RADIO FOR EQUITABLE EDUCATION TO ALL

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ABSTRACT. Pakistan is a developing country. It is located in the north-western part of South Asia having a total area of 796,095 square kilometers. Its topography is diverse with mountains and hills on the western and north western side, a fertile Indus basin plain in the centre and east, a desert in the south and a long coastal fringe in the south and west. Radio broadcasts have full coverage except hilly areas. One of the major problems which the educationists in Pakistan face is that of reaching the mass of the people. Pakistan is by no means, in comparison with other parts of the world, a densely populated country. The areas are generally large and thickly populated with exceptions where population is quite scarce and are thinly inhabited. In urban areas it is possible to collect homogeneous groups together to make face-to-face teaching methods worthwhile and economical, although even in this situation the demand for education often outweighs the supply of adequately qualified teachers. But what of the rural areas over which the bulk of population is scattered? Radio can help to provide a solution. They can be used for teaching purposes in towns and cities being the only way in which teaching can be achieved in rural areas.

Keywords: Radio, Education, Listening groups.

1. Introduction. The full effect of teaching, using radio in Pakistan is only gradually being realized. But these are the media which are becoming more and more popular in providing general educational opportunities, as familiarity with their use improves, new ways of using them are devised. It is possible that these media in the near future will take the brunt of the educational burden. It is because those working in education will find themselves using these media more and more that this is justified. They will be responsible for devising programmes, for introducing programmes, for conducting programmes and, at the receiving end, controlling listening groups.

Along with the problem of provision for a scattered population, the problem that is faced by all developing countries is that of the shortage of trained and skilled teachers. (Dodds, T (1972, p.16). Again radio provides the means which can help to overcome this. One good teacher can, through radio teach at any one time many people scattered over the country. As there seems to be no likelihood of the teacher shortage solving itself, these media must be fully utilized. It is true, and no doubt will remain true for some time, that radio coverage is limited. It is also true that costs of receiving equipment are high. Yet a growing number of Asian countries are providing radio sets. All have radio services and most people have access to a radio set. Coverage is increasing all the time and as good educational programmes are available, so the demand for them will grow. (Bates, A.W, 1984, pp.41-42).

Now radio will be examined in turn; its advantages and disadvantages; major difficulties in the preparation and transmission of programmes looked at; and finally some suggestions of the most effective ways in which this media can be used in education.

2. Advantages of Radio. The advantages of using radio as an educational medium as highlighted by Rashid, M (2010, p.239) include:
1. It can reach a wide audience, over as wide a distance as reception will allow.
2. It is economical for material can be prepared and recorded and used as many times as required. Thus repeats become cheap and possible.
3. Receiving sets are readily available and reasonably cheap.
4. The best teachers can be used with a very wide coverage.
5. The programmes can be heard inside the home if necessary, thus making them more convenient.
6. With the introduction of transistorized radios, sets are easily transportable.
7. Programmes can be used as complete teaching courses, or can be integrated into face-to-face teaching courses, or used in conjunction with distance education courses.

2.1 Disadvantages of Radio. Kaye, A & Garille, R (1983, p.121) highlighted the disadvantages of Radio which should be considered by those responsible for planning and administration of programmes. These include:

1. Radio can be impersonal and students listening for long to a voice from a box can lose interest quickly.
2. There and normally be no student feedback which is spontaneous although the use of listening groups and distance education courses can help to overcome this disadvantage.
3. Radio programmes can provide no visual help and therefore, there is a limitation on the variety of subjects which can be taught.
4. Radio programme reception can be interrupted thus causing loss of continuity.
5. Lengthy regular radio programmes unsupported in other ways cause difficulties of self discipline amongst students.
6. Because radio programmes are beamed to a large audience and “anybody” may be listening in, there is often an initial reluctance on the part of tutors who have had little experience of the medium to commit themselves to the radio.

3. Types of Programmes. It is useful to distinguish two different types of educational broadcasts. The first type includes the general interest programme which is beamed out at the general public. These would include news items and commentaries and programmes which have an entertainment content which is more important than the actual educational content, e.g. discussions, quizzes, forums. The second type is the educational broadcast of a high educational content which is beamed at a specific audience. These include schools broadcasts for children and broadcasts for farmers, school teachers, engineers or any other specific groups. These programmes, while being mainly for educational purpose may also entertain and should do so for the best effect.

The general interest programmes involve problems of planning, content and evaluation. (Rashid, M, 2010, p.107) Experience and listeners surveys are two ways in which guide can be found to the most popular types of general interest programmes. Experimentation with new ideas involves a certain amount of risk which must be carried out if new forms are to be popularized. Evaluation is difficult since there is generally no feedback and the only guides are periodic listener surveys which assess popularity of programmes.

Strictly educational broadcasts can be used in all forms of education. As has been suggested, their use in developing countries is one of the few ways in which any real impact can be made on their large scale problem of educational provision. Educational broadcasts cannot stand on their own. But they can be usefully integrated into distance education courses and regular class meetings. (Holmberg, 1985, p.113).

Distance education courses alone are very impersonal and for successful completion require a high degree of self-discipline. Regular radio broadcasts can inject a more human element and provide a stimulus to regular student study when built into a distance education instructional system.

In rural areas especially, regular and frequent face-to-face classes are difficult to organize though lack of teachers and the often thin scatter of students for higher level classes. Regular monthly weekend sessions may be all that can be programmes realistically. However, educational radio broadcasts can again be used providing continuity through the long periods when teacher and student cannot meet, with the added advantage of the best radio teachers being used.Usha Rao (1991, p.863) stated that the use of radio in a novel way of enlivening an educational broadcast has proved attractive as a teaching method.In developing countries where a low level of education has to be remedied speedily on a large scale, the use of radio cannot be avoided. With imagination and skilled forethought this medium
of mass communication can be a cornerstone on which all types of large educational programmes can be mounted and carried successfully through.

4. **Listening groups and feedback.** Formal educational broadcasts will be beamed at a specific section of the community. In order to make the teaching more effective and provide a guide to student organization is required. The formation of listening groups is a way in which students can be brought together. The group can have a properly qualified teacher to amplify the radio teaching. If such a teacher is not available then a group leader who can conduct discussion and channel correspondence between the broadcasting agency and the students could be obtained.

Listening groups provide a number of elements which are often essential to making the best use of broadcast programme:

- they make possible the use of communal radio sets where such sets are not available to all students;
- they enhance and provide an extra self-disciplinary aid to students studying privately and individually. The group meeting can itself encourage student application from its social nature;
- they encourage the exchange of ideas on the teaching content between students and provide opportunities for face-to-face teaching if there is a teacher available. Difficulties can be cleared up easily and the subject or topic of the broadcast developed further within the group.

More important, they provide a way of evaluating the broadcasted courses from the feedback from individual students and teachers or group leaders. General comments sent in, questionnaires and problem-answer papers submitted will allow the radio teacher to know how successful he is, and indicate ways in which he can improve his performance. A national structure of viewing groups will provide guidance to national response and provide organizational framework through which teaching materials can be distributed, new programmes advertised and written work marked and assessed.

5. **Radio in Pakistan.** The Allama Iqbal Open University was established in 1974 with the objective of imparting education and training to masses at large along with its other media. Radio and television is also used in teaching learning process.

There are 31 broadcasting houses established by the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation with a variety of types of transmitters. i.e. medium wave, short wave and FM. The numbers of transmitters installed are 33, 8 and 21 respectively. Radio programmes are broadcast in national and 21 regional languages. The services for foreign students are also provided in 16 foreign languages. The radio programmes for different classes are being broadcast for Pakistani students living abroad. Pakistan Radio Broadcast net-work is very enormous and covers nearly 98% of population. It spread over 80 percent areas of Pakistan. FM radio service was started in 2002. Now only 8 FM stations are providing 101 services.

The university gave priority to supplement the textual material with radio and television programmes. For this purpose radio and TV equipment were up-graded with the help of JICA assistance in 1996. It was the grant aid project costing Rs. 280.842 million. Further in June 2005-06 AIOU collaborated with the Embassy of USA Public Affairs Section, as a result of an agreement produced 120 programmes of English for middle and secondary school’ students through Worlds Space satellite digital project. The total value of the project was US $41,026 equivalent to Pak Rs. 2.439 million.

In 2006 JICA assisted AIOU to enhance the educational facilities; an assistance of 480.00 million was given as an aid for installation of digital TV studio, digital radio studios and non-linear existing suits (AIOU, 2012, p.195).

This installation certainly helped in broadcasting radio programmes for supplement to courses of printed material to of middle, secondary, higher secondary and even at graduate level. Radio further helps in admission, examination, and academic update and re-address students queries and problems.

The FM radio channel was used by the University for its Courses Transmission from the transmitters of Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation. The broadcast time for each course is of 15 minutes duration. The enormously increased
in students’ enrollment compelled the university to increase the course related broadcast which was not possible through PBC during its limited time. The university took a decision to establish own FM channel. Now-a-days it is working successfully and FM transmission can be listened, live on internet also.

For other regions of the country, web based radio broadcasting option for networking the FM transmission as www.aiou.edu.pk is available. Media support Radio and TV programmes are reflected in the following figure.

![Media Support: Radio and TV Programmes Transmission (2007-08 to 2011-12)](image)

Source: Vice-Chancellor’s Annual Report (2012, p.159)

6. **Conclusion.** Radio is economically attractive for instructional purposes for several reasons. First radio transmission the cost of education provided in a classroom setting. Second, radio instruction is non-rival. Once listener’s use of radio does not limit the instruction of another. This is in contrast to a classroom situation where the number of people, able to participate in instruction, some-time, they may be limited by the total classroom space available. Thirdly, in a country with a large area characterized by geographic features which isolate a portion of the populace, or in countries with a widely dispersed population, it is sometimes not feasible to provide formal schooling in rural areas. The benefits of providing a formal educational system simply do not outweigh the enormous costs. Finally, in some subsistence economies, rural families are either unwilling or unable to send their children to school, especially where this involves time apart from normal work activities. Radio provides a compromise solution which doe not require the rural family to fore-go time in the field. There are the potential benefits of radio as viewed from the perspective of those concerned with the costs of providing education to rural persons. They fail to take into account, the effectiveness of radio when the individual is solely responsible for his or her own education. On the whole Radio broadcast programmes cover 98% population of Pakistan. It is beneficial for scattered population and for remote areas. Radio is an easy access for most of the people and is economical because material can be prepared, recorded and used as many times as required.

**REFERENCES**