CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Educational achievement is the touchstone of civilization, culture and progress of a country. It is also visualized as an evolutionary force so that each individual is enabled to evolve from purely material consciousness towards superior planes of intellectual development. Education can play a very significant role in minimizing and finally eliminating various kinds of biases and imbalances such as rural/urban, rich/poor and gender divisions. At the same time it promotes understanding, harmony and tolerance. It is highly important for the socio-economic development of a society.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) statistics (2007), out of 661 crore world population only 85.5% is literate and the remaining 14.5% is (96 crore) illiterate. In India the illiteracy rate is high (34.2%) as compared to the world illiteracy rate. Out of 110 crore Indian population, only 72.38 crore people (65.8%) are literate. Youths getting educational opportunity, especially higher educational opportunity is very low in India.

Worldwide, total of 7,304 universities exist in 182 countries. According to University Grants Commission’s (UGC) latest statistics (2007) there are 300 universities and equivalent institutions which includes 116 general universities, 12 science and technology universities, 7 open
universities, 33 agricultural universities, 5 women’s universities, 11 language universities, and 11 medical universities and few numbers of deemed universities in India. In addition to that, there are 16 thousands colleges including Arts and Science, Engineering and Technology, Medical, Management, Teacher Education/Training colleges and 1100 Polytechnics. In these colleges 80% of undergraduate courses and 50% of postgraduate courses are offered. The number of students is 67.5 lakhs and 3.21 lakhs teachers in the Indian higher education system. These numbers are very small for the size of India as can be seen from the following comparison. Japan, a small country, has 684 universities, 512 of them private. The United States has 2364 universities, 1752 of them private, offering four year bachelor’s degree programmes and above.

Colleges in India are established by State Governments and private agencies. In some cases, universities themselves establish colleges. Universities have been set up by the Central or State Governments by means of legislation. Most of Indian higher education institutions do not have libraries worth the name. Most of them have very low faculty strength. These institutions of higher learning perform only classroom teaching, preparing students for examinations. Mostly higher education in India takes place only in the ill-equipped, understaffed colleges.

Developed countries are moving towards mass higher education. Information about the proportion of the relevant age group (18 to 23) entering higher education in some of the advanced countries may prove the point. In the U.S., it is 80 per cent; Canada has 88 per cent; Australia 80 per cent; Finland 74 per cent; and in the U.K. statistics show 52 per cent enrollment. Most of the developed countries have more than 50 per cent of the relevant age group in university level education. In India the relevant age group entering into the portals of universities is only 7 per cent. The need for higher
education is constantly expanding. Higher education institutions are offering learning opportunities to satisfy these diverse demands. These formal educational institutions are not adequate to provide quality education to a large number of students. Distance education would provide equal educational opportunities to millions of students. It supplements the formal educational system which is inhibited by many constraints in providing education to the growing number of people.

Distance learning programmes and open universities are an instrument of democratizing education. Through the open universities and distance learning initiatives, mechanisms are in place to upgrade skills. Open Universities were initiated to augment opportunities for higher education and to make it a lifelong process. The first Open University in the country was established in Andhra Pradesh in 1982. The central government established the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 1985. More state governments are establishing or planning to start open universities.

However in spite of all these initiatives the existing formal and distance educational institutions, as well as universities are inadequate to meet the needs, both in terms of quantity as well as quality. Expanding the infrastructure, establishing more institutions and appointing teaching and non-teaching staff are not an easy task. Modern mass media technologies like radio, television (TV), internet, Compact Disc (CD) can help to resolve this problem.

1.2 MASS MEDIA AND EDUCATION

Mass media, if utilized properly, can make significant contributions to the development of education. Mass communication systems can help to extend the reach of the educational system. Mass media can also help the
education systems to achieve their goals such as transmitting a body of knowledge and raising the levels of information access. These two systems mass media and educational system when they work together can serve the larger interests of the society. All that is needed is a concerted effort to imaginatively utilize the mass media to serve the purpose of education.

The importance of communication in education has increased in recent times. It includes information dissemination, motivation, socialization, involvement in developmental issues, preservation of heritage, and promotion of art and culture, besides learning and acquiring of knowledge, skills and attitudes and modification of behavior. In modern time’s mass media, particularly electronic media is playing a vital role in providing information. Due to its impact on the cognitive development of human beings, modern educationalists are emphasizing the use of electronic media in education.

According to the eminent academician Chitnis (2000), the world is entering the information age and developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are opening up new and cost-effective approaches increasing/expanding the reach of higher education among the youth as well as among those who need continuing education for meeting the demands of explosion of information, fast changing nature of occupations, and lifelong education. He adds that with the talent and vast intellectual resources of our youth, India can meet the challenges of the Information, Communication and Education (ICE) age provided education is given the top priority.

Based on the recommendations made by the modern educationalists India made lot of efforts in the area of media and education. In India, radio has by far the most extensive network. Radio signals cover almost the entire country. State owned radio service i.e. All India Radio (AIR) channels
broadcast programmes in various languages through out the country. Now so many Frequency Modulation (FM) radio stations have been established. There are a few educational channels providing service to the student community. Gyan Vani (GV) radio service is a unique way of providing classroom type of lecture sessions to the students in remote areas having access to radio sets. The Gyan Vani is aired at 107.4 MHz FM. These provide a substantial boost to countrywide regular and distance education in India.

TV has emerged as a remarkable medium of ‘Communication, entertainment and education’. It is one of the major means of mass communication and has rapidly elevated itself to become a very powerful medium. It has revolutionized the lives of people in the world. With the combination of sound and pictures it provides the most effective temporal and spatial transmission of reality to its viewers. With the advent of satellite and cable television, the expansion of electronic media in India has got an enormous boost, both in terms of reach and choice of channels and programme. Cable TV is largely used for entertainment but it has great potential for being used for education as well. With the technology growing in leaps and bounds, education does not stop at the borders of the campus, and TV offers another way to reach out into homes and serve people where they live (Reddi 1994).

Thus, the intimate nature of TV, ‘its immediacy, its great visual appeal and its mass communication character’ coupled with several other attributes give TV its tremendous power to communicate effectively with a large number of people anywhere, anytime. A powerful teaching tool Educational Television (ETV) does have several advantages over other educational media. It provides direct instruction as well as developmental continuing education. It can bring the world into classroom and classroom into home. TV is multimedia equipment by which different kinds of means,
media and materials can be utilized for producing programmes. The real education of today cannot be made effective as well as efficient for the citizens of tomorrow without the support of the TV (Manisha Malviya 2002).

The government has taken many initiatives to use these powerful media for the education. In 1975 Indian planners demonstrated the utility of TV in the field of social education. Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) carried out then was one of the largest and most successful experiments in the field of communication. The main objective of the 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 due to technological constraints.

Internet has become almost synonymous with information super highway. Internet is a worldwide ‘network of networks’ that connects computers so that millions can send e-mail and exchange messages with one another and access files of computer data. Internet’s most relevant function is being an electronics mail gateway. It is interactive in nature and offers commercial database services, electronic libraries, on-line transactions and search engines. Internet enables citizens to have access to anything and everything of their choice like curriculum, books, movie, games, news, bank accounts, travel agents, shopping, databanks, friends, relatives, peer and interest groups at any time of their choice.

Internet communication technologies increase access to faculty members, help them share useful resources and provide for joint problem solving and shared learning. This technology can usefully augment face-to-face contact in and outside of class meetings. Web based training uses any combination of texts, graphics and animation, sound, video or external data banks to present a course of instruction. It is more interactive and can send
information and receive feedback. Instant updating of information and immediate feedback from the users via e-mail is possible. The concepts of e-books and e-learning are highly acceptable in the Indian environment and our universities are also capable of offering courses in tune with the requirements of industries in the new millennium (Balasubramaniam and Shajahan 2001).

The Varghese Committee strongly recommended granting broadcast franchises to educational institutions. This would empower national institutions of higher learning to use low-power radio or TV transmission solely for the propagation of quality education to large masses of students and others according to Government of India (1999). Planners in India try to revitalize the education system, utilizing all available technologies.

One of the UGC’s pioneering efforts is Countrywide Classroom (CWCR) which was launched in 1984. Its objective is to upgrade, update and enrich the education and to make quality education accessible to students. The CWCR project of UGC is intended to make best teachers and high quality audio visual materials accessible to college students in the country through the vast TV network already in place in India. CWCR programmes attempt to overcome the obsolescence of syllabus and present the latest advancements in all fields including the newly emerging ones. The primary target group of CWCR is the undergraduate students of the colleges spread over the entire country. Other students can also benefit from these telecasts. Currently it is reaching a wide cross-section of society (Rao 2001).

Education and Research Network (ERNET) was initiated in 1986 by the Department of Electronics, with funding support from the Government of India and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), involving eight Indian premier educational institutions. ERNET provides state of the art
communication infrastructure and services to academic research institutions and government organizations. ERNET has made a significant contribution to the emergence of networking in the country. It practically brought the internet to India and has built up national capabilities in the area of networking. It has not only succeeded in building a large network that provides various facilities to the intellectual segment of Indian society the research and education community. UNDP has lauded ERNET as one of the most successful programmes. Now, Indian government and some other bodies had taken more efforts to create more networks and websites for the purpose of educational development.

Training and Development Communication Channel (TDCC) was introduced in 1993 by DECU - ISRO (Development and Educational Communication Unit - Indian Space Research Organization) who pioneered the system of one-way video and two-way audio communication systems for educational application. This system is satellite based and works on extended C-Band. One of the teaching ends is located in the Electronic Media Production Centre studios of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and the images and voices of the experts/resource persons from the studio are sent over to a mobile uplink facility called TRACT (Transportable Remote Area Communications Terminal), which is parked just outside the studio building.

Gyan Darshan (GD) a 24 hours service was launched in the year 2000 to serve as a TV Channel totally devoted to education and development. Lately, the system was expanded as a bouquet of channels operating in the digital mode, sharing the same transponder space in the C Band. One of these six Gyan Darshan channels, GD2 is reserved for live interactive programmes, including Tele Conferencing. The other Gyan Darshan channels are Vyas and ekalyva.
1.3 NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

India’s National Policy on Education - 1986 made an effort to focus the nation’s attention on the problems of education and emphasized the use of electronic media for improving the quality of education. But resources for formal education in schools, colleges and universities are found to be limited. Further, the extension of quality education to remote and rural regions becomes a Herculean task for India with multi-lingual and multi-cultural population separated by vast geographical distances, and many inaccessible terrains.

The lack of adequate educational infrastructure and non-availability of good teachers in sufficient numbers adversely affect the efforts made in education according to Sekar (2004). In order to correct the imbalances in the infrastructure and shortage of competent teachers the planners have derived ways of utilizing various electronic media in the field of education. In this age of a techno-scientific revolution, the sheer quantity of knowledge and information is expanding exponentially. The needs of education constantly growing and student population are burgeoning. For this purpose new communication technologies like radio, TV and internet are exploited vastly in India. Most of the advanced countries have adopted these technologies for the development of higher education.

In this context, the quality of training and teaching in higher education institutions also demand urgent attention. The advances in ICT provide great opportunities to enhance the quality and reach of teaching and learning in higher education with both on-campus and distance education initiatives. All those who require updating of their knowledge and life-long education can now be benefited by the modern facilities of communication. They also provide increased access to information sources and facilitate
communication among researchers and teachers and the building of networks of institutions and scholars.

The aim of telecasts and broadcasts of educational programmes is to upgrade, update and enrich the quality of education while extending its reach. The research study assumes significance as it proposes to assess the extent to which these aims of Indian policy on educational development have been achieved.

According to Saiprasad (2001), there is a need to assess the knowledge gains accruing to the members of the target group as a result of listening, viewing the educational programmes through available media. At present, data on benefits derived by students out of using educational mass media are available mainly in the form of feedback letters reaching the channels. Occasionally, individual producers of the programmes like Media Research Centers and Media Organizations have been conducting research within local audiences, about specific programmes using separate research methodologies and design. However, there has been no study in the Indian context that spans all the different media within the same study, covering respondents of multiple locations, modes of study, medium of instruction, gender, subject of study and other strata. The present study is an attempt to bridge this research gap.

The findings of the research study are expected to provide usage patterns of each particular medium, comprising of different educational programmes, by a large section of the student population, taken as a whole. Futuristic research is useful for prediction, forecast and envisioning. Through existing research, efforts in terms of evaluation are being made to improve the programme quality in terms of inputs at the production end. At the receivers’ end, research is confined to eliciting reactions on programme quality and
sporadic assessment of viewership patterns. Few efforts were made in the past to assess the actual knowledge gains and to relate them to the programme components. Thus, there is a need to explore and find out the utility of new media technologies, which are being used for education now and project their future utility.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

On the one hand, there have been huge investments by the educational sector on the establishment and maintenance of educational media for students. On the other hand, there has been very little knowledge about the usage of these media by the students targeted by them. There is a need to understand the opinions of the target group on the functioning of the educational media and elicit their suggestions towards the improvement of educational media in terms of content, duration, timings and methods of communication available through them. Various media has to be compared in order to identify the most effective medium.

In terms of reach, popularity and variety the growth of the electronic media radio and TV has been phenomenal, but there is no corresponding growth in their education-related usage. Lack of publicity due to absence of promotional activities, unavailability of transmission signals and lack of interactive nature of their programmes have been reported to have contributed to the under utilization of educational media. In the case of internet medium, the problem has been one of access and affordability. In the case of the other educational media, the concern is about availability to and under-utilization by students.

There are several socio-economic factors that divide different segments of population leading to unequal distribution of facilities for
educational media and consequential deprivation of the less advantaged among the student community. For instance, rural students are said to have less familiarity on the availability and contents of various media inputs. Similarly, the students of distance education and regional language medium classes also face limitations in their utilization of educational media resources compared to students from regular streams and English medium classes. These factors are at the backdrop of the research study.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To find out the extent to which various electronic media such as Radio, TV, Internet, CD-ROM, Tele conferencing and Video conferencing are accessible to college students in Tamil Nadu.

2. To trace the patterns and usage of various electronic media among the college students in Tamil Nadu with regard to education and other activities.

3. To find out the effectiveness of electronic media in terms of benefits and need fulfillment as perceived by the students for educational purpose.

4. To find out the differences between regular and distance mode students in terms of access, usage and perceived effectiveness of electronic media in Tamil Nadu.

5. To find out the differences between urban and rural students in terms of access, usage and perceived effectiveness of electronic media in Tamil Nadu.
6. To find out the differences between male and female students, English and Tamil medium students and students from various courses and year of study in terms of access, usage and perceived effectiveness of electronic media in Tamil Nadu.

7. To find out the opinions of students on how to make electronic media more beneficial towards the student community.

1.6 CHAPTERIZATION

1. The study has been presented in seven chapters including the introductory chapter.

2. The second chapter presents the ‘Review of literature’ with special reference to the studies related to role, impact, effectiveness and importance of electronic media i.e. Radio, TV, Internet, Tele Conferencing and Video Conferencing.

3. The third chapter gives a detailed account on electronic media and education in India.

4. The fourth chapter presents the methodology adopted in the study.

5. The fifth chapter presents the results obtained and discussion there of. The presentation consists of sample composition, usage pattern of media, perceived benefits of the various electronic media - radio, TV and internet, CDs, Tele Conferencing and Video Conferencing and suggestions elicited from the respondents.

6. The sixth chapter presents the major findings and the inferences drawn from them.

7. The seventh chapter presents suggestions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.