

EDUCATIONAL AUDIO IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY FROM INDIA.

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1. Introduction:

The Radio might have lost its relevance in urban centers where mass media has been revolutionized by television and Internet, but the audio media continues to be the most powerful medium of education, information and entertainment as of today. It is quicker, cost-effective, easy in terms of production. Its delivery is easy, as it is also portable, less equipment are required for the user. It may be on Broadcast mode or non-Broadcast. It's easy in accessibility in every corner of the country comparative to other medium. Audio is much more needed in the developing countries, because of its lower cost and especially in Developing countries like India, where there are vast variations in the languages, cast, creed and they also faced the problem of excessive population. Radio/ audio medium has been successfully used for formal or non-formal education in many countries of the world and that in India too.

2. Educational Broadcast: Indian Scenario

Radio is being used for enrichment of primary and higher level of education in India. It is also been used for Non-formal and Developmental education. For the 'developmental activities' of the government or the state, Radio plays a vital role because of its inherent qualities.

The main goals for developmental education are to sensitize people about their problems: For children, the areas covered besides the school education are health hygiene, National integration etc. For youths the special focus was also given to social education and mass literacy. Form and Home Units of AIR could promote the developmental activities in the rural youths with useful productions and extensive coverage on local network. There are special programs for the teacher broadcast by many of the AIR centers with the objectives to upgrade the teaching skills, to make them aware of innovations in teaching methods, curricular changes, new additions to knowledge and so on. Various subjects are also covered on the 'Regular Network.'

Besides the radio broadcast, there are practices of producing educational audiocassettes in number of educational institutions either formal or non-formal education.

The Electronic Media Production Center (EMPC) located at the campus of Indira Gandhi National Open University; New Delhi is a national resource for the country. The center is involved primarily in production of audio/video courseware for IGNOU programs. In addition to other advanced latest technologies for audio/video courseware this center is also equipped with two audio studios and digital audiotape format (DAT) audio edit suites etc. The center has so far produced 692 audio besides its video productions. The programs are carefully planned and produced by professional and trained staff of EMPC in active and close collaboration with the faculty concerned. The audio-video programs are designed as an integral part of the courses. Selected stations of AIR Hyderabad and Mumbai broadcast the audio programs. The cassettes are also available for sale through authorized agents. Facilities of EMPC are available to other educational institutions and State Open Universities too.

Some of the universities/institutions, such as the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET), are equipped with program production facilities. Such institutions produce programs for specific target groups. In some cases, the universities provide content inputs, and programs are produced and broadcast by AIR.

2.1 Practices and Methodologies

A project entitled the Radio Pilot Project, was started jointly by the Department of Education (Government of Rajasthan), AIR Jaipur, and the NCERT, Delhi. The aim of the project was to teach language (Hindi) to the primary school children. The radio programs were planned as part of a package, which included the print materials and classroom teacher support. The support services helped showed that all the teachers, who were given the responsibility to arrange listening, unanimously accepted that the role of radio programs in promoting the students' knowledge of Hindi was significant. Similarly, radio programs are being broadcasts for secondary school students. Many radio stations in India broadcast the programs based on the secondary school syllabus during school hours. Some

Directorates of Correspondence Courses of the conventional universities make use of the radio broadcast for their students. For instance, correspondence courses and continuing education (DCC&CE), Delhi is making use of about 700 talks in a year for the under Graduate students relayed by the All India Radio Delhi. Production, in its own studios is also under plan. AIR, Jalandhar broadcast higher education programs for the correspondence students of the Punjabi University. Similarly, AIR Tiruchi is engaged in producing and broadcasting programs for the students of the Madurai Kamaraj University. Some other universities are also engaged in planning, producing and utilizing radio programs for their students. Two states OUs produced 2 to 4 audiocassettes per 8-credit course. Most the faculty members of the universities are involved in script writing, presentation and coordination.

The other University is Dr.BRAOU Hyderabad, which produces educational audio. An Audio-visual Production and Research Center was also started at Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) Hyderabad to cater the crucial relevance of integration of audio-visual inputs in the courses and counseling system in planning of the programs in the University. The center has produces nearly 300 audio and more than 1000 Radio program lessons by 1996 besides its video productions.

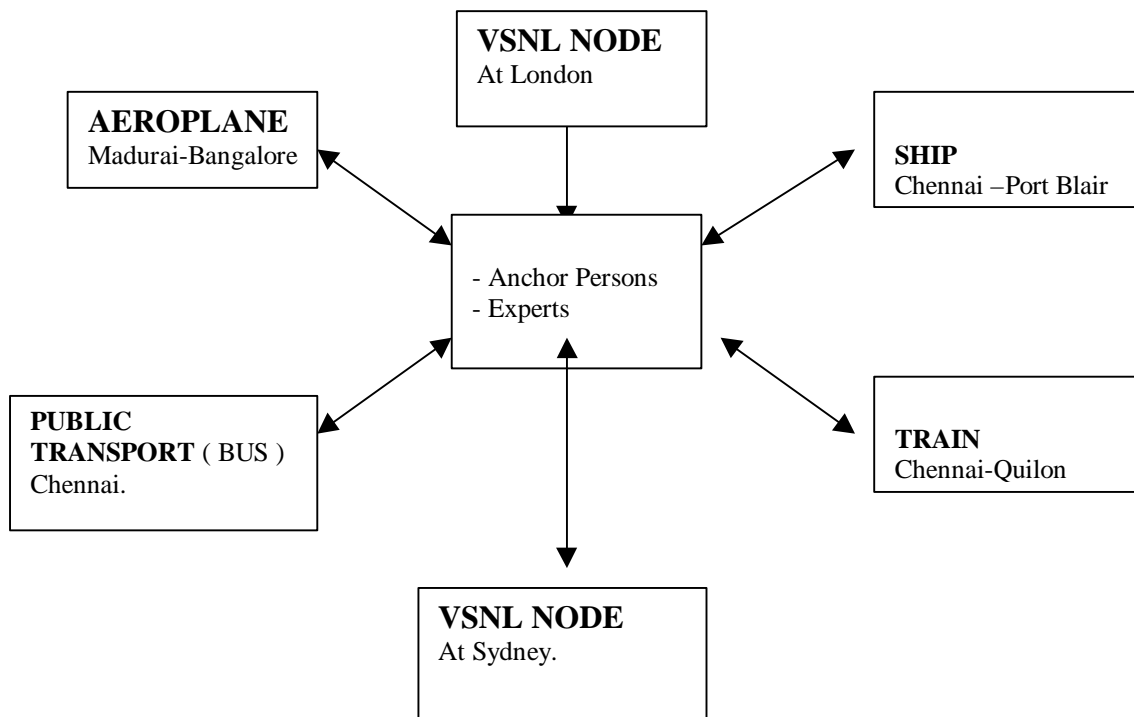
Besides Open Universities, 3 CCIs (SNDT, Delhi and CIEFL produced audiocassettes. The number of audiocassettes produced per course varies form 7 to 30 and per subject forms 1 to 8. Some members of the faculty are also take parts in writing scripts as also in the presentation of the radio programs. (*Singh* 1994)

Although the print material remains the master, National Open School (NOS) has produced audio and visual material, which is curriculum based as opposed to general awareness programs. The purpose of these is to support the learning styles of the learners. The audio material is integrated with the print material for learning languages. For other subjects, both the audio and the video materials supplement the print material and enrich the experience of the learner.

In all the OUs radio –talks are a supplemental part of the course material. The broadest are beamed for 30 minutes both in the morning and the evening on all weekdays and in the case of some OUs only twice a week. The total number of the radio broadcast per academic year varies vastly—25 to 288. Most of the OUs do send a broadcast schedule to the students in advance. In a majority of OUs audiocassettes are made available to the students at the study centers and these constitute a supplemental part of the course material.(*Singh* 1994)

2.2 Innovations in Educational Broadcast

An experimental Teleconference with ‘people on move’ was successfully done by All India Radio Chennai on May 17, 1983 on ‘World Tele-communication Day.’



Links were established using police wireless only. One antenna at AIR Station and police wireless sets on the Ship, Train and Bus. Airplane used Air-Ground air traffic wireless. VSNL (Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited) nodes were used using ISD. Question from plane answered by peoples on the ship. Press was in the Bus.

Technology Demonstration of a 18th century innovation is used in the 20th century. India was to project that reaching people is no problem even if they are on the move. At that time cell phones, pagers and satellite were not generally known for such usage. (Shreedhar , 1988)

All India Radio in collaboration with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) carried out a project **Radio-DATE** (Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Education in 1990. The 30 weekly episodes, 20 minutes each, were broadcast in sixteen regional languages, simultaneously all over the country, from 84 AIR stations. The random surveys conducted in rural areas of Karnataka and Goa have revealed that most of the person (96.4% in Karnataka and 95.6% in Goa) felt that program were ‘goo’ or ‘very good.’ More than 92% felt that it would have effect on users in discontinuing their habit and the program would have effect on children in not initiating the habit and more than 31% reduced the frequency of use.

‘Human Evolution,’ a joint venture of All India Radio and National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) had been broadcast simultaneously in eighteen languages in 144 episodes. One lakh individual listeners in the age group of 10-14 years had been registered as committed listeners. In addition to this ten thousand register schools also tune to this serial. Without any incentives 56, 779 children responded immediately. (Gupta, 1994)

A Rural development weekly program **‘Chalo gaon ki or’** (Let’s go back to villages) is being run into its 130th episode .on radio. This broadcast is carried every week in the evening at on primary channel and also on the FM channels wherever they available in 28 Indian languages including the North East covering the remotest part of the country. The program is appreciated such a that a large number of letter are received in the feedback. Areas, which could not be covered because of non-availability of FM transmitters, they requested to make them available. The format of the program is Docu-drama. It informs and educate about the rural development programs of the government of India creating awareness about the basic criteria, target groups, and how and why of benefits to be accrued through various development programs. The message is passed on mainly through a dancer and his wife the ‘Nat’ and the ‘Nati’ who also entertain the audience while passing on the relevant information. One stage is set always in a rural surrounding and the village atmosphere is created through sounds of birds,

bullock cart cows and buffalo etc. An active elderly village woman react sharply to represent the villagers voice and according to the demand of villagers society (Panchayat) and the Block Development officer are added. In the end of the program letters of the listeners are replied in which not only they appreciate the program but they also ask the all type of questions mostly who they can be benefited of the information supplied by the program. They also write sometimes about the failure of the local rural development official. It is found that the illiterate listeners use their literate neighbors to communicate. The Ministry of Rural Development has sponsored the program and the contract has been given to a private producer. However the Ministry officials who demand certain changes if required necessary screen the each script. The popularity of the program has encouraged the AIR to broadcast on Primary Channel through out the country. (Sharma ,1998)

IGNOU has started recently the **Radio-interactive-counseling through Phone-in** on one of its center of AIR at Bhopal. The curtain raiser program was broadcast on May 3rd 1998. A research has been done after the completion of 3 months of this fortnightly one-hour broadcast. Education as could reach formally first time to students directly at their homes that too on two - way communication model the results are encouraging.

3. Follow Up

Feed back mechanism: Experience shows that extensive and effective planning is necessary besides the planning and productions of Broadcast especially for Educational Programs. Group listening can be encouraged with the formation of Listeners Groups, Radio Forums and even Organized listening in the regular classes of formal education in the schools or the colleges (Sumitra, 1988)

The most important things, which are missing in the practices that, are the feed back of the programs. Studies are must from the users point of view, resources available to them for using tape-recorders, their skills of handling equipment, their understanding from the particular production. On the approach of using different formats, talk, interviews, drama or feature program etc to get the fuller advantage. Aiming the objective to determine the media-habits of the IGNOU students in his survey, Dr. Basu (1992) reveals, 'the Bachelor of Degree program (BDP) students devoted more time to radio (31%) then the Management students (16%).' He suggests therefore, attention is required for media selection for various groups of students enrolling in different academic programs. 'The students Management (21%) and BDP (18%) visited the study centers to use the library. A few visited the study centers to listen to audio programs.' The respondents were not happy with the working condition of the audio sets. The students (Management 27% and BDP 36%) found the audio sets either seldom or never working. Students (Management 27% and BDP 23%) responded 'audio sets working only sometimes. They had similar experience with the availability of audiocassettes. Therefore he suggests

' This is a matter of concern as these cassettes may have very important teaching points and information for the students.' It has been found through the survey 'a lot of students, especially those doing the BDP courses depend on audio channels. Their media habits suggest that for various reasons audio/radio is preferred. Therefore, it could be a good idea for IGNOU to send audio programs/cassettes to the students in addition to the printed materials. Two to three audiocassettes with relevant programs could enrich the students' understanding of their respective courses' (Basu.1994)

The experience of integrating the audio-visual inputs with counseling at various study center of Dr. BRAOU Hyderabad has not been satisfactory in view of lack of training to nearly 3,000 counselors who are engaged in this part time weekly process. The lack of training of the counselors and the shortage of time for counseling for subjects has come in the way of integrating successfully the audio-visual inputs. (Bashiruddin, 1996). This also we have to take care

4. Cost Effectiveness

The use of more advance technology can be justified only if it increases accessibility to students, enhances teaching effectiveness, and lowers the cost.

(Khan, 1994) While these factors are important, in practice, media selection and use are determined by a number of macro-level factors are country size (area and population): wealth and resources: extent of industrialization: education and training system infrastructure and capabilities: political support for education and educational technology: and information dissemination infrastructure. These factors can suggest the kinds of technology that best fit a country's economic and socio-political circumstances. Micro-level factors include income levels: access to media: and gender implications. The scale of the

Distance Education system varies considerably depending upon the size of the country, educational infrastructure, type of institution, and international organizations. Studies show that in the available different non-print medium audio medium is the one, which has the maximum reach to the masses with the lowest cost. Therefore the adaptation of audio/radio medium will be more useful in their existing problems in the developing countries.

5. Conclusion

In India, Government controls the Radio and primarily aims to bring socio-cultural and economic changes in society. All India Radiobroadcast the programs for the different groups of the people. In one of the studies done by the students of PGJMC, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, they found in their queries that the marginal farmers, they hardly know about the meaning and implications of Dunkel problem but were very much aware because of its uproar in the assembly through radio. This and many other studies shows that the radio programs continue to be listened by the future citizens. Audio medium is supported with other medium like print in terms of charts, flaps, handout are affective. In India such practices are needed to be adopted. Such practices are most advisable in developing countries because of illiteracy and lower level of education as well as economic problems restricts to get the maximum advantage of the efforts otherwise. Follow-up practices in peer groups bring the positive results.

Studies shows that the most of the educational radio/audio programs are either in English or in Hindi. Number of programs produced in other languages is few. Indira Gandhi National Open University is one who have produced programs in Tamil and few other regional languages. Medium like radio/audio, which is, rely on communication stressed understandable and fluent language for which the regional languages can be more purposeful.

Radio thus can be more exploited in the developing countries adopting different strategies according to the situation.

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