Radio and distance learning in Pakistan

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1986

Razia, A. (1986). Radio and distance learning in Pakistan. In AMIC-CSD-WACC Seminar on the Communication Revolution in Asia : New Delhi, Aug 21-23, 1986. Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research & Information Centre.

<https://hdl.handle.net/10356/90679>

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AMIC-CSD-WACC Seminar on The Communication Revolution in Asia

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Pakistan is a country with 803.943 sq. Km area and 87.1 million population. There are 16 radio stations and the estimated number of radio sets in the country is 9.8 million. In 1947 population coverage for radio transmission was 6.7 percent for an area of 4.3 per cent. At present it is estimated to be 75 percent for an area of 98 percent. Radio listening pattern for the country is 75.5 percent while the female and male division for it is 75.7 percent and 79.8 percent respectively. In cities 3 out of every 4 house-holds have radios and in villages 2 out of 3 households have radio sets.

Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation has state monopoly and its headquarter is situated in Islamabad. Total power of all the stations is 2040.75 k.w. The budget, which is allocated annually, by the Government is based on licence fees and state revenues. Commercial advertising is permitted. The Sales Organization of the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation manages to arrange broadcasts of educational programmes and other public interest information programmes at prescribed rates. PBC home service now transmits 270 programme hours per day in the 21 major languages of the country.

During the first decade, after the inception of Pakistan, Radio was taken to be a means of long-distance communication which did not depend, like the press, on printing and transportation and that it could even reach its audience without the requirement of literacy. National leaders and high officials discovered the benefits of speaking directly to the people instead of waiting for their messages to be reported in the newspapers. Its advantages became even more apparent in the times of crisis. Radio was also considered, principally a medium of entertainment. It created, in a vast new public, a taste for music and drama. At the same time news reporting began to be considered important by the public, bringing into existence a new branch of the journalistic profession.

Karachi Radio Station was the first to introduce a school broadcast service in January 1953 serving ⁿearly 55,000 students in about 104 primary, middle and high schools in the city. The Karachi Station broadcasts were 15 minute programmes four days a week in Urdu and English. They were mainly language courses,

In 1960 Pakistan started radio broadcasts for schools with five different regional languages. Because of the diversity of languages school broadcasts were made by individual stations rather than nationally. The radio stations of Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Quetta and Hyderabad prepared these weekly broadcasts in the respective language of the region.

Radio Pakistan also transmitted special programmes in the regional languages from all stations with the aim of educating the masses particularly in the rural areas. There were also programmes for women, children and the armed forces. After some time, the radio broadcasts for schools were dropped from the programmes. For the last decade there have not been many educational broadcasts from PBC. The present proportion of different categories of programmes given below has been prevalent for some time now.

Music, Drama and Feature	45%
News and current affairs	11%
Religious broadcasts	16%
Talks, discussions, seminars on vital publicity themes and general information programmes	10%
Rural broadcast, farm forum	7%
Science and Technology	2%
Women's programmes	1%
Youth forum	1%
Students programmes	1%
Sports	3%
Children's programmes	11%
Forces programmes	2%

As can be seen from the above allocations, little time is given to educational broadcasts. Fortunately this work was taken over by Allama Iqbal Open University of

Pakistan. This distance learning educational institution was established in 1974 through an act of Parliament and is the only institution in the country using radio broadcasts for its distance education system.

Institute of Educational Technology of AIOU

In 1974 an institute of communication and mass media technology known as the Institute of Educational Technology (IET) was established within the Allama Iqbal Open University. The IET channels the transmission and flow of well designed educational messages and lessons from the teachers to the students by employing the distance teaching methodology that is reinforcement of students weekly lessons with broadcast and non-broadcast media. While in a conventional University students come to the campus, under the distance learning system, the AIOU reaches its students at their homes and places of work. This distinctive feature of AIOU is only made possible through present-day use of technology in education. In a country like Pakistan where television is not accessible by majority of the people broadcasts through radio is the basic technology being utilised for most of the courses of the university.

The Institute of Educational Technology has three main areas of operation — the production of radio programmes; television and video programmes; and non-broadcast media which includes a variety of audio-visual aids to teaching and

learning. In this paper I will only be covering the first of the areas of operation — the radio programmes prepared by IET.

Planning and Developing Radio Programmes

The Institute of Educational Technology is an integral part of the University and as such performs its functions within the University's institutional frame-work. IET closely integrates its activities with all the academic departments of the university. Immediately after a course proposal is initiated by a course committee in a department, an IET representative is appointed as a regular member of a course team. In this way the IET staff member participates not only in the development of curricula and syllabi of courses but also helps in identifying such course contents that may need reinforcement through radio.

All university courses are examined and approved by the Academic Planning and Development Committee; the Research and Educational Technology Committee; the Board of Faculties and the Academic Council. The committee for Research and Educational Technology is of special relevance here. This is a statutory body which advises the university on the production of broadcast scripts. It is headed by the Vice-Chancellor and Deans, Chairmen of the Departments and four educational media Advisors are the members of

this committee. These media Advisors are one each for written text, radio, television and films. They are the nominees of the Chief Executives of Pakistan Television and Broadcasting Corporation.

Course Teams start their actual developmental work after the courses are formally approved by various authorities and the writing of broadcast scripts and the correspondence text is simultaneously carried out. While the teachers in the departments convert the plainly written manuscripts of these courses into distance-learning-self-study-activity-oriented correspondence texts, the Producer of the IET transcribes their scripts into actual production scripts. Joint course team meetings frequently take place and ensure that different components of a course are well integrated into a complete bearing package fulfilling the earlier spelled out educational objectives.

After launching a course, radio programmes are reviewed in the light of the feed-back received from the students. Their recommendations along with those received from University's Research and Statistical Cell are examined by the Academic Planning and Development Committee. Again a statutory body reviews the proposed deletions and additions in the programme and gives its views for ~~the~~ improvement.

Cooperative work of the members of the production team has the sole purpose of producing a learning package that students may follow, comprehend and apply all by themselves without the help of a teacher.

During the two semesters of an academic year, the AIOU enrolls an average about 100 thousand students in F.A., B.A. and some non-credit courses all of which have radio support. The Institute of Educational Technology has two radio studies of its own and it is estimated that 150 to 200 radio programmes are produced in one year.

Radio broadcast time is bought from Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation at the rate of approximately Rs.2000/- for 15 minutes duration.

Broadcast timings are decided in consultation with the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation at Headquarter and Regional Offices. For every semester a radio broadcasts schedule is prepared. This printed schedule is sent to each and every student.

Following is the list of courses with radio support showing the tremendous increase in the number of radio programmes over the years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Radio Programmes</u>
1975-76	13
1976-77	57
1977-78	113
1978-79	205
1979-80	374
1980-81	551
1981-82	710

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Radio Programmes</u>
1982-83	784
1983-84	657
1984-85	737
1985-86	750

Inspite of the fact that Allama Iqbal Open University is doing a lot in the field of Distance Education through the medium of radio a lot more can still be done and achieved. Because of the University's financial constraints and also because transmission is costly, radio is being used sparingly. Another difficulty is the availability of appropriate radio timing.

The time slot scheduled by the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation for transmitting the course broadcasts is sometimes not suitable for the listeners. Some households still do not have radio sets but it is hoped that with the passage of time more people, and especially the students, will own radio sets and the University with less financial constraint in future will produce better and more programmes.