CHAPTER - II

EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION IN INDIA

Introduction:

The world view of development of educational television attempted earlier points to the evolution of the medium from being a teaching aid in the school to becoming an integral part of distance education system serving a variety of audience groups of young and adult learners. In the process television has made significant contribution in extending the educational opportunities to many marginalised and disadvantaged learners in a number of countries across the world. While one may critique the methods of utilisation of educational television in specific country context, and point to the need to match content to local needs, no one can dispute the potential of the medium in enriching learning and strengthening educational activities.

In the Indian context also, therefore, there is much scope for television to strengthen
educational efforts. However, the effectiveness of the medium will only be as good as our understanding of the situation in which it is being used and the purpose which it is expected to fulfill. Consequently research contribution in the field of educational television is as important and aspect as recognition of the educational potential of the Medium.

**Educational Television at School Level:**

As mentioned earlier, in the three decades of its existence in India, educational television has been largely confined to school education. Even so, much could have been gained by systematic research over the years as has been done in other developing countries. While some attempt has been made in building an infrastructure facility for software production, similar concern is absent in the area of research and evaluation of educational television in India. As Agrawal (1987) points out it is an area least researched and there is no dearth of researchable problems. Be it a focus on the audience groups, an assessment of the
organisational structure, an analysis of the message production process or an enquiry into the relevance of content to the learner, there are innumerable questions in search of answers. Still, a review of the growth of educational television in India and the research input available is necessary to establish a context for the present study.

It was in an atmosphere of optimism of the fifties and early sixties, that educational television made an entry on the Indian media scene, as an experimental project to broadcast tele lessons to Delhi schools in 1959.

Following the established pattern of the Latin American country projects discussed earlier, the Delhi school broadcasts started in 1961 regularly with about 150 schools receiving the programmes. Aimed at the students in the secondary level of school education, science and language programmes were broadcast daily. Continuous evaluation was built
into the project through daily and periodic contact with class teachers through correspondence and meetings. (Kumar and Chandiram, 1967). However, only one scientific evaluation was conducted by Neurath which indicated that achievement of students in television schools was slightly better than those in non television schools and on the whole teachers welcomed television in the classroom (Neurath, nd).

**Infrastructure development:**

Recommendation by the Ministry of culture in 1967 that educational television should be totally integrated with the educational system and must be part of the Ministry of Education also reflect the Government policy supporting the educational function of television. (GOI, 1967). Thus it is relevant to remember that it is the planners and media professionals in the Ministry of Education who have been actively associated with the growth and development of educational television in the country, rather than researchers and teachers. As a result there has been a consistent effort to build an infrastructure for software production in different part of the country.
A centre for Educational Technology was set up in 1971 with assistance from UNDP under the administration of the National Council for Educational Research & Training (NCERT). Similar Educational Technology cells were set up in a phased manner in almost all states in the next five years. (GCI, 1988).

However, similar concern is absent with regard to research and evaluation of educational television to gauge its effectiveness as a teaching resource. It was the Satellite Instructional Television Project (SITE) during 1975-76 that brought the much needed research input into educational television in India.

SITE Experiences:

A major component of the SITE project was the enrichment oriented programmes for primary education aimed at rural school children in the age group of 5-12 years. These programmes telecast six days in the week were of a total of 1½ hours daily. The school
programmes were made in four main languages prevailing in the SITE coverage area. As a result children were exposed to 22½ minutes of telelessons in their own languages. These programmes were in the form of a capsule composed of two programmes of about 10 minutes each with a few still visuals as fillers inbetween.

Three major evaluations of the school programmes provide three different perspective on SITE school educational programmes though all of them followed the pre-post experimental test design. The study by Shukla and Kumar (1977) is a comprehensive one conducted in all the six states covered by SITE project. The study planned to evaluate the impact of SITE on children and teachers compares the impact of the language programmes on students at different grades in schools located in different regions. Rehman's (1977) assessment of educational television is restricted to one region of SITE coverage areas-the state of Orissa. Aghi's (1977) study of impact of science programmes on children of Rajasthan is more focussed in terms of both region and content.
Language development: In the study by Shukla and Kumar, language development tests were administered to students in 20 controlled and 20 experimental villages. The report indicated that overall, children from all areas showed positive improvement in language development. While children from non-Hindi states like Andhra Pradesh/Karnataka/Orissa showed statistically significant gains, the performance of children from Hindi states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar were not statistically significant.

The researcher argue that this variation in test results from different geographical areas is due to the fact that in the non-Hindi states the programmes were produced by people familiar with the location and the audience groups were smaller and more homogeneous compared to the Hindi regions. Also the local dialects used by the people in the Hindi region was substantially different from the standard Hindi that was used on television.

Though the researchers confine their comment
to the limitations of the production process, one cannot but recall Arnove's comments on 'Cross Cultural Dissonance' (discussed earlier) in far away American Samoa coming to grips with the American English used on television. Also, a matter of particular importance is that the question of language for education is not only a universal problem but one that transcends differentiation between school and college learners. Clearly there is need for a language policy for broadcasting, particularly for educational purposes.

Appreciation of television: Rahman's study on Educational television is region specific and is an assessment of the impact of eight television programmes on children and teachers in the rural schools of Orissa. However, the study does not use the term impact in the usual sense of measurement of gain in knowledge or behavioural change among the children. The researcher is primarily concerned with exploring the degree of 'acceptance' and 'appreciation' of television and comprehension of content of programmes.
The findings indicate a high level of 'acceptance' of television among all children but shows variation in the 'appreciation' responses as well as in the level of 'comprehension'. Variation in appreciation is a result of the critical assessment of the presentation and the consequent liking/disliking of the programmes by the children. Variation in comprehension was found related to information load as well as presentation techniques. The researcher also reports a close connection between appreciation and comprehension though no supportive evidence to this effect is provided in the study.

*Creating scientific temper*: The science programmes for SITE project were specially made for the rural children. The impact study by Aghi was intended to assess the gain in science information and also the capacity of the children to apply the information received to solving everyday problems. Here also an experimental design was applied to groups of children studying in Standard III & IV.
The results in general show that test performance by children improved with exposure to television. The researcher, however, argues that the test results indicate more than gain in information. Her contention is that there was improvement in the process of thinking and the children showed an ability to analyse problems. Aghi bases her conclusions on the response of the children to the test instrument where quite often the children have indicated the reasons for their answers.

The study also suggests that the television programmes were able to incultate a favourable attitude towards science among the rural children.

If the morning transmission exclusively aimed at school children was clearly instructional in nature, the evening programmes for the rural adults was also overwhelmingly educational in nature. The programmes ranging from agricultural practices, health as well as innumerable vocational guidance programmes were of relevance to the rural adults.

Extensive evaluation of various dimensions of
SITE adult education programmes were also attempted. However, a review of these studies is beyond the scope of the present study confined to an understanding of the role of television in the formal educational science.

Post SITE Development:

Technologically, SITE was a preamble to the indegenuously developed INSAT series that became operational early in the eighties. The immediate response to the availability of Satellite Television was once again a large scale development of infrastructure for software production in an expanding television network.

With the advent of INSAT - IB in 1982, the Ministry of Education initiated a scheme to set up educational television programme production centres in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh and strengthening of existing educational technology cells in all the states in terms of software
production facilities. The Ministry of Information 
& Broadcasting responded by providing community 
viewing television sets in clusters of the selected 
states. At present the satellite based educational 
television services for schools consists of 45 
minutes of daily telecasts of programmes for children 
in the age group of 6-11. (GOI, 1988).

Concurrent with these efforts to strengthen 
existing educational television infrastructure - 
are the attempts to invest in new areas of educa­
tional endeavours, particularly in higher education.

Educational Television in Higher Education:

Prior to the emergence of satellite television 
on the Indian media scene, most of the use of tele­
vision for higher education was limited to a few 
sporadic attempts at setting up video production 
facilities for inhouse training and research activ­
ities in institutions engaged in higher education.

Among the educational institutes, the Indian
Institute of Technology, Kanpur was among the first to acquire NTSC (American) standard television equipment and set up a studio in 1965. Following this, many Technical, Teachers Training Institutes, Polytechnics also acquired television production facilities. The objective in acquiring the television production centres were mainly to make programmes in science and technology that could be useful to schools and colleges and their own training programmes. The Agricultural Communication centre at Pantnagar, was similarly set up to develop software in Agriculture technology and expand the earlier approach of extension departments of agricultural universities to the field of television. Several other institutes such as the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad and the Central Institute of Indian Languages at Mysore also have video production facilities to make programmes.

Invariably availability of imported equipment from donor agencies has been the starting point of these attempts. Without corresponding efforts at
developing indigenous software as well as technical competency for maintenance of hardware many of these production units have become "audio-visual equipment mortuaries" (UGC, 1963, p.26).

An Experimental Telesymposium:

The video lecture course organised by Space Application Centre under the APPLE application programme in June 1984 was the first attempt in using television for higher education in the formal educational system in India. (Agrawal, ISRO, 1984). The programme involved the APPLE Satellite, which provided a national reach, a group of communication experts and production facilities from Space Application Centre, Ahmadabad and a few Institutes of Technologies in India. Arrangements were made for viewing the programmes in five receiving centres located in Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bombay, Delhi and Madras. Using the telesymposium form, the experimental television course was meant for students at an advanced level of study in Electronics and Communication technology and consisted of video lectures and lecture notes.
In addition a two way voice link facility was made available for post video lecture discussion between the students and the lectures. In an experimental effort of this kind, it is meaningless to attempt any comprehensive analysis of the impact of the programme on the intended audience. Still, the evaluation report of the project (Agrawal, 1964) highlights the fact that besides the content and curriculum, other non-academic factors are quite significant in planning distant learning projects of this type. A point of considerable relevance to the large scale utilisation of television in higher education.

University Grants Commission - Television Project for Higher Education:

Clearly there was a need to create an appropriate infrastructure for efficient and effective use of the new satellite technology available for educational purposes. The University Grants Commission (U.G.C.) as the nodal agency responsible for higher
education in India, set up a Task Force in 1983 to examine and report on the type of organisational infrastructure needed to use television for higher education at the undergraduate level of study in India. Concurrent with this initiative of UGC, was the assurance that one hour transmission time would be available for programmes on higher education through the INSAT IB facility. Keeping in view the need to have specific educational objectives for effective utilisation of television in education as also the experience, Indian and International, with educational television wherein equipment or hardware plays a dominant role, the Task Force recommended a phased development of television programme production centres spread across the country which would be co-ordinated centrally by the U.G.C. Secretariat on Educational Technology.

To start with three levels of centres were to be set up in different Universities in view of the interdisciplinary nature of planning educational television programmes and the diverse needs of students/teachers in different geographic locations.
of the country, the task force report emphasises the need for decentralised production and utilisation of television programmes. The three levels of centres recommended by the task force consisted of a National Centre for Educational Media at Delhi, two Educational Media Research Centres and two Audio Visual Research Centres to begin with in 1983, and located in different parts of the country. As recommended in the Task Force report all the centres have been located in the university system thereby providing an academic environment and also ensuring an interdiciplinary approach to the production of television programmes. (UGC, Task Force, 1983).

**Countrywide classroom : (CWCR)**

Titled the "Countrywide Classroom", the first telecast of educational television programmes was made on August 15, 1984. Initially started as an afternoon transmission of one hour duration everyday for six days a week, the CWCR has expanded rapidly in the six years. The number of Media Centres producing these television programmes has expanded
from four to 13, the total number of programmes produced has gone up from 109 to 1800, which has changed the earlier dependance on foreign programmes. Also the initial one hour transmission have been increased to two hours per day, six days a week. Language of the broadcast has been English, though there are proposals to start at least in Hindi during the VIII plan period.

**Future Projections:**

The number of media centres is expected to be increased to 20 by 1994-95. Correspondingly the number of programmes produced by these centres would exceed four hundred per year, according to the UGC Status report (1989). The report also indicates a five fold increase from the initial budget proposed by the Task Force in 1983. Other future projections for expanding the CWCR transmissions include establishment of video libraries; development of computer assisted instruction formats; introduction of talk-back facility to ensure better teacher-student interaction, and
setting up of an Inter-University Consortium for networking of different media centres and their activities. (UGC Status Report, 1989).

Clearly the future of educational television for higher education in India is poised on the threshold of new vistas of development. It is therefore, appropriate to reflect and reconsider the founding principles of educational television in this country. Concurrent with the technology input and infrastructure development initiated by U.G.C. it is equally important to infuse extensive evaluation of the system into the planning process.

Research Evidence:

The UGC Task Force (1983) as well as the Feasibility Report by the Association of Indian Universities (1984) have strongly emphasised the need for promoting research based television programmes as well as ensuring continuous evaluation of the programmes by the production centres and other external agencies.
Infact, even before the CWCR was made operational, the Research Advisory Committee of UGC had conducted a pretesting of a sample of programmes to be telecast. A set of six programmes consisting of a mixture of foreign and Indian made programmes were pretested in six regions of the country in 1984. Primarily the objective was to find out the level of comprehension of the programmes by students, especially of the programmes produced abroad. The report of pretesting (ISRO 1984), indicate that almost all the students from all parts of the country had found foreign programmes difficult to understand. Evidently, the English language spoken with a foreign accent was a major obstacle to better comprehension of content. The report recommends using Indian facilitators to explain the gist of the programmes or better still adopt dubbing and/or subtitling techniques to make the language more clear.

Further, pretesting findings indicate that though the Indian Programmes made with "Indian English" were better understood than their foreign counterparts,
the overall comprehension level of the Indian pro-
grammes was also low. Evidently, apart from the
language dimension, there are other factors that
contribute to better comprehension of content. The
pretesting report, however, confines itself to
suggesting improvements in production techiques.
Thus, there is a need for a systematic analysis of
varied factors that influence comprehension of
television instruction.

With the setting up of media centres to produce
programmes for CWCR, a consistent effort has been
made to strengthen research input by providing a research
cell in each centre. By and large, however, these
inhouse research efforts have been mostly feedback
studies to guage audience size, their media utili-
sation patterns and exposure to CWCR programmes.
The Educational Media Research Centre (EMRC) at
Poona, for instance, has initiated a periodic survey
approach to obtain continuous feedback from the
target audience in the State about CWCR programmes.
The series entitled "Quest" have been building a database in terms of students response to CWCR programmes. Generally, the reports indicate a fairly high exposure pattern with about 60-65 per cent watching the CWCR programmes, but regularity of watching is much lower (about 20 per cent) in both urban and rural areas. Also the students have repeatedly expressed their difficulty in understanding the language used in the programme, (Pendharkar, 1988).

Another feedback survey conducted by the Audio Visual Research Centre (AVRC), University of Roorkee among the affiliated college of Meerut University indicates similar results. While the exposure to CWCR programmes among the target audience group is a high 59 per cent, regularity of viewing remains a low 21 per cent. Again the students have identified language as a major barrier to better understanding of the programmes. (AVRC, Roorkee, 1989).

The consistent field reports pointing to the need to reconsider the language of telecast has,
no doubt, prompted the policy statement of making the programmes in Hindi in addition to English during the VIII plan period (U.G.C. Status Report, 1989). While no one can dispute the need to produce programmes in the language that is best understood by the audience, the moot question is whether - regional language tele lessons alone will lead to better cognition of subject matter being presented. Surely, the causes of low level of regularity in viewing the programmes by the intended user should also be a matter of equal concern? In general, however, the "overall orientation of the project (CWCR) has been on the planner and the producer of the programmes and not on the receiver" (Reddi, 1987, p. 133).

The focus of enquiry must therefore, expand to include an analysis of the learning context in which educational television is received, understood and utilised by the intended student audience groups. As with the rest of the world the Indian research agenda must shift from the medium to the learner.