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TEACHER TRAINING BY RADIO

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will examine a variety of uses of radio for the training of teachers with special reference to experiences gained in Kenya over the last twenty years. Radio, used by itself, has many limitations as a medium for training teachers, but when used in suitable combinations with other distance teaching media, its effectiveness is greatly enhanced. There are sufficient examples drawn from different parts of the world which illustrate the application of radio as an effective tool for teacher education and training particularly when used in combination with printed materials and occasional face-to-face instruction. This is sometimes referred to as a "three-way teaching system." The paper will attempt to give an overview of the progress made in Kenya in the area of teacher training through the use of distance teaching methods, and to indicate possible new directions for the future.

WHAT IS DISTANCE TEACHING?

I would like, at the outset, to define what we mean by distance teaching. **Distance teaching refers to an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and time from the learner.** This definition stresses the organization of both the teaching and the learning in which students of a variety of ages and backgrounds will study either in groups or individually, at home or at their places of work, using centrally produced self-instructional materials, distributed through a variety of media, and with regular communication and feedback between the students and the teachers.

Distance teaching may draw from an increasingly wide range of methods and technological equipment in its attempt to support students. In practice, distance teaching usually involves a combination of media such as print and broadcasts with some face-to-face instruction. The distance teaching approach also stresses the physical separation of teacher and student, but the teaching and learning processes are conducted through a suitable combination of media which include some form of face-to-face study.

In applying distance teaching methods to teacher training, we can distinguish four main elements which may appear in a variety of combinations. These elements are correspondence lessons, broadcasting, face-to-face tuition and project work. For purposes of this paper, we shall concentrate on the broadcasting element, and specifically the radio broadcasting, which, for Kenya and most developing countries, has proved to be more easily accessible, relatively cheaper in terms of technology and expertise and more flexible for use in teacher training.

TWO DECADES AGO

It was in 1964, one year after Independence, that the Kenya Education Commission headed by Professor Simeon Ominde recommended how the educational system of the new Kenya Government should be structured. Impressed with the potential of radio for adult education, the Ominde Commission recommended that the government should "provide a combination of lessons by radio with an approved correspondence course" for teacher training. Thus, the Radio/Correspondence Course Unit was established at the University of Nairobi in 1966. Its main objectives were:

1. to develop correspondence and other distance teaching methods for spreading education to all adults and out-of-school youths in Kenya;

2. to act as a "service agency" for Government Ministries in their training and upgrading programs where correspondence methods are applicable;

3. to develop expertise in distance teaching methods and the evaluation of the effectiveness of these methods; and

4. to set up flexible administrative machinery to deal with correspondence courses at higher levels, including degree courses by external studies.

The initial project funding was obtained from USAID and the Government of Kenya. When U.S. assistance ended in 1971, the Ministry of Education assumed the responsibility for funding the Correspondence Course Unit through an annual grant which has continued to date.

The first ten years saw a rapid growth in popularity of radio/correspondence courses for adults and young people who were not in the formal educational system. The courses led to the following public examinations:

1. Kenya Junior Secondary Examination (KJSE)

2. East African Certificate of Education (EACE)

About 90 percent of the students enrolled in these courses were practicing teachers who learned that they would automatically be promoted on passing KJSE or EACE examinations. Enrollments in the above courses totaled about 8,000 during the first ten years, and the examination success rates averaged about 55 percent.

One additional program was mounted in 1969 jointly by the Kenya Institute of Education and the Correspondence Course Unit for in-service training of unqualified teachers through radio, correspondence and residential study. By the end of 1972, about 10,000 teachers successfully completed these upgrading courses and were awarded Primary Teachers Certificates.

It was not difficult to forecast the potential impact that numerous promotions of teachers each year would have on the national education budget. The availability of radio/correspondence courses to upgrade teacher qualifications and consequently the salary status clearly hastened the crisis in the educational budget and ironically contributed to the removal of the major incentive for teachers to enroll in these courses.

The Ministry of Education eliminated automatic promotions for primary teachers in 1974. This decision brought the near collapse of the Correspondence Course Unit which was quick to redirect its attention to other potential audiences, and sought to develop commercial courses leading to the Accounts Clerk National Certificate (ACNC) in 1976. Thus the Correspondence Course Unit clearly demonstrated its ability to adapt to the rapidly changing educational picture by offering the more popular courses.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

There are four developments that have taken place in recent years in Kenya in the field of education and which will have far-reaching implications as far as distance teaching is concerned.

First, there has been a rapid growth in adult literacy and adult education over the last six years. This has come as a result of a Presidential directive in December 1978 when His Excellency President Daniel arap Moi declared war against illiteracy. Consequently a Department of Adult Education was established within the Ministry of Culture and Social Services to develop and administer adult literacy programs throughout the country. Some 3,000 adult literacy teachers were immediately recruited from among primary school teachers and employed on a full-time basis. At the same time, they were enrolled in a three-year in-service training program during which they have to complete 6 study units in the following areas:

1. Methods of teaching adults
2. Psychology of adult learning
3. Human relations and communication
4. Curriculum design and development
5. Policy and philosophy of adult education in Kenya
6. Adult education and development in Kenya
7. Effective evaluation of adult education
8. Introduction to Kiswahili

In addition, there are radio programs which are broadcast on the Voice of Kenya to supplement the correspondence lessons and also to expand the general knowledge and awareness on the part of the listener. The final assessment for the award of the Certificate in Foundations of Adult Education will consist of

3 written examination papers, continuous assessment and practical teaching assessment.

The second recent development has been the restructuring of the Kenyan educational system into an 8:4:4 pattern which will start with the primary level in January 1985. This has led to recruitment of an additional 12,000 untrained primary teachers on top of the existing 40,000 untrained teachers in the schools. Inevitably, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has revived the In-service Training Program which had been suspended in 1974. The first batch of 3,600 teachers has already been enrolled and are following correspondence courses, supplemented by regular radio broadcasts and residential face-to-face tuition during the school holidays.

The third development is the establishment of the College of Adult and Distance Education within the University of Nairobi. This has given pertinent recognition of adult education as a discipline in the University, and distance teaching as a method through which most adults in Kenya will pursue their education and training.

The fourth and most recent development is the proposal to establish an External Degree Program of the University of Nairobi. The first courses to be offered will be for the Bachelor of Education (Arts) degree in the 1985 academic year, and the Bachelor of Education (Science) degree in the following year.

In all these distance teaching programs, the accent is on academic and professional training of teachers at the various levels, but without removing teachers from the classrooms. These teachers are studying largely on their own, by correspondence methods of instruction prepared by the College of Adult and Distance Education, supplemented by radio lessons broadcast on the Voice of Kenya and occasional face-to-face instruction conducted in residence during the vacations.

With the rising demand for more qualified and trained teachers at all levels, it has become evident that distance teaching methods are the most feasible for training the required teachers on locale.

It is also evident that radio will continue to play a prominent role in our distance teaching programs.

Radio reaches our audience instantly and can provide a liveliness, stimulation and immediacy which are difficult to achieve through print alone. Radio also lends itself to a variety of uses in dialogue, drama, discussion, question and answer, sound effects, music, folklore, and so on. Radio is also excellent for pacing the distance learner, and for updating information and encouraging dialogue between the learner and the teacher. Radio can also enable other teachers to eavesdrop on more experienced radio teachers and thus learn something about classroom skills. Therefore radio enables us to multiply the effectiveness of one good teacher many times. The combination of different media also enables us to capitalize on the strengths of each medium to balance any weaknesses.

GENERAL LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE KENYA EXPERIENCE

There are a number of general lessons and conclusions which could be drawn from the Kenyan experience and which could apply more generally to other parts of the world. First, the project has demonstrated the need for a definite commitment from the government in an educational venture. Its success has, to a considerable extent, been due to the close consultation and cooperation between various bodies—the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and the University of Nairobi. The fact that the Correspondence Course Unit was set up within the University enabled it to attract and retain staff of high caliber and also gave it access to a wide range of expertise throughout the country. This has resulted in a high quality of the instructional materials produced, the radio programs and the research component of the whole exercise.

Second, the flexibility of the CCU's structure and operation have made it possible to cope with the changing educational needs of the country and to cater to different groups of students at different levels throughout Kenya, including the more remote parts.

Over the years, the CCU has developed into a viable service unit which offers specialized pedagogical expertise and administrative machinery for teaching at a distance at various levels including external degree courses due to start in 1984.

Third, although radio is the most ubiquitous tool for motivating distance learners and for carrying information most widely and effectively, it has its limitations in the quantity of knowledge and information it can effectively impart at any one time. The printed correspondence materials can do that. Again radio cannot effectively teach skills or change attitudes. These are best done in a face-to-face learning situation where group discussion, demonstration, repetition, practice and corrections can be carried out.

Fourth, the project has demonstrated one of the advantages of distance teaching, namely, that in the long term it is cheap and cost effective. It can exploit economies of scale, it can make full use of existing facilities and services from other institutions, it can make more efficient use of the time and skills of educators and trainers who are in short supply. The adults training through distance teaching methods can continue in their jobs and earn their livelihood and therefore, far from being a financial burden on the country, contribute to the economy.

Fifth, related to the overall issue of costs, is the returns to the country from educational expenditure in terms not only of increased trained manpower but also of the more ephemeral qualities of life which result from an all-round improvement in educational standards. Some of the incidental benefits which distance teaching media can bring include, for instance, the extra numbers of adult literacy teachers who share correspondence course materials with the enrolled teachers, the large numbers of eavesdroppers who listen to the radio broadcasts, or other adults and youths who may be encouraged to take up part-time studies for their self improvement as a result of success scored by their colleagues.

Sixth, it should be borne in mind that in-service training of teachers is only a first step towards improvement of educational programs, and that the newly qualified teachers by themselves will not be able to bring about the much-needed change in education unless efforts are made to reform the related aspects of curricula, examinations, supervision, instructional materials, and the like. Educational change implies changes in the concepts, attitudes and the behaviour of those inside as well as outside the system. The newly-trained teachers should therefore be encouraged to experiment with any new methods or skills learned during their training, and to apply the advice and directives they may receive from their supervisors in order to test their suitability or otherwise in actual life situations. A teacher who finds that a new approach to a subject has direct functional application and relevance to his daily work is more likely to take keen interest in learning it and in seeking more information on his own than the one who learns it just for the sake of satisfying the examiner, the supervisor or the employer.

The seventh point to emphasize is in connection with the training of the educational supervisors and administrators. In order to ensure that suitable support and guidance will be available to the teachers in the field, it is necessary that the people to provide these services should themselves be well-equipped to perform their tasks. It has been suggested that distance teaching should be used to impart the latest information about curricula changes and educational policies to the supervisors, and administrators in addition to the practicing teachers, so that both the administrators and the educators can be on an equal footing on the long road to educational improvement.

It is for this reason that we have stressed the need to view any system of in-service training, not as one which has a beginning and an end but one which is spread out over the entire professional career of the educator and which reaches out to those who provide supporting and advisory services. It should be considered as a long-term, open-ended system with many entrances and exits, which should be planned and coordinated—in other words, a system of "continuing" teacher education.

Obviously, the use of traditional methods to meet these changing needs will be slow and expensive. We have suggested that perhaps distance teaching might be the most practical and most effective way of disseminating the idea of "continuing" teacher education as rapidly and as widely as possible.

In conclusion one should put a caveat to the applicability of distance teaching, namely, that it will not solve all the educational problems in a country. But, given a chance, distance teaching can offer one more tool with which to bring about development.

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