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Role Of Radio In Social And Economic Development In Pakistan

By

Shamsuddin Butt
ROLE OF RADIO IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN

Shamsuddin Butt
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The essence of economic development is a rapid increase in the economic productivity of the society. All theories of economic development agreed on that. Productivity is the key. Therefore, the attention of the economists has been on the problem of how to husband resources in the most productive areas of modern society, namely the agricultural and the industrial sectors. Capital must be invested to generate more capital. Thus the basic dynamics of economic development is: save and invest in productivity. Some economists state this as the iron law of economic growth: growth is a function of national investment, the productivity of the investment and the population increase.

To support both agriculture and industry, we have to build up that part of society which is called "Social Overhead" which includes basic transport, irrigation, power facilities and communications. Above all, there must be a mobilisation of human resources. Agriculture, social overhead and human resources have to be developed to a certain level before any country is ready to make the "big push" through industry.
Now it is not difficult to imagine that change comes hard in underdeveloped societies because for them what is old, what is tried, what is near is safe. What is distant and new is dis-trusted. It is also true that attitudes of people in under-developed societies like Pakistan tend to be hostile to change and lacking in economic motivation. Along with such counter-productive attitudes are counter-productive customs and social patterns, such as fatalism, the dowry system, beggary, social unacceptance of manual labour, etc.

Mobilising human resources requires the substitution of productive attitudes and behaviour for unproductive ones. It is here that Mass Communication Media especially, radio come to the help of the economic planners. Perhaps the most general way to describe what radio is doing in our country is to say that it provides a climate for national development. It provides a forum for discussion, leadership and decision making. When development is going well, every sector of society has new skills to learn, and everybody seems to be asking for more information. Radio provides this information inexpensively and on a country-wide scale, thus planting a seed for change, because change does not take place smoothly unless people want to change. Continuous flow of new information when widely distributed triggers change.
Like other developing countries, Pakistan has a strong tradition where wisdom is passed on from generation to generation orally, not in writing because most of the people are illiterate. People live mostly in isolated communities in the villages with very undeveloped means of communications. So the radio is a natural medium for us, and it is used for a number of purposes:

First, to develop among the people some kind of a national consciousness, that is, a feeling of what their country's ideology is, and what their national aspirations - ARE.

Second, radio is used for developing advanced knowledge about crops and about health and sanitation.

Third, radio is used for informing the people about other countries and other people, and how they have either developed, or are developing, their resources. This helps motivate people to seek development in order to have a better way of life.

Now, of course, there are a few questions that can be validly asked in this situation. The first is: How effective is radio in getting people to change. Can radio change strongly held attitudes or valued practices? Mass Media are not very effective as an agent of change. They function far more
frequently as an agent of re-inforcement. It has been seen that by and large people tend to expose themselves to methods of communications which are in accord with their existing attitudes and interests. In the event of the people being exposed to un-sympathetic material, they often seem not to perceive it, or to re-cast or re-interpret it to fit their existing views, or to forget it more readily than they forget sympathetic material. The processes involved in these self-protective exercises have come to be known as selective exposure, selective perception and selective retention. Research studies indicate that communications are likely to be transmitted along social lines defined by friendship, by shared interests and particularly by shared opinions. Some scholars like Lazarsfeld have suggested that ideas often flow from mass media to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population.

Social change is much easier if it is not contrary to group norms. Participation in decision making is a powerful device to speed and smooth social change where group norms are involved. Another thing that complicates social change is that changes in many instances require people to learn new skills, and it is often difficult to teach skills soon enough.
The second question which can be validly raised is: What are the tasks of the mass communication media in national development? According to Wilbur Schramm, an expert on Mass Communication, these tasks are of three kinds. "In the first place, the populace must have information about national development: their attention must be focused on the need for change, the opportunities inviting change, the methods and means of change. In the second place, there must be opportunity to participate intelligently in the decision making process: the dialogue must be broadened to include all those who must decide to change; the leaders must have an opportunity to lead and the common people to be heard; the issues of change must be clear, and the alternatives discussed; information must flow up and down the hierarchy. And third, the needed skills must be taught: adults must be taught to read, children must be educated, farmers must learn the methods of modern farming, workers must master technical skills". The first task can be done by the mass media themselves. The second task is what the mass media can only help to do. In the third task, Mass Media can only supplement the effort of inter-personal communicators.

And lastly, a question may be asked: What are the moral and ethical considerations of thus manipulating people? What happens when you break down a lot of traditional values, thus
causing a great deal of unrest. By raising expectations, does not radio tend to cause frustration in the mind of the people by glorifying a standard of living which their economy cannot support. My answer to this question is that in the long run it may be a very desirable thing to do. If you are going to have a society which needs to change, then you have got to break down many traditional values and many traditional institutions. That may, indeed be a painful process. Its only justification is that the decision has been taken by the people themselves, that radio and other mass media have, as already stated by me, only provided a forum for discussion, leadership and decision making.

Now I would like to give you the salient features of two of our most successful programmes, one of Farm Broadcasting and the other of Allama Iqbal Open Air University.

The most fertile contribution of Radio Pakistan has been the introduction of the farm forum programme in 1964. It was a major break-through. Farm forum is patently an instructional programme put across daily from seven stations of Radio Pakistan exclusively for the farmers and the peasants. The duration ranges from 30 to 40 minutes. The schedule of the programmes is at Appendix A. These programmes are planned, produced and presented with the active cooperation of
the Department of Agriculture. Besides, the Programme
Producers visit villages to make on the spot recordings
of the people working in the fields. This provides them
with an opportunity to get a feed-back for their programmes.

It would be of interest to note that various research surveys
carried out by Government Agencies, some indigenous
organisations and international agencies like FAO, have
shown that 95% of the farmers listen to the Farm Forum regularly
and derive benefit from experts advice going a long way in
creating a climate for modernising agriculture and accelerated
increased production.

A recent survey undertaken by the Board of Economic Inquiry of
Pakistan Government on the Farm Forum Programmes of Radio
Pakistan indicates that the area of cultivation and the yield
of crops in the wheat growing regions of Pakistan had considerably
increased primarily because of rural broadcasts. The F.A.O.
Regional Information Advisor, based in Cairo, who recently visited
Pakistan and studied the Farm broadcasts of this country had
this to say "In my estimation, operation of Farm Broadcasting in
Pakistan is far better than anything that I have seen in the
other countries of the region which I have visited". Similar
views have been expressed by Dr. Richard A. Stanford of University
of North Carolina, USA, in his book "Studies on Rural
Development: Focus on Pakistan. "His comments are - "People
from around the world have visited Pakistan to study these techniques and programmes. A recent survey has indicated that, in all probability, Pakistan has one of the best, if not the very best agricultural broadcast programmes of all Middle Eastern and Asian countries”.

The Provincial Agriculture Departments have deputed representatives on regular basis to Radio Pakistan Stations who provide assistance to the Producers in planning and conducting the programmes. They also provide relevant material and suggest suitable talents.

Subjects discussed in these programmes are:-

1. Seasonal Crops
2. Cattle Wealth
3. Poultry Farming
4. Farm Water Management
5. Fertilizers
6. Tree Plantation
7. Soil Problems
8. Market Rates & Weather Reports
9. Measures taken by the Government for farm development
10. Plant diseases
11. Scientific methods of farming
12. Interview with progressive farmers
Now I come to the other subject, the People's Open University which came into being in May, 1974. It started functioning from the beginning of the financial year 1974 - 75.

The significant features of the University are summarised below:

- it provides education to anyone who desires it regardless of his or her previous schooling or background.
- it uses multi-media teaching methods.
- its students who study at home in their spare time and at their own pace are spread all over the country.
- its teaching materials are specially produced and sent directly to students in their homes throughout the country.
- the correspondence lessons are supported by radio and television programmes which are available to both registered students and thousands of listeners and viewers who are not registered with the University.
- it is economical because it saves capital costs on laborataries, libraries and lecture theatres by utilizing the facilities of other institutions spread all over the country.
- its students continue to contribute to the national economy while improving their knowledge and skills.
The University is designed for:

- working adults who cannot leave their work to attend formal institutions.
- house-bound women who are desirous of improving their education.
- inservice teachers, to improve their teaching methods and keep them abreast of changes in curricula and syllabi.
- those who wish to extend their knowledge and skills in fields other than those in which they have received education.
- those living in the remote areas of the country who do not have access to educational institutions.
- handicapped persons who are physically unable to leave their homes.
- those who cannot afford to be educated through the conventional education system.

There are three main components of AIOU's teaching system:

i) the core of the system is the correspondence package which consists of carefully structured lessons arranged in units each representing about 8-10 hours of work which the student is expected to complete in one week. Normally each course is of six months duration and contains 20 to 24 such units. The courses are integrated with assignments and broadcasts.
ii) course broadcasts (radio/television).

iii) tuition and counselling contacts with tutors at the local study centres where students discuss difficulties encountered while studying. They also listen to taped replays of radio broadcasts.

iv) the assignments are specially constructed questions and exercises which form an important part of the teaching system and enable the students to assess their own progress. Tutor-marked assignments range from a series of short answers to medium length essays. The marks of these assignments are reported to the students with tutor's comments and notes. At the end of each course a student also takes a written examination.

v) the continuous assessment of the student's progress is made through the assignments. The marks he obtains in these assignments are combined with the result of the examination to determine whether or not a credit will be awarded.

The University is engaged in the following three programmes of study:

Teacher Education Programme:

In-service teacher training can do a lot to improve teaching skills and keep teachers informed about developments in knowledge and changes in the national curricula. The
University imparts such training through its distance system which has the advantage of being able to reach thousands of teachers quickly, especially those who live in remote areas, without obliging them to leave their jobs or disrupt the learning programmes of their students. The materials they receive from the University can form the nucleus of a small library for future reference. So far 35,000 Primary School Teachers have completed this course.

Functional Education Programme:
This programme includes courses aimed at improving skills and enhancing knowledge in occupational and household fields. Its students are drawn mostly from professionals and sub-professionals working in other nation-building departments: literate individuals already employed or seeking employment and illiterate people desirous of learning to read and write or improving their skills in their day-to-day occupations.

General Education Programme:
There are thousands of people in Pakistan who have not been able to complete their education through the conventional system. The courses of the University in its general education programme provide such people with an opportunity to add to their formal qualifications without leaving their jobs.
Two areas have been identified for research and development:

a) Adult functional literacy/education: an integrated functional education project was launched in 1976 aimed at raising levels of consciousness, the acquisition of literacy and the improvement of rural skills. Five new projects one in each province and the Federal area, were planned for implementation in 1978 in collaboration with the appropriate agencies.

b) Instructional Research: research is conducted to establish the basis on which the instructional material and other facilities are provided to make the courses meaningful and effective. This includes a regular system of receiving feedback which is necessary to assess the needs of the people as part of the evaluation of the courses, programmes and materials.

The University courses are designed and developed by course teams and approved by committees of courses. These bodies include University academics and external experts drawn from various organisations. A correspondence text is called a 'Unit'. The Unit becomes final only after it has been reviewed by experts in the relevant discipline. In addition to the main correspondence units, supplementary material is prepared which includes broadcast notes, guidelines to
the part-time tutors and instructions to the students.

Broadcast materials (radio/TV scripts and programmes) and illustrations are prepared by the Producers and Designers of the University's Institute of Educational Technology. Where it is not possible to arrange radio broadcasts the lessons are backed up by cassettes.

The courses are finally edited in the Editing and Translation Cell, and a glossary of important terms is appended to each unit.

Workshops, seminars and briefing sessions are frequently held to familiarise participants with the University's programmes, strategies for non-formal education and innovative techniques in the development and dissemination of multimedia course materials which, in view of the special situation of distance learners, is quite a challenging task.

A student normally takes one or two courses offered by the University at a time. Each course consists of 24 units of written text (correspondence). The University works in collaboration with PBC and PTC which broadcast lesson units over radio and television. One such unit is broadcast twice each week over both radio and television. At the Study
Centres established by the University, facilities are available for tutorial guidance and listening and viewing of taped lessons. The attendance at the Study Centres is voluntary. The Study Centres handle for the most part the continuous evaluation of student progress and the conduct of final examinations. The University sets no time limit during which course work should be completed for a diploma or a degree. Similarly there is no restriction on the choice and combination of courses by the students.
## STATEMENT SHOWING THE TIMINGS AND DURATION OF FARM FORUM PROGRAMMES OF RADIO PAKISTAN STATIONS

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<th>Station</th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Evening</th>
<th>Language</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lahore</td>
<td>1303 to 1323 hours</td>
<td>6.05 to 6.25 p.m.</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rawalpindi</td>
<td>0835 to 0850 hours</td>
<td>6.15 to 6.45 p.m.</td>
<td>Punjabi/Pothohari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multan</td>
<td>0735 to 0755 hours</td>
<td>6.00 to 6.30 p.m.</td>
<td>Saraiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>0730 to 0750 hours</td>
<td>6.45 to 7.15 p.m.</td>
<td>Sindhi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peshawar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.00 to 6.30 p.m.</td>
<td>Pushto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quetta</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.30 to 4.45 p.m.</td>
<td>Brahvi</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5.45 to 6.00 p.m.</td>
<td>Pushto</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>6.00 to 6.15 p.m.</td>
<td>Baluchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahawalpur</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.30 to 7.00 p.m.</td>
<td>Saraiki</td>
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