Educational Television in India: Challenges and Prospects

V. Jagadeeshwar Rao, Osmania University, India

The IAFOR International Conference on Education – Hawaii 2018
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract
Today, in India television is considered as an important medium that is being extensively used to impart information to its viewers. The availability of new information technologies at the global level, satellite television broadcasting has been increasingly used for distance education and training in India. Research reveals that television differs from other media in the way it can combine various kinds of information, better accessibility and has the potential to bring the learning materials to the masses in a more direct and personal way. Television, the most potential mass media of the 20th century, occupies a prominent position in the field of communication and education. The new state-of-the-art internet technologies and the satellite communication technologies furthered its reach. In the field of education, television has acquired an immense importance not only in terms of its reach but also in improving the quality of education at all levels. In a country like India, where resources are limited and educational infrastructure is inequitably distributed between urban and rural areas, television can play a significant role in equalizing the educational opportunities. Although India has good television infrastructure it is a challenging job to create educational content for television. The vision of television education is to reach out to large number students, teachers, and the general public with effective materials so as to address the issues of access and quality. It is against this backdrop an attempt has been made here to understand and explicate the role of television education in India.

Keywords: Educational Television, Countrywide Classroom, Satellite Instruction, Vyas Higher Educational Channel

Introduction

The emerging technologies have redefined the art of communication. Today, mass media does not just pass on information from one end to the other. Rather it is a wholesome facilitation for two way communication. The mass media channels, be it radio, TV, internet, mobile – all have embedded the instant, anytime, anywhere capabilities for feedback there by making the entire communication process live and interactive. Today, television is considered as an important medium for dissemination of information. The new state-of-the-art internet technologies and the satellite communication technologies furthered its reach.

Because of its better accessibility, it is more effective to take information and knowledge to the masses in a more direct and effective way. Research studies reveal that television differs from the other media as it combines different media like text, audio, video, etc. Thus it is more potential to take learning materials to the masses in a more direct and personal way. In the field of education, television has acquired an immense importance not only in terms of its reach but also in improving the quality of education at all levels.

Television-the Beginning

With the invention of television by John Baird in 1924, the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) became the pioneer in television. The first telecast in the USSR was made in 1931 and by 1938 two full-fledged TV stations started telecasting programmes on regular basis (UNESCO, 1964). The next is in the United State of America (USA). It started as an instructional medium in 1932 by the State University of IOWA, USA, on an experimental basis in a world fair. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) started its public telecast on November 2nd, 1936. Since then television has established itself, the world over, as a potent medium of information, education and entertainment.

Television as an Educational Tool

Taking the cue from the experiments in USA, in 1932, many countries around the world started using television in training and teaching students at the national level much more innovatively, quickly, economically and efficiently. Japan, for example, is the most advanced country, where every school and educational institution is automatically linked and equipped with television receivers. The Japanese television is a part of the national TV system called *Nippon Has Kinkaid* / *Nihon Has Kinkaid* (NHK), with a network of around 100 relay stations. By 1967 they were interconnected with key broadcast stations to provide the most complete educational television coverage in the world (Moir: 1967).

In most of the European countries, in sixties, educational television was extensively developed. While Europe and the western countries were taking advantage of TV for education, many developing and underdeveloped countries, due to lack of enough resources, were not able to show much progress.

Television in India

Television was started as an instructional medium on experimental projects in India that as follows.

Delhi School Television Project: The transmission of School Television programmes started on October 24, 1959, as the first syllabus based science and English television programme, it was produced and telecast in India for higher secondary school students of Delhi, popularly known as "Delhi School Television" project. Subsequently, it acted as an efficient tool for imparting education to primary, secondary and even to the university level students.

Secondary School Television Project:

This project was designed in 1961 for the secondary school students of Delhi. With an aim to improve the standard of teaching in view of shortage of laboratories, space, equipment and dearth of qualified teachers. This project started on an experimental basis in October 1961 for teaching Physics, Chemistry, English and Hindi for students of Class XI. The lectures were syllabus-based and were telecast in school hours as part and parcel of school activities. According to Paul (1968) 'by and large, the television schools did somewhat better in the test than the non-television schools'.

Delhi Agriculture Television (DATV) Project:

This is also known as 'Krishi Darshan' initiated on January 26, 1966 for communicating agricultural information to the farmers an on experimental basis for the 80 selected villages of Union territory of Delhi through community viewing of television and further discussions among themselves. This experiment was successful and there was a substantial gain in the information regarding agricultural practices.

Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE): The SITE was made to use television for primary education in 1975-76. During this time, communication satellite was used for direct broadcasting in the rural schools of six backward states in India. It is the world's largest jointly collaborated techno-social experiment. Major collaborators in the project were National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), National Council for Educational Research Training (NCERT) and Doordarshan. The main objective of SITE was to provide requisite information for national development to those who otherwise would have been deprived of such information for many years to come. It was made possible with the use of a satellite i.e., (ATS-6) to take television to the villages of India even before it reached the metropolitan cities. SITE demonstrated the utility of satellite communication as a tool for national development in general and education in particular (Agrawal and Aghi 1987).

The vision to use television through satellite for direct broadcasting was that of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai from ISRO, who was determined to bridge the urban-rural gap with the help of satellite technologies. His dream came true in the form of SITE project conducted between August 1, 1975 and July 31, 1976. For the first time in India, 2400 villages in the backward states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh (400 villages in each state) could watch community

television in their respective villages. The primary school children in the age group of 5-12 of class I to VIII could watch "enrichment" programmes in the local languages, namely Telugu, Kannada, Oriya, Rajastani and Hindi respectively, on all school days. It consisted of twenty-two and half minutes of community viewing, regardless of the age of the viewer and grade of the student. In addition, as part of the experiment, 4800 primary school teachers were given training in science education.

So far in the world, no one has conducted such a large-scale primary education television experiment or for that matter, primary school teachers training. In this respect, there is a great deal of learning for the universalisation and quality improvement of primary education through television. SITE experiment showed that the new technologies made it possible to reach large number of people in the remotest areas. The role of television was appreciated and it was accepted in rural primary schools as an educational force.

Indian National Satellite Project (INSAT-1982):

In view of the possibility of covering the deep rural and inaccessible areas by terrestrial TV, the Government took another bold decision in 1975 to provide direct satellite coverage through INSAT to the people in such areas. The prime objective of the INSAT project was making the rural masses aware of the latest developments in the areas of agriculture, health and hygiene and enhancing the quality of telecommunications, meteorological and mass communication capabilities of the country. In this series India has launched nine satellites, six from abroad and three from India itself. The launch of satellites facilitated the telecast of educational programmes at the national level for the benefit of a sizable chunk of population. Soon after the launch of INSAT-1(A) in 1982, INSAT educational television service was started for elementary schools of India.

As part of INSAT Education project, the Educational Television (ETV) broadcasts were inaugurated and continued through terrestrial transmission from 15th August 1982 in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Later, other states, namely Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh were covered under INSAT service using INSAT-1B in June 1983. In each state, a cluster of 3-4 districts were selected on the basis of backwardness of the area, availability of suitable developmental infrastructure and utilization of existing production facilities. The ETV programmes telecast with the help of INSAT- 1B were received with great success and brought about a marked change in the educational scenario of the area. This also left a good impact, in terms of qualitative and quantitative improvement, on the overall development of education. The INSAT system which was firmly in place opened up a variety of communication options by 1983. Taking a cue from SITE and Kheda Communication(Gujarat) experiments, and realising the potential of television in dissemination of knowledge and education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) seized this opportunity and proposed to utilise satellite communication to enrich the quality of higher education during the Sixth Five Year Plan (IGNOU, 2000).

UGC-Higher Education Television Project (1984):

Higher Education in India got a fresh impetus through the launching of Countrywide Classroom (CWCR) programme in India. The UGC in collaboration with INSAT started educational television project, CWCR, on August 15, 1984 with the aim to update, upgrade and enrich the quality of education while extending its reach to UG and PG students across the country. The programmes attempted to overcome the obsolescence of the syllabus and presented the latest advances in all fields. These programmes are primarily targeted towards the undergraduate students in colleges, universities, open universities, correspondence courses. The secondary target groups are the students studying in +2 level, post-graduate level academicians, teachers, housewives, senior citizens, executives etc. Its aim is to benefit the students residing in semi-urban as well as the remotest parts of the country where quality of teachers and teaching facilities are poor.

CWCR programmes were telecast on the national network on all days. In the initial stage, the CWCR used to depend more on educational programmes produced by other countries like USA, UK, Russia, Germany and Australia. Over a period of time the UGC's CWCR project acquired resources and established an inter-university Consortium for Education Communication (CEC) along with a chain of about 22 Educational Media Research Centres at different institutions in the country. In 2004, these centres were renamed as Educational Multimedia Research Centres (EMMRCs). The role of CEC was to collect programmes from media centres, conduct proper preview, technical check and make programme capsules for telecast network. One of the reasons why these production centres were located in the universities was to help them to make the best use of the expertise of academics and scientist working in these institutions. This project is very popular among students, teachers and other learners in the country and other parts of the world also (CEC website).

Research studies were conducted in order to assess the effectiveness of the talkback facility and its educational benefits. About 70% of the participants opined that talk back can enhance subject comprehension. More than 75% of the participants are of the opinion that talkback helps them participate in classroom discussion. 86% of the participants felt that talkback could enhance interest in CWCR programmes. Overall, the reactions of the students have been found favourable to the talkback method (Usha, V.Reddy, Sai Prasad and Rukmini, 1992&1995).

Gyan Darshan:

On January 26, 2000, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) created history in educational television by launching a dedicated satellite based national educational channel called Gyan Darshan (GD). It was jointly launched by Human Resource Development, Information & Broadcasting, the Prasar Bharti and IGNOU launched Gyandarshan.

Vyas-Higher Education Channel-

With two decades experience in Countrywide Classroom and its potential, UGC through its inter-university centre of CEC launched in 2004 a 24-hour higher educational channel called 'Vyas' to impart knowledge to households, students,

teachers and public. With the establishment of 'Vyas', the focus shifted to curriculum-based, syllabus oriented programmes as against the enrichment programmes, which imparted knowledge beyond the text books. Initially, the programmes were mostly produced in English language but of late programmes are made in Hindi and some regional languages as well. All the EMMRC's are producing educational programmes for the 24 hours transmission (CEC Website: www. cec-ugc.org and Rao, Jagadeeshwar V. (2007).

Challenges and Prospects

Research studies from SITE and INSAT indicate large-scale investment in "educational television" both for primary and higher secondary and college education. Centrally supported production studios have been set up in six SITE states, where enrichment programmes are being produced for primary school children. Similarly, nearly two dozen production studios have been set up by the University Grants Commission in various universities/ institutions across India to produce enrichment/syllabus based programmes for college students. Over a period of time, Doordarshan, a public service television channel has gradually relinquished its social responsibility of telecasting educational programmes. All these have been handed over to educational planners who are now directly responsible for educational telecast from UGC-CEC, IGNOU and NCERT.

India stands tall, except maybe for China, to have such a remarkable achievement in educational television, production and transmission capability. From primary to higher education, it has helped not only the students who did not get a first chance to go to school/college, but for a large number of housewives and senior citizens, who have a second opportunity for education. In a rapidly changing information and knowledge world, television has helped updating, upgrading and enhancing the societal knowledge. The critical question is: what has India achieved in the last three decades at a colossal cost? The educational planners have not been able to decide whether to use media for classroom teaching or enrichment. Also, it is high time that one must examine what role media can play in the universalisation of education in an over-populated country of several million unemployed graduates, who could be meaningfully employed to provide education in India.

With the advent of multimedia and other technological developments, new vistas have been opened for the educational television as it can be made more interactive as education is now in the process of going on-line. The term multimedia broadly describes multiple media types being accessed interactively via computer.

Television has a significant role to play in conventional as well as in distance education with its special position, the way of presentation and qualities peculiar to it. Thanks to its special features, television helps conventional and distance education in many ways. Notwithstanding its popularity as a medium of entertainment, television can be used effectively to teach especially the Indian rural masses.

According to experts, television seems to have adapted itself better to the new technologies and changing tastes of its audience than any other media. This is reflected in the style of programming, the production techniques and developments in television technology itself. The most evident shift seems to be striking at the very

root of the nature of educational television itself. Thanks to convergence of technologies, television is fast becoming and effective, interactive medium- a paradigm shift from its monolithic one-way communication process. Today most educational television channels tend to spend a considerable amount of time for interaction. This is true of both Indian and foreign educational channels. This somehow seems to sustain the audience for they feel that they belong to this community.

The launch of Gyandarshan, a satellite channel by IGNOU, and other educational channels like EKLAVYA, VYAS, etc., under the umbrella of Gyandarshan made a good beginning but could not make a significant contribution as their reach is limited to some cable areas; if at all it is carried by the cable operator. Moreover, the cable operators assign weaker frequencies to Gyandarshan which results in poor reception quality of the programmes which is also related to the quality of transmission they receive.

The quality of educational television programmes produced by the media centres and educational institutions has always remained a case of concern. Out of 20,000 programmes produced by various UGC media centres for CEC-UGC in different subject categories almost 50% are below quality. The same is the case with the programmes produced by the CIET, SIETs, and the EMPCs in different Open/Distance Universities in the country.

The poor quality is attributed to two reasons; one, the lack of enough resources, and second the lack of talented manpower for production of educational television programmes. The reason for not attracting talented manpower is rooted in lack of proper economic resources. What is required is the pooling of all the resources to attract more and more of talented manpower and involving experienced media professionals, teachers, writers and engineers and the technicians to create a movement for the uplift of educational television. Shortage of funds for research, one of the most important aspects of educational television, always results in poor quality of programmes. All these factors put together result in the production of mediocre programmes by production centres involved in production of educational programmes, the programmes that, perhaps, no one likes to see and only a very few watch (Rasool, Shahid, 2012).

Despite the above drawbacks and problems faced by the educational television, it still retains its importance in imparting education to thousands who seek it. A well-designed educational television programmes can motivate the students to watch more, inculcate their reading habits, encourage independent learning, develop new insights, but that is possible only, when the traditional method of teaching through lecturers is replaced or augmented with more exciting television programmes in the form of demonstrations and discoveries. The poorly designed content of educational programmes is an impediment in its growth as a powerful supplement to traditional teaching.

Conclusions

The Indian television education has undergone many changes. It is being used in conventional and distance education. This has a greater scope in developing countries. The various initiatives by the government of India underline the role and significance of television in education.

Although it does not replace classroom teaching, television has a significant role to play in conventional as well as in distance education with its special position, the way of presentation and qualities peculiar to it. Thanks to its special features, television helps conventional and distance education in many ways. Notwithstanding its popularity as a medium of entertainment, television can be used effectively to teach, especially the Indian rural masses.

According to experts, television seems to have adapted itself to new technologies and changing tastes of its audience than any other media. This is reflected in the style of programming, the production techniques and developments in television technology itself. The most evident shift seems to be striking at the very root of the nature of television itself.

To sum up, another new beginning has been made to achieve the national goals of education and catapult India to be a knowledge super power. The vision of television education particularly higher education channels and e-learning, therefore, is to reach out to large number of students, teachers and general public with quality educational material electronically so as to address the issue of access and equity with quality higher education. The success or failure of any programme largely depends on the students' response. Educational television should not be restricted to any one particular type of programmes. Hence, the content should be a judicious mix of direct teaching, enrichment and general awareness programmes.

References

ADMAR Report of National "Viewership Study 97 on UGC CWCR Programmes" CEC, 1997, New Delhi.

ASnapshotofIndianTelevisionHistoryhttp://www.indiantelevision.com/indianbrodcast/history/historyoftele.htm

Agrawal, B.C. (1978, 1981&1987) & Raghaviah, S. (2006). India: Public Service Broadcasting and changing perspectives.

Agrawal, C. Binod. Television comes to village: An Evaluation of SITE., Bangalore: ISRO, 1978.

Audience Research Unit (1991) Television India, Director General Doordarshan, New Delhi.

Bakhshi, A.K. (2013). CEC, Newsletter, New Delhi; ICT in Education: Need of the Hour, Vol.14, No.07. p.3.

Bates A.W. (1981). 'Some unique characteristics of television and some implications for teaching & learning', Journal of Educational TV, Vol.7, No.3.

Bates, A. W. (1983) Adult learning from educational television: The Open University experience. In M. J. A. Howe (Eds.), Learning from television: Psychological and educational research (pp. 57-77). London: Academic Press.

Bates, A. W. (1987) Television, learning and distance education. Milton Keynes, UK: The Open University, Institute of Educational Technology.

Bates A.W. (1988). Technology for distance education; a 10-year perspective, Open Learning, Vol. 3, No. 3.pp 3-12.

Brietenfield, F. (1968). Instructional television: The state of the art.
New York: The Academy for Educational Development. Cited by Jeffries,

CEC (2010), RESEARCH REPORT On NATIONAL VIEWERSHIP SURVEYON UGC-CEC VYAS HIGHER EDUCATION CHANNEL TELECAST THROUGH CABLE & SATELLITE AND DD DTH, NEW DELHI.

CEC Website: www. Cec-ugc.org

CEC-IGNOU-ISRO (1995). National Talkback Experiment on New Communication and Information Technologies – A course taught Teleconference- 1994, unpublished Report.

Chandiram, J. (2010, March 24). Green Kerala Express. *The Hoot.* Retrieved from www.thehoot.org/web/home/story.php?storyid=44158&pg 24.

Chaudhary, S.S. (1996): Current Trends, Methods and Technologies in Distance Education for Primary School Teachers, a working paper for Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver rent status of Indian Television Market (2002).

Ghosh, P.P. (1996). Disinformation and Market Forces. In Dyal, R., & Gupta, V.S. (Eds.) (1998), *Media and Market Forces: Challenges and Opportunities* (pp. 45-47). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co.

Gupta, V.S. (1995). *Third Revolution in Indian Perspective: Contemporary Issues and Themes in Communication.* New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co.

Herman, E.S., & Mc Chesney, R.W. (2001). *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism.* London: Continuum.
http://www.indiantelevision.com/indianbrodcast/history/historyoftele.htm)

Hull, R. (1962). 'A note on the history behind ETV. Educational television, the next ten years'. Stanford CA: Institute for Communication Research cited by Jeffries, Michael (1999), and IPSE - Research in Distance Education http://www.ihets.org.

IGNOU (2000). Course ES-318: Communication Technology for Distance Education, Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education programme, New Delhi: IGNOU

IGNOU Profile (2002), Indira Gandhi National Open University, New –Delhi, India.
Jagadeeshwar Rao, V (2007). Educational TV in India, Mass Communicator, JIMS, New Delhi, PP: 1-7.

Jagadeeshwar Rao, V (2007). Educational Satellite Network at the Classroom end, Osmania Journal of Social Sciences, O.U., Hyd., PP: 85-89.

Jeffrey, Robin (2006). The Mahatma didn't like the movies and why it matters: Indian Broadcasting Policy, 1920s-1990s. In Mehta, Nalin (Ed.) (2009), *Television in India: Satellites, Politics and Cultural Change*. New York: Routledge
Johnstone, B. and Carlson, D. (1998). History of Electronic publishing
http://www.iml_jou_ulf_edu.

Johnson, Kirk (2000). *Television and Social Change in Rural India.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Joshi, P.C. (1985). *An Indian Personality for Television: Report of the Working Group on Software on Doordarshan.* New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

Kumar, K.J. (2000). *Mass Communication in India.* Jaico Publishing New Delhi.

Kumari, Abhilasha and Akthar Ali. (1991). Programme Evaluation series Report-1, MCRC, New Delhi.

Magnuson, G.W.S. (1965),'Educational Television Progress Report, Public Broadcasting policy base http://www.current.org/pbpbabout.html.

McBride, S. (1978). Many Voices in one World: Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow, UNESCO, Paris.

Mehta, Nalin (2008). *India on Television: How Satellite News Channels have changed the way we think and act?* New Delhi: Harper Collins. 25

MHRD Website: www.education.nic.in

Michael (1999), IPSE- Research in Distance Education http://www.ihets.org
Mission Document (2009). NME-ICT, MHRD, Govt.of India, New Delhi.

Ninan, S. (1995). *Through the Magic Window: Television and Change in India.* New Delhi: Penguin.

Ninan, S. (1998). History of Indian Broadcasting Reform. In Price, M.E., & Verhulst, S.G. (Eds.), *Broadcasting Reform in India: Media Law from a Global Perspective,* (pp. 1-21). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Ninan, S. (2007). Reining in Broadcasters. *Vidura, Vol. 44(3),* 10-12.

Page, D., & Crawley, W. (2001). *Satellites over South Asia: Broadcasting Culture and the Public Interest.* New
Paul N. (1968). School Television in India, New Delhi: All India Radio.

Public Service Broadcasting (2005): A Best Practices Sourcebook. Singapore: UNESCO.

Rasool, Shahid. (2012). Educational Television in India-present scenario future prospects, concept publishers, New Delhi.

Rogers, E.M., (1986): Communication Technology: The New Media in Society, New York: The Free Press.

Salomon, G. (1979) & Olson and Bruner (1974). Interaction of Media, Cognition and Learning, London.

Satyanarayana, P. and Sesharatnam, C. (2000). Distance Education: What? Why? How? Booklinks Corporation, Hyderabad (India), pp: 95-96.
Seneviratne, K. (Eds.), *Public Service Broadcasting in the Age of Globalisation* (pp. 149-164). Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre.

Singhal, A, & Rogers, Everett M. (2001). *India's Communication Revolution: From Bullock Carts to Cyber Marts.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

UGC website: www.ugc.ac.in.

UGC (2012).INCLUSIVE AND QUALITATIVEEXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION. *Higher Education in the 12th Five-Year Plan,* New Delhi.

UNESCO website (September 5, 2011). UNESCO-IPDC Prize for Rural Communication. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from 26.

Usha, V.Reddy, Sai Prasad and Rukmini (1992): "UGC-ISRO National Talk Back Experiment-1991" CEC-UGC unpublished Report.

Usha, V.Reddy, (1995): "CEC-IGNO-ISRO National Talk Back Experiment- New Communication and Information Technologies- A course taught by Teleconference-1994, unpublished Report.

Verghese, B.G. (1978). *Akash Bharti – National Broadcast Trust: Report of the Working Group on Autonomy for Akashvani and Doordarshan.* New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

Vilanilam, J.V. (2005). *Mass Communication in India: A Sociological Perspective.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Walker, D. (1995). A primer in distance education, JERITT, Bulletin Vol. 6 (1), January/February 1995, Michigan State University, USA.

Contact email: vjemrc@gmail.com