CHAPTER - V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction:

Cumulative, worldwide experience in the use of television for education has clearly established the potential of the medium to provide a variety of learning stimulus to a diverse set of student audiences. However, efforts to integrate television into existing teaching-learning processes have not always been as satisfactory as expected. Primarily because the policy makers and planners have often been more concerned with issues related to organisational aspects of production and distribution of educational television programmes. Very little attention has been paid to the lacunae in existing learning situations wherein television is likely to be used and expected to satisfy the needs of the students.

Increasingly, however, media researchers have been stressing the need for greater learner oriented studies
wherein the relationship between the learner, the medium and the learning environment are examined in a holistic comprehensive manner. Even though the Countrywide Classroom television programmes sponsored by U.G.C is a relatively new effort in using the medium for higher education in India, it is necessary that research effort focus more on the target audience, that is the students enrolled in different colleges across the country.

It is in this context that an exploratory field study was conducted to examine the extent of exposure to CWCR programmes and the level of comprehension of content of programmes by the undergraduate students enrolled in colleges affiliated to Bangalore University.

Study Procedure and Findings:

The sample drawn from both urban and rural areas had an equitable distribution of male and female students enrolled in science courses of various colleges located in both urban and rural areas within the jurisdiction of Bangalore University.
The respondents of the study provided data regarding their general television viewing behaviour and their exposure to CWCR programmes. Data was also collected to find out the attitude of students towards educational television in general, their preferences of content of educational television programmes as well as methods of integrating the medium into existing teaching-learning situation in the colleges. The respondents also participated in a test of comprehension of select CWCR programmes wherein they watched the television programmes and answered follow up questions related to content.

The study results indicate that about 70 per cent of both urban and rural students have access to television at home. Generally students watch television for about two hours every day. Female students as well as those from rural areas are heavy viewers as compared to their counterparts, the male and urban viewers.
Mainstream television viewing follows a more or less uniform pattern among all students. Regularity of viewing programmes is very low for morning transmission and very high for evening programmes. Generally more female students are regular viewers of television as compared to males. For the afternoon transmission when the CWCR programmes are telecast more rural female students constitute regular viewers.

It is also observed that regularity of viewing CWCR programmes is related to availability of television in colleges. In rural areas access to television in colleges shows a marked improvement in regularity of viewing CWCR programmes by students.

Also the students, in general, show a very favourable attitude towards educational television, though there are distinct differences in assessment of limitation of television in education by the urban and rural students. Favourable attitude by itself may not result in better cognition of message received from the medium. To certain this is borne out by analysis of comprehension of content of programmes by the students.
The study indicates varying levels of comprehension of programme by the students. Almost a quarter of the respondents have no comprehension, while only two of the total 323 respondents had full comprehension with a maximum score of ten in the comprehension test. The average comprehension scores for the Instructional and General Awareness type programmes were 4.8 and 3.8 respectively.

Analysis of variance of comprehension indicates that female students have better comprehension than male students and that Instructional type programmes are better understood than the General Awareness type programmes. Whether the student is located in urban or rural areas per se, is not a significant factor that affect comprehension. However, female students in both urban and rural areas have better comprehension compared to the male students. Further while urban female students have better comprehension of General Awareness type programmes, rural female students have better understanding of Instructional type programmes.

Collating the various findings of the study it is interesting to note that in exposure to mainstream tele-
vision programmes the students emerge as a more or less homogeneous audience group. Further analysis of their exposure to CVCR programmes, their attitude towards educational television in general and the extent of comprehension of select CVCR science programmes bring out distinct differences between the various segments of the student group. In particular rural female students emerge as a media elite among the students respondents, as far as educational television is concerned. This is an issue that must be of considerable importance to policy makers and planners of CVCR programmes.

As in any exploratory field study, in the present work also a number of issues related to the main objectives of the study have surfaced during the field work but have been excluded from the main analysis for lack of empirical supportive data. Still some of the issues of importance that expand the main findings of the study are discussed here. It must, however, be pointed out that the primary purpose of
the ensuing discussion is to stress the need for further systematic research of the issues being raised. The opinions expressed are by no means prescriptive.

**Access and Exposure to Television:**

As indicated earlier in Chapter II, the U.G.C. has plans to provide every college with a television set as part of future expansion of CWCR project. Implied therein the recognition that access to the medium is a pre-requisite to effective utilisation of the message by the students. The study findings further strengthen this belief. The indications are that if television sets are available in the colleges, particularly in rural areas, there is greater chance of regular viewing of CWCR programmes by the students. The study also reveals that at present the availability of television sets in the colleges is far from satisfactory both in rural and urban areas.

In practical terms, however, supplying television sets to all the undergraduate colleges affiliated to

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over 150 universities estimated to be functioning in the country (India, 1987) can only be attempted in a phased manner stretched over a number of years. The more important question, therefore, is the criteria to be used in shortlisting colleges to whom television sets need to be provided on a priority basis.

If one accepts the CWCR Credo as the basis, then rural colleges and semi urban areas should get priority over other colleges. The indications emerging from the present study endorse but refines this criteria. It is not merely location but the total learning environment that must determine choice of colleges to whom television sets are to be made available. Evidently there cannot be a single, all encompassing set of guidelines to determine the necessary learning conditions wherein intervention by television would be most effective. Without digressing into an elaborate discussion of the issue, the point being emphasised here is that policy makers must pay more attention to prevailing learning conditions in colleges which in turn determines the reception conditions of television messages.
While access is an important consideration, ensuring regular viewing of CWCR programmes by the students for whom it is intended is a more complex matter. Clearly U.G.C. cannot impose CWCR telecasts on the autonomous universities, colleges and the adult learner enrolled in these colleges. At the same time it is important that some effort is made to provide the students an opportunity to watch the programmes in a more systematic way. As Bates (1984) points out, students are not a homogeneous set of learners with similar educational expectations from the medium. There are what he calls the 'Open Learners', that is students who are committed to learning and are likely to take advantage of all educational opportunities including those offered by television. At the same time there are what Bates defines as the 'Structured Learners', that is students whose interest in education is limited to acquiring formal qualifications. They will therefore, be interested only in experiences that expand their understanding of subjects required to perform better in assignments and examinations.
Role of Teachers:

It is the contention here that the present operational structure of CVC programmes favour the Open learners, while the content of the programmes itself are of considerable benefit to the Structured learners as well. In order to benefit as large a student population as possible it is necessary to find ways and means of integrating television into the routine of class instruction. Needless to say there are innumerable ways of doing this and the purpose here is not to prescribe any one approach.

However, it must be pointed out that any attempt to integrate educational television programmes as a part of regular instructional activities in the class requires the complete co-operation and participation of the concerned teachers and college administrators. An illustrative example of such a situation observed during the course of field work is worth recounting here.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter IV, the Golden Valley First Grade College in Kolar has made special provision for the students to view CVC programmes regu-
larly, by including an AV hour in the time table. Attempts are also being made to have separate AV hours for different sections of student groups such as I/II/III year students or on the basis of subjects being studied such as Arts, Commerce or Science.

However, as the teacher in charge of this AV hour assignment indicated, matching student needs to the programmes telecast on any particular day is almost an impossible task. The main difficulty pointed out by the teacher was that CVCR follows no particular pattern in scheduling the programmes for telecast. To a certain extent the weekly preview of programmes gives an indication of what programmes being telecast in the following week are likely to be of use to which group of students. Re-organising the classes at such short notice, is never an easy task. It is only when the concerned teachers fully co-operate that students who are likely to benefit the most from watching the programmes get to do so. The teacher suggested that a monthly bulletin indicating the schedule and a brief synopsis of programmes being telecast would greatly help the teachers to plan their own classes to include
relevant tele-lessons when available.

No doubt there are many such minor details that obstruct the smooth integration of television into the routine of class instruction. The main issue of considerable importance is that eventually, it is the teacher who will determine the extent of utilisation of educational television programmes. Hence they must actively participate in the decision making processes of planning, production and distribution of educational television programmes.

Some of these problems in scheduling and related issues could be mitigated somewhat if video tapes of the programmes are stocked in the library so that the teachers and students could use them as and when required. The status report of U.C.C (1989) has already indicated the plans to establish a network of video libraries across the country as a part of future development of CWCR operations. Again the important question is not the setting up of these libraries per se, but how to make them active agents to promote efficient,
effective use of educational television programmes. The problem again is not with the medium or the organisational structure of operation but with the human resource aspect of educational scenario in India.

A cynical view would be to extend Bates definition of Open and Structured learners to the teaching community also. More optimistically, one could point out that, as in the case of diffusion of any innovation, for optimum use of video libraries also one must begin by training the trainers. To start with an incentive scheme that recognises innovative and committed teachers may help identify colleges/regions where the video library is likely to function most effectively.

One such innovative and committed teacher surfaced during field work observations. In one of the colleges a lecturer of History had video taped the entire B.B.C series of Shakespeare plays. These programmes were used to initiate discussions about social norms, customs and events relating to European history of that period. According to the teacher the students
had lively discussions comparing the character they were studying in the textbook to those portrayed in the teleplay. This might be a rare combination of an exceptional teacher in an extremely flexible learning situation encouraged by an understanding college administration. But it is precisely in such an environment that television will emerge as an extraordinarily resourceful educational tool.

These random, select illustrations have been presented here as they strengthen our understanding of the teaching attributes of the medium. They also, perhaps, bring out the precision with which curriculum must be planned and the efficiency with which the organisational structure must function.

Assessing Student Needs

This naturally lead us to the concerns of the student as the third important element in the triad of medium-teacher-learner. The study indicates that the students have a very favourable and expectant attitude regarding the educational potential of television.
At the same time the students by themselves are not likely to make any effort to seek out television programmes that may provide them additional knowledge.

This observation is based on the informal discussions with students and teachers in all the colleges where the field study was conducted. Invariably, the issue of watching video programmes came up during these discussions. By and large it was found that the teachers had made some effort to video tape the programmes they felt would be useful for use in classes. In none of the discussions did the students mention either making a video recording or borrowing a video tape that they considered educationally useful.

In other words the students are receptive to educational messages from television, but would prefer the teachers to locate and make available appropriate and relevant television programmes.

In addition to access, relevance of learning experience is also related to how well the message of the medium satisfies the educational needs of students.
Educational needs assessment of students, in turn, generates its own set of pragmatic and pedagogic questions that cannot be so easily resolved.

For instance, providing equitable coverage to the vast range of subjects taught at University level is itself a problematic issue. Under the present telecast arrangements, it is practically impossible to provide adequate time for a comprehensive coverage of all subjects. Consequently there will always be subjects or topics that are not given sufficient time or importance as perceived by one segment or other of student audiences.

The monthly feedback report of December 1968 brought out by Mass Communication Research Centre, Delhi, further substantiates this point. Out of 91 letters received from students during the month about 54 per cent have asked for new programmes in about 12 different disciplines of study. In Physics alone as many as 14 new topics have been requested.

Evidently it is not possible to satisfy all the varied needs of the student community. The emphasis
given by CWCR Credo to educational material that will 'enrich' student knowledge without directly dealing with any specific syllabus topic is perhaps the most practical approach. But from programme production and presentation point of view, general awareness and enrichment type subject matter is more difficult to handle. To begin with learning objectives are more diffused in these programmes as compared to direct teaching instructional type topics. Additionally, it is difficult to prescribe standards that match different levels of student needs.

Under the existing pattern of higher education in India there is some degree of uniformity in the core disciplines of study and the related prescribed text material provided to the students. But there is considerable variation in the quality and range of additional sources of knowledge made available to the students in different regions and between colleges in the same region. Consequently there will be a wide variety of academic needs among the student community even within the same discipline of study such as science.
Therefore the countrywide classroom programmes telecast for a national audience can at best supplement the basic subjects of study offered by different universities and colleges. Thus there is a basic dilemma on how to reconcile the heterogeneous academic needs of students in different parts of the country with the homogeneous curriculum imposed by the medium. An issue that cannot be easily resolved but nevertheless needs to be attended to.

The analysis of comprehension of CWCR programmes indicate that the students want more of General Awareness type of programmes but have better comprehension of Instructional type programmes. Admittedly, lack of comprehension can be due to many factors. Summing up earlier studies on comprehension of broadcast programmes, Bates (1984) points to two specific areas that seem pertinent in the context of present study and discussion. One that broadcasters generally tend to over estimate the audience background knowledge of the topic and second that the learners have greater difficulty in comprehension when left to sort out the
principal points for themselves. The findings in the present study also substantiate these observations.

However, there is no denying the paucity of literature that analyses not only what the students learn from educational television programmes, but also how learning takes place. No doubt there is plenty of international research experience available for us to draw upon. But in the Indian context much more needs to be done. Many more studies such as the present one must be attempted in diverse learning contexts before we can fully understand the 'educational' aspect of educational television.