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<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Padhi, A. K; Kapil, S. V</td>
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Broadcasting Management 2000: India

By

A K Padhi
and
S V Kapil
Radio in each democratic country is in the public domain and must serve the interest of the public. Radio must fit into a wider perception and perspective of a nation's communication policy and philosophy. This has happened in India, more so because of the cultural variety, ethnic subgroups, linguistic divergence, economic variations, and multiple social ethos.

From time to time the broadcast policy and perspective of AIR have been defined keeping in view specific objectives. Though there is no formal charter enshrined in the statute adopted by the Parliament, policy guidelines and various executive orders have given direction for the purpose and goal of broadcasting in India. They are to:

(i) Uphold the unity and integrity of the country and the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution.

(ii) Uphold the fundamental right guaranteed under Article 19 (1)(a) of the Constitution to freedom of speech and expression.

(iii) Safeguard the citizens' right to be informed freely, truthfully and objectively on all matters of public interest, national or international.

(iv) Provide a national broadcasting service, predominantly Indian in content and character.

(v) Promote the interests and concerns of the entire nation, being mindful of the need for harmony and understanding within the country and ensuring that the programmes reflect the varied elements which make up the composite culture of India.

(vi) Produce and transmit varied programmes designated to awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich all sections of the people, with due regard to the fact that the national broadcast
audience consists of a whole series of public.

(vii) Serve the rural, illiterate and under-privileged population, keeping in mind the special needs and interests of the young, social and cultural minorities, the tribal populations, and of those residing in border regions, backward or remote areas.

(viii) Stimulate and inform the national consciousness in regard to status and problems of women.

(ix) Promote social justice and combat exploitation, inequality and such evils as untouchability and narrow parochial loyalties.

(x) Uphold the secular ideal and promote a spirit of truth and inquiry in the country among all sections of the people.

(xi) Present a fair and balanced flow of information of national, regional, local and international interest, including contrasting views, without advocating any opinion or ideology of its own.

(xii) Help raise educational standards by supporting programmes of formal, non-formal and continuing education and open-learning systems.

(xiii) Promote the extension of new knowledge and practices as well as the transfer of technology as an aid to national development and social change commensurate with inculcating and developing a scientific temper.

(xiv) Provide entertainment and recreation for all sections of the people and encourage all forms of cultural expression—traditional, classical, modern and international.

(xv) Take special steps to protect the interest of children, the blind, the aged and other vulnerable sections of the population.

(xvi) Promote comprehension and national integration by broadcasting in a manner that facilitate communication in
and among all the languages of India.

To achieve the above objectives, India through its Five Year Plans has taken up schemes and projects to provide comprehensive broadcast coverage through the choice of appropriate technology and the best utilisation of the broadcast frequencies to ensure high quality reception.

We devised a three tier system of broadcasting in India i.e. national, regional and local. The megawatt transmitter installed at Nagpur is already catering to the large parts of country. Another megawatt transmitter at Calcutta takes the national channel service from 11 P.M. to 6 P.M. There are other relay centres which also relay the national channel programmes. The night time coverage of the national channel by way of population is 75 per cent approximately. The regional and sub regional stations located in different states are performing their role educating, entertaining and informing the people but the main accent of the regional and sub regional stations is to take the issues related to their region or sub-region. These stations are also helping in preserving the vast cultural and folk heritage of this country. But our main emphasis is on local radio now. We want to reorient broadcasting in India as an instrument of social purpose and change. Our aim is to create a clear understanding of the vision of future among the masses. The social purpose of future society we have in view has to be clearly and continuously campaigned about. Purpose of such planned development through which the economic and social well-being of our people is sought to be achieved bring in its changes in values and attitudes and throws up a new set of social problems on account of industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation of our community. We have to prepare the minds of the people to meet these challenges thrown by fast changed socio-economic and cultural scenario. Our objective would be to persuade and inspire, to make peoples' minds more receptive to familiarise with social and material changes that planned development bring in its wake and to develop local initiative for decision making. Our developmental task is so great and our population so large and that too with very
high illiteracy percentage that we need to broadbase our communication. Local Radio is one such input in this development purpose which will help the full involvement of our people in the process of change and approach. Under 6th Plan, a pilot scheme of 6 Local Radio stations was envisaged. Encouraged by the success of local Radios in this country, a chain of 73 Local Radios was envisaged in the 7th Plan Scheme, out of which 53 stations are already functional and rest are in the pipeline. The ultimate idea is to have a Local Radio Station in each district of the country in a phased manner. The total strength of the districts in the country is nearly 460. The coverage of all districts by Local Radio Stations would be achieved not in the very distant future. We would be able to reach out to the remotest village and the humblest houses in this country of ours effectively persuading the citizens to share in the vision and excitement of development.

Currently a pattern of franchise or privatisation of radio channels is being considered by the Government. It will help various interest groups to project their ideas, opinions and views. It has been decided to initially begin this scheme only on FM channels in metropolitan areas with some component of commercial advertisement to make the system self-sustained. This experiment is likely to succeed because India is opening up to an era of liberal economic growth.

PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT:

In 1936 when organised broadcasting started in India, the first batch of personnel were drawn from various walks of life, more so from academics and from the fields of Radio telegraphy. With the growth of AIR at various times various policies for recruitment of staff have been adopted. Broadcasting being run as a Government organisation has to follow certain principles of recruitment as enshrined in the Constitution to afford equal opportunity to people for career building and furtherance. Certain deprived sections of the

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society who form a large majority of the Indian population need representation in running broadcasting, because they understand better the psyche and ethos of the mass of people for whom broadcasts are meant. Therefore, staff normally were recruited presently at three different levels in so far as programme casting is concerned. The topmost level is at the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) which selects people for senior positions. The second level is through the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) which is responsible for recruiting staff at the sub-ordinate level. The third is the local recruitment Committee to select performing artists like Musicians, Music Composers, Programme Presentation Announcers etc.

Personnel recruited through these channels are the core group who plan, prepare and present programmes. However, there are other performers who are invited after proper screening by committees at appropriate levels to broadcast various genres of programmes like Radio Plays, Music, Spoken word items etc. For these people, there are channels for upgrading their broadcasting skill and for professional development. Most of the staff, other than those who are performing artists, have the actual knowledge and skill of their field of work. In case of others recruited through the UPSC or the SSC, they are freshers without much exposure to actual professional broadcasting. When they are chosen for their jobs, certain basic parameters like age, education and exposure in a particular field like science, sports, music, rural extension etc., are kept in mind. They being freshers take considerable time to adjust themselves to the needs and demands of actual broadcasting. Depending on the aptitude and learning ability they take up the work. Giving the varied scenario and working condition, the location of Radio Station demands specific expertise from broadcast professionals. Accordingly care is taken regarding placement of people keeping in view language, culture, social habits and geographical location of particular areas. There are ample opportunity for career development in broadcasting in India.
The existing schemes of training need revision, updating of training needs and stratification for various levels of professionals. There could be foundation/induction courses, basic course, area specific specialist training, hardware professional training, refreshers course, re-orientation and upgradation courses etc. In-service training has been the system to train personnel already recruited. There are no specific institute as on today to handle training of radio professionals. There are two All India Institutes partially meeting the training need of electronic media professionals. One is Indian Institute of Mass Communication where the entire gamut of means and methods of mass communication is taught. In this institute broadcasting journalism forms only a small component of the course structure which is not considered enough. The second institute is the Indian Institute of Film and Television technology. At this institute while software training in film and television programme making is taught elaborately, in so far as sound broadcasting is concerned only sound recording techniques are taught.

FUTURE CHALLENGES:

Foretelling the future of broadcasting, more so broadcasting in India would be like crystal-gazing. Radio-waves were brought into use during the early decades of the current century and within no time it pervaded the entire globe. In one way it conquered time and space in so far as communication is concerned. The band-length has got jammed. Terrestrial or aerial transmission has nearly become obsolete. Since the band-length could not be stretched further man invaded the skies with satellites. May be in the future, manned satellite broadcast stations shall come up to cater to the information and entertainment needs of the entire "Global-village". But these would be leaps forward only in the hardware sector. These innovative contraptions may only hit the ear-drums of billions of people, but they may not be able to stir the minds, awaken the hearts and inspire the soul of man. To achieve this more meaningful programmes based on
needs of the man of the 21st Century will have to be thought of. The more affluent nations, through advanced means of satellite communication have already invaded the cultures of other peoples. The razzmatazz of various television programmes beamed through strategically located satellites have already caused concern for the people and governments of developing nations. These nations again have started feeling invaded and colonised culturally. Therefore, to allow such nations, who are more in number in the modern world, to retain their cultural identity, heritage and tradition need serious consideration. This would mean allowing each people to build up a sound and health broadcasting system free from the fear of getting cramped by technological superiority of affluent powers.