ABSTRACT

Television has today become the heart throb of one and all. It offers varied programmes and reaches a wider group of viewers. Most of the programmes are targeted towards the public with a motto to entertain, educate, inform and enrich. Restricted by its own limitations and with the convergence of ICT, the functions of television have now diversified. Digital growth has made television channels form into a network and offer bouquets of speciality based programmes. With the initiative from the government growing and private firms continuously investing in new media sectors, the educational channels have also established a very meagre footmark. As the channels compete with each other for gaining TRP and in luring the advertisers, the major chunk is shared by entertainment and news channels.

Discovery, National Geographic, TLC (The Learning Channel) etc. has topped the charts when it comes to general educational television. The rest have not grabbed the attention of the public. Lack of publicity and absolutely nil profit are the reasons why educational television channels are failing. Television can be a very useful academic tool, and has been used in the classroom for academic purposes since the 1970’s. The television programmes are used to assist children in various subject areas and are used alongside other teaching materials, to give a well rounded approach to learning. In terms of cognitive achievement, students seemed to learn as much if taught by television as when taught by more conventional methods (Paden 1977). Hence, most of the television producers and educational institutions
are showing interest in educational channels. The Indian education system has a wide structure. Ample studies have been done on educational channels for schools but not much research has been done about educational channels that are offered for college students in India. Hence a study about the reach and effectiveness of such programmes was essential.

In the current world scenario new inventions, modern technologies, growing economy and competition is the order of the day. In this emerging globalization, India is trying to position itself as a knowledge driven economy. Higher education assumes tremendous importance in facing these challenges. The growth of higher education in India is phenomenally increasing. Lack of skilled trained teachers is a threat for the Indian government. To sort out the problem, the government authorities have showed interest in investing in the education sector in the form of radio, television and free websites which provide e-learning materials.

The 21st century saw a remarkable growth of both free to air and pay channels on education in India. With the launching of more number of educational channels through the dedicated educational satellite EDUSAT, supported by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), the concept of educational delivery on television screen has changed. Reputed institutions such as the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have supplemented class lectures through Gyan Darshan, Vyas, and Eklavya.

Anna University, a quasi-government, technical institution in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, South India, launched its own channel the Anna EDUSAT with the sole aim of telecasting video lectures to its affiliated engineering colleges. The primary aim of launching the channel was to reach
the students in colleges in remote areas. The educational content of these television programmes is updated regularly to accommodate the changing syllabi.

The present study aims to find out the reach and popularity of Anna EDUSAT among the engineering students of Tamil Nadu. Anna EDUSAT is an initiative by Anna University, Chennai, jointly with the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), and it telecasts live interactive lectures on engineering subjects by renowned engineering academics. The study also tries to find out how the educational programmes are able to help the students to supplement their formal education. It determines the lacuna that Anna EDUSAT programmes have and suggests the improvements needed. Focus group discussion gave an idea to proceed further with the survey methodology. The focus group result showed students were aware about Anna EDUSAT but could not watch frequently as it collided with their academic class timings. During leisure periods, some of the colleges allowed the students to watch these educational videos. Lack of information or no proper schedule in the college time table to watch these video lectures has created dissatisfaction in many of the learners.

The content analysis of the videos showed low gradation of technical aspects in the video programmes which had de-motivated many from watching the educational lecture series as mentioned in the group discussions. Almost all the programmes were monotonous and static and the only change noticed was when PowerPoint slides were used to cover up the silver screen substituting the expert’s face. Even use of live demonstration and experiments were totally ignored. Animated videos are rarely used by the content experts in the video lectures. Most of the videos had dull lighting and
there was no attention paid towards the presenter’s looks, dress and body language.

Using the survey method, the study tried to find out the worth of the educational television programmes telecast via the channel. The results are based on the responses of the Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.) 2nd & 3rd year students studying in colleges affiliated to Anna University. The views of students were collected using a questionnaire constructed specially for the study. The questionnaire was constructed after reviewing the related literature.

The analysis showed that students feels that the programmes are useful in terms of understanding difficult concepts in their subjects. But there were some problems mentioned by the students as well which need to be rectified for the continued patronage of the students for the programmes. Mathematics is one of the common subjects which tie all the engineering branches. Literature revealed that most of the students have a higher percentage of failures in engineering mathematics. Hence, it was appropriate to study the after effect level that a student gains after watching the video and that was one of the crucial parameters in this research. A pre and post-test questionnaire was distributed among the respondents to find their knowledge about engineering mathematics which has been analysed through statistical tools.

The study results shows that the Anna EDUSAT programmes are useful. But, it needs more improvements in terms of transmission, timing, video quality, relevant content, audio-video quality etc. These changes can help the Anna EDUSAT and its educational videos to create a good learning environment among the students.