation skills, communication skills, sharing responsibility and ability to perform under pressure.

One point raised by the participants was that while certain aspects of the course like team management and leadership could not be focused upon in the online mode, this was not much of a problem in the 29th MCMC as in the initial weeks of this course training had been conducted in the physical mode. This could be an issue in a fully online course with no physical interaction.

One downside of the online mode was that the Inland Study Tour could not be conducted.

On the administrative side, the areas of concern identified by the CRC included Wi-Fi and internet connectivity. The report also proposed integrating the plagiarism check in the E-portal and developing a NIM alumni portal. At the end of the Evaluation Phase, the C.I. had elicited detailed information about all that was required to be revised for improvement of future courses.

Lessons Learnt

The following policy lessons can be drawn from this case study:

- a. Organizations must ***adapt to survive and remain relevant***. This was a lesson many institutions, including NIM, learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic. The timely conversion of the mode of training during 29th MCMC meant that officers did not lose precious time and that their career progression was not disrupted.
- b. Online learning is the new normal. It brings many benefits but face-to-face interaction has its own value. ***The way forward is to combine the strengths of both and remain flexible in implementation.***

- c. Public sector organizations are usually perceived as slow and difficult to change. However, NIM proved *to be a learning organization* by overcoming organizational inertia and implementing change successfully. The contributing factors towards this success included support from the top, dynamic leadership, a committed and capable team, painstakingly detailed preparation and effective implementation.
- d. In a crisis situation, leaders have to *assess risk(s), handle ambiguity/conflict, quell anxieties and build the confidence of their teams* to implement change successfully.
- e. Once implemented, a process can be fine-tuned with the help of *feedback, review and mid-course corrections*. Most of the lessons learnt during the 29th MCMC were utilized while designing hybrid trainings for subsequent courses.
- f. The most important lesson learnt was that *we must not underestimate our own capacity to change or implement innovative ideas*. The *scarcity of resources* in the public sector *can be overcome by engaging more deliberately with the process*.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that in this particular case, there was a fit between the *organization's mandate* (to transform the training mode) and the *authorizing environment* (directions from NSPP). In addition, both the leadership and the team rose to the challenge. They were willing, committed and qualified to plan and implement the desired change. The presence of this enabling milieu enabled the C.I. to identify internal and external complexities and opportunities. She made good use of the time available before resumption of the 29th MCMC by detailed planning and focusing on all areas of training before starting the course in an online mode. It was due to this painstaking attention to detail that there were no major disruptions in the conduct of the course.

With reference to the key question about whether the course was as rigorous and meaningful as those conducted earlier in the physical mode, faculty perception and participant feedback in the form of CRC report is a good indicator. This document shows that the knowledge part of the course was adequately covered. All the participants were able to complete the course despite the critical COVID-19 situation and ensuing challenges. Most areas of activity were under lockdown and there were sick persons in the family of participants (a few of whom became victims of COVID-19 themselves). Although the interaction between participants in groups was not of the same nature as a physical on-campus presence, however, the main objectives of the course were met and participants recognized the effort and hard work put in by the NIM team for ensuring that the course was resumed and completed despite the crisis. The interplay of all these factors led to a successful transformation of training at NIM Lahore.

Recommendations

In order to manage change successfully in a crisis situation, the following strategy can help:

1. Understanding the authorizing environment: what kind of support is available from the top? How can it be strengthened? Without commitment at the highest level, a change of this magnitude cannot be implemented.
2. Avoiding being bogged down by daunting challenges; the stakeholders should have faith in the system and in their own capacity to rise up to the test.
3. Developing a shared vision and clearly identifying the objectives: Leaders have to decide who should be involved and must then schedule all collaborative working in detail to bring everyone on board. It is important to have a shared vision to move forward in unison.
4. Focusing on teamwork: A capable and committed team is the most important factor in successful change management. Leaders should focus on developing the capacity of their teams. Identifying the right person(s) for right work and training the support staff is crucial.
5. Planning ahead: one of the most important aspects of effective change management is planning in advance and analyzing all aspects thoroughly ***before implementing the required change***. All loose ends must be tied down while keeping the objective(s) in mind.
6. Acquiring desired expertise: Leaders should either develop expertise or engage experts in the relevant field. In this particular case, the course content and methodology were redesigned to suit the online mode and IT experts were engaged to advise about the design and equipment required to conduct online sessions.
7. Putting in place a system of monitoring and review: there can be no improvement without constant monitoring and review. The change team must be flexible and open to suggestions.

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