

RADIO LECTURES IN GHANA: AN INNOVATION FOR THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

By

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ABSTRACT

In the developing countries of the world, Nigeria and Ghana especially have consistently been battling with large enrollment of students into the institutions of higher learning. The attendant problem of the traditional instructional delivery system that poses a serious challenge to the 21st century educational development therefore needs innovation. Can instructional radio broadcast be of help?

It is common knowledge to report that poor funding of universities in west Africa by various governments is no news anymore. However, there are other issues of acute shortage of staff, space, infrastructures, facilities and lack of quality relevant instructional materials that need urgent solution. There is overcrowding of learners in the classrooms, and the alarming increase in qualified university admission seekers annually runs to a million especially in Nigeria. An added problem is that only about 10% of these candidates get placement in universities, the spillover of the admission seekers often get stranded. This is a problem that calls for innovation in instructional delivery systems in African universities if the demand for mass education would be met.

Radio lecture broadcasts it is felt have potentials to ameliorate the problem of delivery because of the attributes of its immediate distance coverage, repetition and cost effectiveness. The paper is an action research report that present the breakthrough of radio lectures to a large class in the university of education in Ghana. The reaction of the community to the innovation, problems encountered, lessons learned and the prospects of radio for teaching are highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

The belief that 'teaching is a serious business' is not just a slogan anymore, but a way of perceiving the problems posed by the twenty first century globalization.

The development of education has however witnessed serious defect in terms of adequate infrastructure, facilities and space. Over population of learners have continued to increase geometrically without a corresponding increase in trained teachers. In the same vein, overcrowding of learners in most institution of higher learning has become a common thing in Nigeria and Ghana, where a large percentage of qualified undergraduate and post basic schools students could not get admission as at when due anymore. The spill over have continued to add up to the number of unadmitted candidates year by year. Therefore, there is a serious bottleneck that hinder educational progress. This is the problem of the developing countries of the world, Nigeria and Ghanaian tertiary institutions and especially the University of Education, Winneba Ghana is an example.

Compounding to the problem of education further the number of qualified staff is not commensurate to the number of students being taught in the class. It is also regretted to note that most teachers are very resistant to utilize modern technologies to improve their teaching {Namududu 1989, in Sentenza Kajabi 1992}

There is acute shortage of textbooks, and needed instructional materials are either not available and even if it is available, they are not used. Audio visual materials that are used for teaching of large class are either obsolete or teachers are not using them effectively and efficiently for enrichment of teaching because of lack of knowledge. The technology that should be mastered are not learned for lack of conviction, for value of change and persons to give the methodologies needed are added problem, [Namududu 1989]. However, it is right to say that some or all identified problems are responsible for the high failure rate in some subject teaching areas, since the teacher is overburdened with too many students in an overcrowded class.

If teachers fail to improve the knowledge they have had, and refuse to update knowledge on the use of modern technologies of the twenty first century, the problem of improving the learners competence would be on the increase. The traditional methods of instructing the learners through the 'talk and chalk' methods is seen as a weakness under the present circumstance as learners will have to resolve to rote learning, memorization and - regurgitation of knowledge without adequate mastery of facts. Learning by fact and memorization may however not improve acquisition always. But it is also required for skills to be mastered for meaningful learning and to be useful in the future.

Modern System of Learning

The Greeks (saphists) were the first to practice teaching as few individual students were taught directly. The sons of the wealthy received instructions in situations that can be classified as one to one. The system of learning that assumed individualized instruction are the ideas of skimmers who first developed the teaching machine. It was from this method of instruction that the Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) and the Computer Managed Instruction (CMI) took their root. Although modeling and mentoring are considered as methods of instruction; the method of visual and audio visual approach to instruction is considered as having significant role to play in modern instructional delivery system .The radio especially makes diffusion and dissemination of information, knowledge and facts possible to an audience.

eaniEmberga-Ikpah (1991) remarked that the break through in telecommunication and education has made teleconferencing possible and easy in the technological development of fibre optics. With fibre optics, telephone could be used for communication with distant learners. The field of electronics still has to explore more as the past centuries have witnessed major exploitation in fibre optics.

In the mid 1920s, professor scientists made the use of radio instruction possible at the University of Wisconsin Madison. They placed microphone in classrooms and broad casting to those who had radio receivers tuned in.

Foster (1982) put it that the aim was to provide an equivalence for secondary and college education. While the University of Wisconsin is credited for the breakthrough in educational use of teleconferencing, the University of Education, Winneba Ghana pioneered radio lectures at the tertiary institutions in 1999 in Ghana. (UCEW, web .p.).

The write - up presents a brief of the innovation of radio lectures in the University of Education, Winneba Ghana. It presents the summary of the reaction of the teachers, the students and the community to the innovation. It presents problems, lessons learned and the prospects.

Evolution of Radio at the University of Education, Ghana

In knowledge based global economy, international development experts' stress that the wealth of a nation is directly linked to its capacity for innovations, which in turn depends on the strength of its science and technology sectors. (Theroux, 2006). The evolution of radio lectures at Winneba Campus was premised on the need to solve the vexing problems of inadequacies of coping with the teaching in large class however, it is the application of knowledge of technology and creativity that are responsible for the innovation.

Radio lectures at the tertiary institutions in Ghana was first introduced on May 10, 1999. The presentation was first delivered by the author himself. The first Radio Lecture made room to discuss the challenges faced in teaching the educational technology course. The session allowed participants to the public address. Complaint of students about communication problem, accent, diction and overcrowding were discussed and this first session led to the decision to use the functioning Windy Bay radio -98.3 FM, a station that was previously used only for student news and musical entertainment.

Reaction of the Community to Radio Lectures

Acceptance of the first radio lecture and the success achieved led to the popularity of radio-communication among students. However, it cannot be confirmed that the radio lectures was massively found acceptable by the community when it first started but the students did. This method received high appreciation, as the resultant stress and time in teaching large class were reduced.

Students' preparation for the second series of radio lecture attested to radio acceptance. Comment from the university community was also quite encouraging. It was found that the use of textbook material as guide by the students, for subsequent topics to be covered in the radio lecture series revealed students' maximum delight in instructional radio.

Apart from the writers contribution to the development of radio lectures each department had members that presented lectures on the radio. Lot of lecturers also attended the radio lecture programmes and workshops that were organized for teachers between July 1999 and March 2000.

The support given to the radio lectures by the University administration was very commendable. It was not too long when the experimental radio lectures started, that a foreign organization donated some equipment, a sound proofed and acoustic radio room to the University. It can be said that it was the enthusiasm and interest shown by the Vice Chancellor; Professor Anamuah Jophus as well as the commitment of the author that made the community of the University of Education at Winneba to accept the innovation.

Radio Lectures Development, Problems and Lessons Learned

The stress of students' and teachers' was reduced considerably and closer relationship was fostered between learners as they shared transistor radio and listened to lectures in a relaxed mood, either in their rooms or in the field. Problem of space overcrowding was solved temporary when radio lesson was on. The consistent breakdown in communication and lack of understanding arising from pronunciations of words, diction and accent of the foreign teacher was greatly reduced. Presentation was meaningful and lectures on radio took around 35-40 minutes.

The radio, apart from serving as motivational factor to learners, also made the teachers to learn the art of presentation. Lessons were planned, scripts were written and presented. The writing of script was mandatory as much research had to be done on topics presented.

Writing and rewriting of scripts enabled the users of radio to master the skill of communication faster. The problem of students' questions were solved through a telephone in system. The workshops that were organized for the lecturers by the university administration motivated as well as equipped users of the radio. Personal contacts and remunerations were however found necessary. Since the encouragement of script writing was very tasking, the University administration had to encourage the users of the radio by giving them commensurate financial support.

Problems encountered in radio lecture

The perception of students and lecturers on the innovation and how some of the fears were allayed are listed below:

- Lack of virtual interaction between students and Teachers:
Separation of teachers physically from learners and absence of face to face contact was considered as an impediment to progressive learning. To circumvent this obstacle, lecturers met their students in a preparatory class before going on air.
- Two way communication system:
The issue of a two way communication system arose as most students wondered how they would ask their questions when radio instruction was on. This problem was solved using a telephone in system that was put in the studio for giving response to questions asked.
- Role of academic community:
The supportive role of the academic community was initially difficult until series of workshops were organized for them.
- Problem of transmission and distance of coverage:
The weather sometimes was not favourable for radio lecture presentation. This problem was minimized when a powerful transmitter was bought, and a higher antenna was put in place.
- Time for scripts writing:
Colleagues were stressed, as much work had to be

done in writing and rewriting the scripts.

- Preference for the traditional mode of instruction:
Since all lecture notes were already intact, there was problem of sourcing for new information. Lecturers were motivated to use the library for sourcing for information.
- Mindset:
It was only the determined lecturers that eventually used the radio for lecture presentation. The need for the use of the radio had to be made clear to its users.
- Inadequate provision of reading materials for the students' use:
Lecturers had learnt to write scripts for journal publication, and they also wrote textbooks for the courses taught.

Prospects of Radio Lectures in Nigeria and in Ghana

In the 1950s, radio lessons in English was relayed to primary school children in Nigeria. However, it was only on 7th February 2007, the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission granted over thirty three licenses for use of privately owned and institutional /community broadcasts. This is a commendable effort with the hope that instructional radio and television broadcasts would eventually lead to mass education of learners. It is also obvious that the costs of education will be grossly reduced after the initial investment.

Quality effectiveness of broadcasts appears to be achievable as more broadcasting houses in Nigeria get specialized. The experienced broadcasters are going to be involved in instructing the users of the medium in the tertiary institutions. With over 44 radio stations in Ghana, and numerous radio and television station in Nigeria there is hope for mature partnership in broadcasting in terms of knowledge and technology sharing. Instruction through the radio creates the opportunity for sound recording, the recorded lectures are thereby made more permanent for latter use. The opportunity of playback is also an advantage as recorded tapes can be used for teaching in the absence of the lecturer. Radio lectures also offer the opportunity for pace-learning and independent learning.

Arising from the opportunity that radio would provide for the lecturers and students, it was felt that constant supply of electricity will be needed for the development of instructional radio broadcast in the developing countries of the world. Even then, considering the population of school going children that are not able to attend, radio broadcast to the rural community in Africa and other developing countries have proved its potential need to be exploited for lecture presentation to a large class.

Conclusion

It is still believed that the developing countries of the world are consumers of refined products from the west. With the breakthrough of radio innovation at the university of Education at Winneba Ghana, where radio was first used for lectures in tertiary institution, considering the fact that Africa has mirages of problems affecting her education and economic development, the west can also become a consumer of the of imported technology from Africa.

If teachers in the University of Education could have a change in their 'mindset' and take to the culture of using radio for their lecture presentations, they would be pushing back the frontiers of knowledge and that of technology.

It was recommended that the university should work towards acquisition of the state of the art equipment. A change from the use of analogue to digitalization would be most desirable than ever, now that the distance education programme is being embraced by higher educational institutions in Nigeria and Ghana.

With the internet and availability of the digitalized equipment in place, radio can very easily be linked to computers in the university library and to far away places for knowledge dissemination to distance learners who are more likely to appreciate the new technology. Accessibility of learners to the internet is seen as a prerequisite for all in other to meet the goal of the development of education in Africa.

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