

INDIAN JOURNAL OF OPEN LEARNING

VOLUME 10

NUMBER 2

MAY 2001

**Role of Radio and TV Programmes in Distance Open Learning System:
A Case of Bangladesh Open University**

Salma Karim, Mustafa Azad Kama and Md. Mayenul Islam



Indira Gandhi National Open University
Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110068 (India)

Role of Radio and TV Programmes in Distance and Open Learning System: A Case of Bangladesh Open University

SALMA KARIM, MUSTAFA AZAD KAMAL, and MD. MAYENUL ISLAM
School of Business, Bangladesh Open University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract: *In distance and open learning system different types of media are used to impart education to the learners. Along with the print materials, different types of audio-visual support are provided to meet the learners' need. Audio-visual programmes may be treated as a substitute for the personal touch of the teacher. Through audio-visual media specially television – the distance learners can listen to the talks of the course experts and also see them on the TV screen. Radio and TV programmes help the learners get the direction about how the courses should be dealt with and also explanations of the difficult concepts in the courses. This paper aims to reveal the role/effectiveness of radio and TV programmes in distance and open learning system on the basis of a survey of the students of Graduate Diploma in Management (GDM) programme of Bangladesh Open University (BOU)*

Introduction

Among all the available electronic media, the radio and the television appear to be the most common and popular ones for the distance students to learn from and for the distance educators to impart education from a distance (IGNOU, 1995). In spite of advanced communication technologies with more glamour and efficiency, the radio is capable of generating the students' own complete and thoroughly satisfying imaginative images (Jones, 1962). Merdian (1979) finds that the radio is able to stimulate and make use of the students' imagination to a great extent. With the advancements in communication technology, a variety of audio-visual media – radio television broadcast, video-cassettes, video compact disc, video text and computer-have become part of the study package in distance and open learning system.

Kachroo (1999) also reported that Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Jammu as well as IGNOU supported students' learning through counselling and mass media namely radio, TV and newspapers.

Ding (1994) finds that distance education at tertiary level in China has two major forms: the correspondence education provided by conventional universities and colleges, and several independent correspondence schools. China began its correspondence education at the university level in 1953. In 1990 the total enrolment of correspondence students reached 536,200. From 1982 to 1991, 1.453 million graduates passed out of Chinese Radio and TV Universities (RTVU), which equals 31% of the total graduates from conventional universities and colleges over the same period, and 58% of the graduates from other adult institutions of higher education in that country. This means that about 17 out of 100 total university graduates in China during 1982-1991 were from RTVUs.

In the open and distance education system, print materials, tutorial sessions, radio, television, audio and video-cassettes, CD and other innovative techniques are used for effective transmission of knowledge to the learners at a distance. Since for on-campus teaching a huge infrastructural set-up is essential, developing countries like Bangladesh, with very limited resources have no alternative but to implement off-campus education system to educate their vast population. In order to ensure the quality of education, distance education institutions must be careful about the use of proper media. Effective combination of print and electronic media is necessary for assuring effectiveness of the distance education system.

Bangladesh Open University

The Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is the only distance and open learning public university of this country. BOU was established by the Bangladesh Parliament in 1992 by the Act No 38. Its objectives are to:

Expand all levels of education, knowledge and science by a diversity of means, including the use of any communication technology to improve the quality of education and to provide opportunities for education to the general public through mass-orientation of education and to create efficient manpower by improving the quality of education in general.

This is indicative of three-fold objectives as: (1) the improvement of the quality of education, (2) the provision of educational opportunities to a wide range of citizens and (3) improving the competence level of the workforce. Prime objective of the BOU is to transform the country's vast human resources into an educated and trained workforce by extending to them a wide range of academic programmes, both formal and non formal BOU's programmes are aimed at every one, particularly working people, women and those socially disadvantaged groups, who cannot enroll in traditional universities.

BOU has six Schools in the fields of Science and Technology, Education, Social Sciences, Agriculture, and Business. BOU has already launched 18 formal and 19 non-formal programs. Formal programmes include master degrees, bachelor degree, diploma and certificate programmes, for the distance and open learners. Over 1,50,000 (approximately) students have already been enrolled in various programmes. Non-formal programmes are designed to make people aware as to how to live a better life. These are community based programmes and are intended for the people who are willing to improve the level of their knowledge and understanding about the environment and socio-cultural aspects of life in general. These include basic science, agriculture, pisciculture, poultry, livestock, health, nutrition, ethics and environment. The university has a media division to produce audio-video educational programmes and transform them into cassettes for broadcasting by radio and television.

Role of Radio and Television in Distance Education at BOU

Siddiqui, A.S. (1987) stated that selection of appropriate media for a learning package is a complex decision influenced by a variety of considerations, such as the specific learning objectives of the unit, the nature of subject matter, learner's background and experiences and the characteristics of the target group, as well as practical constraints including availability of infrastructure and financial resources.

Singh (1999) reported that television is the most popular medium because it is easily accessible and the most effective telecom technique. The advantages of TV are- (1) it is good for reaching mass audience; (2) it can be recorded and watched at any suitable time and (3) it is a permanent resource.

Rumble (1994) said that four media, namely print, audio, television and computers are available for teaching purposes in one technological form or another. The distinction between media and technology is a useful one. A medium is a generic form of communication associated with particular ways of presenting knowledge. There are five important media in education: direct human contact (face-to-face), text (including still graphics), audio, television and computing. The use of each media gives both variety and the chance of accommodating different learning styles.

BOU is using print, television, radio, audio-cassettes and face-to-face tutorial service, for each student. It has not adopted computing media and technologies for teaching, for obvious reasons of cost and poor access, but it has adopted a spectrum of four of the five media, and makes use of four technologies.

Radio

Jamison and McAnany (1978) reviewed research literature and concluded that radio, properly used, can teach as well as/ or, in some cases, better than the traditional instruction. Considering the effectiveness, the costs and the access to technology, they further stated that the radio is a more suitable medium for the third world countries.

Distance learning, by combining the radio with other media, particularly with the print materials and occasional personal contact sessions, attempts to replace both the teacher and the institution. The developed countries like the UK, Australia, Canada and Japan make the extensive use of the radio for teaching at a distance. China, Thailand and Kenya have many years of experience with the radio correspondence approach to learning. Radio Santa Maria is a successful example of home study with the help of radio by individuals who failed to attend school-based education (McAnany and Mayo, 1980). BOU is also making use of the radio for distance education in Bangladesh.

Radio can be used to relay lectures, provide discussions of other elements of the course materials, give students access to alternative views, provide materials for analysis (e.g. children's speech patterns), give access to performance, provide rural experiences, and collect and relay to others the view and experience of specialists, experts, and witnesses. Because it is cheap, it can provide a channel for messages to be sent to students, and a way of giving instant feedback to student. One major drawback is the difficulty of enabling two-way communication to take place, though it can be used in conjunction with the telephone or letters. Its other major drawback is its ephemeral nature.

BOU is engaged in planning, producing and evaluating both radio broadcasts and audio-cassettes for its students. From the very beginning, audio tapes and radio broadcasts have formed part of the BOU course materials.

Television

One of the main objectives of establishing BOU is to provide the various sections of the population with a wider access to higher education. To achieve this objective, BOU has adopted a teaching-learning system based on a combination of print and non-print media.

As one of the non-print medium BOU aims to advance and disseminate knowledge by television broadcast.

Television is a complex medium. As a medium, television can personalize teaching, enabling the distant student to identify the individuality of the teacher(s) responsible for the materials, and provide a public image of the university's presence in the community. As such, it also plays an important part in recruiting students. Although regularly scheduled broadcast would motivate students to keep up with the pace of their studies, this is almost certainly not the case. This pacing function is far more likely to be achieved through regular assessment. While television can be a powerful educational tool, its value is totally dependent on the quality of materials and the skill with which it is used. Moreover, television is essentially a one-way communication medium and as such it does not provide for immediate feed-back on learners' reactions, queries and doubts. At times, the absence of active participation and lack of provision for feed back are likely to fail to sustain the interest and enthusiasm of learners. However, the real strength of television is its unique teaching features and its ability to improve learning efficiency.

Rumble (1994) reported that the time BOU was planned, the percentage of population having ownership of television was still very low in Bangladesh (0.5% per 100 people in 1990 against 5.5 per 100 people in all developing countries, and 54.4 per 100 in industrialized countries). Not surprisingly, there were concerns about the use of broadcasting technologies where ownership of receivers is so low. Bangladesh Television (BTV), the government owned network, broadcasts on a single channel which currently covers about 85% of the total population area via its originating station in Dhaka, and nine relay stations. Some areas of the country are currently not covered, notably the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

BOU transmits 40 minutes of TV programmes six days a week between 4.00 pm and 6.00 pm and 30 minutes of radio broadcasts daily between 7.00 pm and 8.00 pm. All the Schools of the University share these time schedules. Hence, on an average, each School has one day per week for its programme. To compensate for low quality tutorial support in areas outside the big cities (where the quality of local tutorial support is difficult to maintain) as well as to ensure a consistent standard of support across the country, each School of the University carefully selects the contents of the radio and TV programmes.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To assess the effectiveness of BOU's radio and TV programmes;
2. To suggest the remedial measures to make the radio and TV programmes more effective for BOU students.

Methodology and Sources of Data

The survey was conducted on a sample of the students of GDM programmes of Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Comilla, Mymensingh, Barisal, Faridpur, Jessore, Khulna, Rajshia, Bogra and Rangpur regional resource centers of BOU. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaires were distributed among 340 students in ten regional resource centers of BOU, out of which 200 questionnaires were received back which were filled up by the sample students.

Results and Analysis

Students' profile

The profile of the respondents is given in Table 1.

Table-1: Students Profile

Sex	Percentage
Male	76.25
Female	23.75
Age	Percentage
20-25	15.00
25-30	31.25
30-35	37.00
35-40	16.25
40+	00.50
Occupation	Percentage
Government service	20.50
Non-government service	48.25
Defence service	06.25
Businessmen	03.75
Regular students and others	21.25

The option of most students of GDM programme is that they have selected distance and open education because of the flexibility of the programme that allows them to go on with their studies and job simultaneously.

Access to radio broadcast

Bangladesh Beater's medium wave transmission reaches most of the areas of the country. In fact the radio coverage in Bangladesh is almost around 100 percent. The general economic status of GDM students of the Business School also ensures almost all students have access to radio. However, it is evident from the research findings that 86.25 percent of GDM students have access to radio and 50 percent of them found it effective and helpful in their pursuit of studies. Around 45 percent of them could not listen to BOU's radio programme regularly. 81 percent reported that the radio programme is easy to understand. Students' preference for radio transmission, by day of the week and time is shown in Table-2.

Table 2: Students' preference for the day and time of radio programme broadcasts

a) Day

Day of week	Percentage
Saturday	10.00
Sunday	02.00
Monday	04.00
Tuesday	03.00
Wednesday	05.00
Thursday	05.00
Friday	71.00

b) Time

Time	Percentage
08.00 – 10.00 AM	05 %
10.00 – 12.00 AM	02 %
12.00 – 14.00 PM	01 %
14.00 – 16.00 PM	03 %
16.00 – 18.00 PM	08 %
18.00 - 20.00 PM	65 %
20.00 – 22.00 PM	16 %

School of Business broadcasts radio programmes for GDM students on Sunday in between 18.00 – 20.00 PM. However, 71 percent students prefer radio programme to be broadcast on Friday and 65 percent opined that broadcast time should be in between 6.00 to 8.00 PM.

Access to TV broadcast

Bangladesh Television, the government owned network, broadcasts on a single channel which currently covers about 85 percent of total population area via its originating station in Dhaka and nine relay stations throughout the country. As per our findings 71.25 percent of the GDM students has access to TV. Eighty five percent of the students appreciate TV broadcasting by BOU and believe that the programmes are suitable for GDM students. GDM students' preference for TV transmission by day of week and time is shown in Table:3.

Table-3 Students' preference for the day and time of TV broadcasts**b) Day**

Day of week	Percentage
Saturday	11.00
Sunday	01.00
Monday	01.00
Tuesday	02.00
Wednesday	03.00
Thursday	15.00
Friday	67.00

b) Time

Time	Percentage
15 – 17 PM	06 %
17 – 19 PM	13 %
19 – 21 PM	15 %
21 – 23 PM	66 %

School of Business broadcast TV programme for GDM students on Tuesday in between 15.30 to 17.00 PM. However, 67 per cent students prefer Friday as the day of broadcasting and 66 per cent students prefer 19.00 to 21.00 PM as the suitable time of broadcasting.

Summary

The findings of the study about the radio and television programmes of BOU can be summarized as below:

1. Radio sets are available to more than 86 per cent of the total participants while only 50 per cent find it effective and helpful in their study. Nearly 4 per cent cannot listen to the programmes regularly because of the unsuitable time schedule. Also 14 per cent do not have access to radio sets. 81 per cent find radio programmes easy to understand while 19 per cent find them difficult.
2. The respondents identified some significant problems in the use of radio programmes, the most frequent being (a) Unsuitable time schedule, (b) non-availability of time due to the business and/or family involvement of students.
3. TV sets were available to more than 71 per cent of the students. Of the remaining 29 per cent students who didn't own TV sets, watched TV at their friends place.
4. The TV programmes, presented by BOU were appreciated by 85 per cent of GDM students. They said the programmes are suitable for their text materials. 19 per cent of the respondents reported that TV programmes of the GDM programme were helpful to gather general knowledge.
5. The responding viewers identified some problems in television programmes which were, by and large, unsuitable time for viewing the programmes and power cuts.
6. Majority (79 per cent) of the viewers expressed their opinion that the TV programmes should be presented on Fridays and between 7.00pm and 9.00pm.

Recommendations

Since the distant learners cannot have much face to face contact with teachers like the on-campus students, learning with only print materials may be boring to them. Standard instructive radio and TV programmes may relieve them from that boredom . To make the radio and TV programmes more effective BOU should be careful about the following things:

- The time span for radio programmes broadcasting should be extended. The same topic should be broadcast on two consecutive days. It would be very helpful for the students if the programmes are broadcast after 10 pm so that the students can listen to the programmes. Broadcasting should be regular and should be followed by announcement of the topic for the next day broadcasting.
- The quality of presentation should be ensured. Presentation must be attractive. To avoid the monotony more visuals/outdoor shots should be incorporated in the programmes. Discussion should be on the critical and hard topics of the course that will help the students better. If the discussions could be arranged in the form of classroom interaction, they would benefit the students more. Continuous talk of a single presenter may make the whole programme boring to the students.
- The teachers of the concerned Schools should come forward to design and direct the radio and TV programmes.
- Repetition of a single programme several times in the same semester should be stopped.
- The TV broadcast time should be enhanced, for that, BOU can think of getting satellite access and a separate channel should be opened to broadcast its programmes. This will reduce its dependency on the government owned channel too.

- The radio and TV programmes may be supplemented by providing the students with audio and video-cassettes.

References

- Singh, R.P. (1999) Distance Education in New Zealand and Australia, *Indian Journal of Open Learning*, Vol.8(3) 229-241.
- Kachroo, K.B. (1999) Distance Education Programmes at College and University Levels in Jammu Region : An Evaluative Study, *Indian Journal of Open Learning*, (3), 293-305.
- Jones, J.G. (1962) Teaching with Tape. The Focal Press, London.
- Mardian, F. (1979) School Radio in Europe, *K.G. Saur Munchen*, New York.
- Jamaisn, D.T. and McAnany, E.g. (1978) Radio for Education and Development, Sage Publishers, Beverly Hills/London.
- McAnany, E.G. and Mayo, J. K. (1980) *Communication Media in Education for Low income Countries: Implications for Planning*, UNESCO.
- Siddiqui, A.S. (1987) Role of Radio and TV in Distance Education System of Allama Iqbal Open University, *Pakistan Journal of Distance Education*, Vol. 5, No.2.
- Rumble, G. (1995) Media Use at Open University, *The Guardian (Dhaka, Bangladesh)*, Bangladesh Open University, November.
- Ding, Xingfu (1994) "Economic Analysis of the Radio and Television Universities in China", *The Bulletin of the International Council for Distance Education*, UK. Vol. 2.
- Bangladesh Gazetter (1992) Bangladesh Parliament: The Act no. 38.
- Media in Distance Educatio: Broadcast and Cassette Technology*. ES-318, STRIDE, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, 1995.

[Salma Karim, Assistant Professor, School of Business, Bangladesh Open University.
Mostafa Azad Kamal, Assistant Professor, School of Business, Bangladesh Open University.
Md. Mayenui Islam, Lecturer, School of Business, Bangladesh Open University.]