

Role of the Radio and Newspaper in NAEP

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Generally speaking, when people talk about the use of radio in adult education they presume that this is an aid like any, other aid with certain additional facilities or provisions and that this can supplement the teacher. Both presumptions, in my opinion, are questionable. If produced properly most of the adult education programmes on radio do not need the: presence of the teacher. Where a teacher is available, he may supplement the: programmes, but not vice versa. The point to be remembered is that when programmes are not used as independent items and are tailored to supplement the: teacher, they remain underutilized and their full potential is not realized.

All India Radio with its 84 radio stations having 154 transmitting points covers 89% of the total population of the country. It broadcasts for 386 hours in a week and has ample opportunity and high potential to work for the NAEP. As a medium of entertainment, radio is so popular that its other two functions viz. educating and informing people have been overshadowed.

In the context of NAEP, the following positive factors about radio need to be borne in mind:

1. It reaches more people than any other mass media and has access to the remotest corners.
2. A fast medium, it provides information within the shortest possible time.
3. It is a variegated entertaining medium capable of catering to varied interests and needs.
4. Its cost is comparatively low.
5. It conforms to the oral tradition to which Indians are attuned.

Some drawbacks need also to be listed:

1. Broadcasting programmes assures neither reception of the programme by the audience nor their participation in it.
2. There is a lack of feed-back opportunities and methods.
3. There is a lack of aptitude for educational and informational programmes.

These drawbacks are not insurmountable. Creating a proper listening atmosphere needs good planning and a careful analysis of requirements of the NAEP.

A radio programme does not treat literacy as a prerequisite of education through it. This makes the programme extremely important. Broadly speaking, programmes should be planned in four stages which have reference to four aspects of the NAEP. The first 'Introduction' or 'Explanation' should tell the people about the NAEP in great detail. The second, 'Motivation' must bring home to the people the relevance and use of NAEP to individual and social life. The third, 'Education', should convey the educational messages that NAEP would like to convey. The last, 'Follow-up', should help retain what was conveyed, adding to it what may be needed further.

An analysis of radio programme requirements of the NAEP projects the need of four different types of programmes i.e., 1) General, 2) Functional, 3) Educational, and 4) follow-up programmes.

The first requirement is that of "general programmes" which cover the first two stages of the NAEP viz., explanatory and motivational. These being the initial stages in which messages would be communicated to as large a number of people as possible, careful planning is necessary. The programme presented should whet the desire of the people to listen to future programmes connected with NAEP. Failure or success at these two stages will set the tone of the general impact of radio programmes on target population.

Functional programmes should be designed to educate the NAEP functionaries of all categories, voluntary workers or Government employees, who are scattered all over the country, and who need information, training and other assistance for the implementation and evaluation of the on-going programmes.

At present there are no media nor any organization which provide adequate assistance to them. AIR should introduce a special item of at least 3 minutes a day in local languages to meet this requirement. This is how the NAEP throughout the country could be guided and co-ordinate with the help of radio. For the NAEP functionaries, programmes relating to the following aspects should be broadcast:

1. Previous and current experiments in adult education being conducted within the country and other countries and the lessons learnt from these.
2. The NAEP's aim and scope and the role of the functionaries.
3. Organizing people for the developmental task.
4. Literacy teaching.

5. Methods of evaluating the programmes.
6. Methods of using educational tools available
7. Problems that are likely to be faced and the possible ways of finding solutions to these.

"Educational" programmes", both 'common' and 'specific', are crucial because these form the core of NAEP. Common programmes have to be of general interest and should appeal to all irrespective of their urban, rural and professional backgrounds, but 'specific' programmes have to be directed to the specific groups of people with a focus on the special needs and interests of each group.

Lastly, the Reinforcement and Follow-up programmes should be designed in such a way that they reinforce learning and help retain what has been learnt. This has been the weakest link of programmes produced by AIR so far. There should be a regular weekly 10-minute programme presenting a feed back from functionaries, target population and others. This interaction can clear doubts provide guidance and suggest improvements.

While programming on these lines, certain precautions have to be taken. The programmer should

- (a) educate while entertaining and entertain while educating.
- (b) give importance to style of the programme along with that of content.
- (c) try to understand the needs of the target audience and not underestimate or over-estimate their knowledge and awareness about the message that is being conveyed in a particular programme.
- (d) coordinate various programmes in such a way that they form links in one single chain.

The NAEP' functionaries working in various places should establish the NAEP listeners' informal clubs. People should be told about the forthcoming programmes well in advance. It has been our experience that group listening has great utility. In villages where Radio forums were set up, it was found that the knowledge of the listeners got doubled and where these did not exist the increase in listeners knowledge was only 20%. Jha's study of "Radio listening behaviour and preferences of farmers" has shown that there is no link between the listeners socio-economic status, age and size of land holding to the frequency of listening to the programmes on farming. The listeners' socio-economic status may not stand as a barrier for listening to educational programmes.

News Paper

So far, newspapers are an untapped source for purposes of adult education. A glance at the studies of the role of mass media in adult education reveals the fact that newspapers are not supposed to play much of a role. It is to be remembered, however, that newspaper, with its independence of expression can play an important role in creating public opinion in favour of the NAEP, helping functionaries to create forums for discussing their needs and problems and providing necessary information.

Most adult educators are under the wrong impression that literacy is an essential prerequisite to get message from this medium. But that is not the whole truth. It is true only if someone wants to get the message directly from the newspaper. There are other indirect methods of getting the message out of it. They need to be tapped. Recently there was an experimental adult education programme conducted by Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, in 3 villages of Karnataka. One of the components of this programme was a "reading session" in which one 'reader' read the newspaper item which he had selected well in advance on the basis of its relevance and interest to the group and initiated a discussion on it among the illiterate listeners gathered around him. It was observed that people were more active and articulate when the message of the news item was 'told' rather than when it was 'read', On the part of the reader this needed only readiness and preparation to take up the task. In our villages it is not uncommon to see people gathering around some one if he has some paper in his hand. If newspaper can reach the community when someone who can read, understand and explain the message to his own people, is available, it will be helpful. There are important occasions in rural areas which can be best utilized for regular educational sessions of this kind.

Experience in educating people has shown that the problems of people are the starting points from which their education can begin. Analysing and finding solutions to these problems can become an operation in which people can participate and learn. In this context it may be advisable to have a two page NAEP daily newspaper issued from all district headquarters of the country.

Let us not think that the use of Radio and newspaper for NAEP is a luxury, it is in fact a necessity.