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Effective Use of Radio for Development of Literacy Education in Nigeria

Okemakinde, Sunday O. *PhD*

*Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education,
Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo State, Nigeria*

Abstract

Radio is a scientific device that functions as an effective auditory instrument for communication.

It provides affordable access to information, a powerful medium o widest audience specifically suited to reaching remote community and vulnerable learners. It plays an important role in literacy education. It is not only informing, but also inspires adults to become literate. Despite increasing efforts to combat illiteracy in the country, the number of non-literates is still out stepping educational efforts. Traditional methods of highly repetitive (drill) tasks that emphasized memorization (rote learning), alone cannot reverse the trend. Given that radio is heavily used by lower income and less educated people, literacy education utilizing radio can be applied to reduce the level of illiteracy in the country. This paper therefore examines the roles of radio in the teaching and learning of literacy education and how it serves as spring board in reducing non-literates in Nigeria. The author recommended among others that, the states and local governments should awake to their responsibilities and commitments to their people who are beneficiaries of literacy by radio as a part of efforts to reduce non-literates in the country.

Keywords: Radio, Use of Radio, Literacy Education, Development, Teaching and Learning

Introduction

Radio is an effective audio aid device and most significant medium for literacy education that is capable of providing valuable

assistance to the facilitators by presenting useful information and learning experiences to a large number of learners. In recognition of the importance of radio as a powerful medium with the ability of reaching widest audience including those in remote community and vulnerable people, the Member State of UNESCO proclaimed in 2011 and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012 as an International Day, February 13, became World Radio Day (WRD).

UNESCO also, officially proclaimed 8 September, 2016 International Literacy Day to promote literacy as an instrument to empower individuals, communities and societies. The target of the 2016 International Day is that by the year 2030 all youths and substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy. Decree number 17 of June 26, 1990 also, established National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) but did not take off fully until July 5, 1991 when its Governing Board was inaugurated (NMEC), the government institution charged with the responsibility of making literate all those who for one reason or the other did not or cannot benefit from the formal school system. These include out-of-school youths, children in the street, women in purdah, victims of teenage motherhood (VVF), Nomadic illiterate people, Almajiris and other migrant fishing folks. The beneficiaries should be able to use the literacy skill acquired in their daily socio-economic activities of themselves as individuals in particular and the nation at large (Abiodun, 2011; UNESCO, 2016; UNDP, 2020; Sanusi, 2021).

Despite the efforts put in place by Nigerian government in combating illiteracy rate, the number of illiterates is growing in the country. According to Adamu (2021), 76 million Nigerian are illiterates, 60% of the illiterates are women who generally are responsible for nurturing and raising children. This means that the children of these women are unlikely to benefit from motherly support for their children. Other groups of illiterates include school age children, out-of-school children and men often in the rural areas or urban slum. More than 6.9 million children 6-11 years are not in school; drop-out

rate in primary school is 9.3%. This may not be unconnected with the fact that some facilitators in literacy education programmes are still making use of traditional method of instruction.

Traditional method of instruction involves a situation where the change agent has full responsibility for making decisions about what will be learnt, how it will be learnt, when it will be learnt, and if the material has been learnt. The method is based on the assumption that learners need to know only what the instructor teaches them (Adam, 2021). If the goals of reducing illiteracy rates in the country are to be accomplished, the current formal approach to literacy education should be complemented with other strategies. Effective use of radio can be applied to the reduction/eradication of illiteracy. Radio is important, not only in the direct instruction of illiterates, but equally in the mobilization and motivation of those who are literate and in the training of instructors.

NMEC & UNICEF, 2010, conducted the baseline study aimed at assessing the needs and shortcomings in the delivery of Basic Education through the electronics media (essentially, radio and television). The study assessed the availability and utilization of facilities needed for Basic Education. The institution therefore settled for the radio as the commonest, cheapest, all-purpose means of mass communication and most easily affordable medium for reducing illiteracy rates in the country.

Radio allows us to overcome the intimidation efforts, or other barriers, especially illiterate adults. The conceptual idea is that over the course of a period of time of the programme, those illiterate adults will become literate. It therefore naturally promotes behavioural change among facilitators and learners. Through the radio, one single facilitator can reach many learners at once. The adult learners do not have to go anywhere since they can learn in their bedrooms using their radios. We do not need many facilitators and professionals for the programme. No schools are required for learners by radio. It keeps families together because the whole family, young and old can come together to learn and support each other in the learning process. People gain a lot of confidence and enjoy doing their work by themselves. The community is a major

stakeholder and has special roles to play in this project. The community needs to support the facilitator and accept the programme (EAEA, 2015; Sanusi, Talabi, Adelabu & Alade, 2021). All these attributes of radio, makes it a relevant medium for literacy education delivery in any developing countries (Nigeria inclusive).

Literacy by radio is a process of promoting the learning of reading, writing and computing through the use of radio. It can also be referred to as a strategy for effective delivery of basic literacy to a large number of learners scattered over a large geographical area. This is because it overcomes whatever geographical barrier to its reception by listeners, whether they are in the valley or top of the mountain, they receive the message of the radio. It is a socialization process as it gives learners the opportunity to improve culturally and socially through enlightenment, entertainment programmes. It is a powerful means of communicating idea, information and knowledge on various issues under the sun (Aderinoye & Olajide 2004; Odiaka, 2018; Afriati & Aditia 2020).

In essence, the main objective of literacy by radio is to increase access to adult and non-formal education learners to opportunities for literacy education programmes which in effect will increase the reading, writing numeracy and computing skills of all non-formal education learners irrespective of age, gender, socio-cultural and economic circumstances so as to improve human quality for development in Nigeria. By extension, literacy by radio will bring about behavioural change of both the learners and facilitators for better livelihoods by exposing them to social, health, and economic, civil and vocational education at the basic literacy level (Anaele, Onyebuchi, & Obayi, 2019; Friedman, 2020).

In Nigeria, literacy programmes aired through radio using the Cuban method is carried out in two phases: (1) The radio listening session and (2) The face-to-face session – the Cuban method is a mixed method. It is mixed because ideas and elements from different methods of literacy were brought together. Radio's involvement in supporting and strengthening text could occur before, during, and after the writing process: facilitators could provide direct lessons via radio on the written material, provide

ongoing engagement and consultation with the learner while working on the assignments, and finally, provide direct feedback on complete and evaluated work. It also, recognizes the fact that education cannot be separated from the culture of the people, since culture and education are interwoven. It adapts its techniques to the culture of any country where it is practiced.

In spite of the efforts put in place by Nigerian government, the evaluation reports of literacy by radio in 36 states and FCT of Nigeria conducted by NMEC & UNICEF (2010), revealed that only 12 states were 83.3% successful coupled with the fact that she is still ranked among the ten nations of the world that experience high illiteracy rate. Literacy by radio failed to accomplish its aims and objectives in Nigeria due to many constraints, among which are: policy, technical, monitoring and evaluation issues among others. This paper therefore aimed at addressing some of the issues raised and how to intensify efforts in the use of radio for the development of literacy education in Nigeria in order to reach the teeming population of illiterates especially through the radio.

Concept of Literacy and Non-Literacy

Literacy is the ability to read, write and numerate with understanding and being able to use the skills in one's daily socio-economic activities. While Basic literacy is a literacy programme (reading, writing and computing) organized for the beginners or people considered to be non-literate (Olatunji, 2010). In this context, literacy is viewed as a set of tangible skills particularly the cognitive skills of reading and writing that are dependent on the context in which they are acquired and the background of the person who acquire them. Non-literate refers to inability to read, write and numerate and unable to use the skills in one's daily socio-economic activities. Literacy education is an important agent for development of an individual, community, social and the nation as a whole. There are certain prescribed goals that are realized through literacy education in the area of economic growth, healthcare, political and social awareness, political stability, self-reliance, national identity, cultural correlation and so on.

The Dominant Traditional Method of Teaching Literacy in Nigeria

Teaching is an act, which involves a cluster of activities that a tutor may be engaging in during a specific time or period, either in or out of the classroom. Teaching in literacy programmes has for a long time dominated by traditional method. The traditional strategies include highly repetitive (drill) tasks that established memorization (rote learning), while de-emphasizing critical thinking, problem solving, metacognitive and social skills. Learners spoke very little, the facilitator spoke a lot, and behaviour management was often brutal by today's standards (Adam, 2021).

Shortcomings Associated with the Method

There is no doubt about the fact that there are many shortcoming associated with traditional method of teaching literacy in Nigeria. Among them include the following:

- The learner is dependent: Tutor directs what, when, how a subject is learnt and tests that it has been learnt instead of moving towards independence (self-directing), where tutor encourages and nurtures this movement.
- Teaching methods are didactic instead of discussion, problem solving and so on methods of teaching.
- Learners learn what the society expects them to. In essence, the curriculum is standardized. However, learners in literacy programme should be allowed to learn what they need to know, so that learning programmes were organized around life application.
- Curriculum is organized subjects by subjects without taken into account the learning experience of the learners.

Complementing the Traditional Methods of Literacy Teaching with the Use of Radio

Radio is a way to send electromagnetic signals over a long distance, to deliver information from one place to another. It is the technology that allows for the transmission of sound or other signals by modulation of electromagnetic waves. Radio technology was first developed during the late nineteenth century and came into popularity as an educational medium during the early twentieth century. It has been used in different formats for educational

purposes the world round. Although, often overshadowed as educational medium vis-à-vis other technologies such as television, radio remains a viable medium that has proven educational worth in terms of both pedagogical importance and geographical reach (Chandar and Sharma, 2003; Abiona and Osu, 2015).

Radio has been used in different formats for educational purposes throughout the world. The most accessible source of new technology in education is educational radio and that most people can be reached through radio, at relatively low cost. It has the powerful means of passing information and provides academic support to the listener. It can improve educational quality and relevance; lowered educational costs; improved access to education, particularly for disadvantaged grouped. Through radio, communication is made effective and this involves the process by which information is transferred from one person to another. There is no need to be literate before listening and learning from the radio. This is possible because message contact can be delivered in native language.

The origin of radio broadcasting in Nigeria can be traced to 1932 when the colonial government setup machinery to relay signals from British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for people in the colonies. It was then known as Empire Broadcasting (Saba, 2013). Unlike other media types, such as newspaper, radio stations have the ability to become a reliable source of information in areas where information is scarce. People from all around the world can search the airwaves for reliable source of information even when phone lines are cut and the internet is blocked. It should be noted that the advent of transistor radio has brought radio to remote corners of many poor communities for literacy promotion. It also empowers people to participate in the dialogue and decision making processes essentially for them to control their own economy.

Instead of a facilitator being physically present with the learners, the radio facilitator is in the Radio Station broadcasting the lesson. Learners listen to the radio broadcast and act on the instruction of the radio facilitator. They also obtain further assistance in learning from facilitators during face-to-face meetings. The primary objective of any radio station is to attract the biggest possible audience through

the quality of information, education and entertainment it disseminates. It is aimed at broaden the horizon of the listeners. For the service to be acceptable, its content must be relevant to the society, it must be related to the live of the listeners, and must show a considerable understanding of their hopes and fears, their living conditions and their political, social and cultural environment. Literacy by radio is therefore:

- i. To complement and improve the existing curricula and strong reliance on written text within formal educational system. Radio programmes were not intended to supplant existing, text-based educational curriculum, but rather to, supplement, or to stimulate, the study of subjects offered in schools.
- ii. Literacy educational radio set stage for later educational technologies, providing a framework for the adoption and implementation of these technologies for future efforts in the implementation of educational technology.

The objectives of using the radio for development of literacy education in Nigeria were to:

- i. Mobilize and sensitize adult illiterates to appreciate the value of literacy;
- ii. Encourage adults (especially women) to contribute meaningfully towards the education of their children;
- iii. Increase the level of support and enthusiasm of adults with a view to improving adult learners' enrolment and attendance;
- iv. Motivate adults (both men and women) to enroll in adult literacy programmes;
- v. Acquaint them with their civic responsibilities, including the formation of cooperative societies and radio listening groups; and
- vi. Improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly where performance is low and facilitators are poorly trained (UNESCO, 2008 & Fugate, 2019)

Advantages of the use of Radio for Literacy Teaching

Radio has immense values, particularly in a developing country like

Nigeria where constraints of finance, professional facilitators, suitable equipment and appliances and so on adversely affect literacy education planning and administration. Radio can therefore play a significant part in reducing illiteracy rate in the country. Development programmes are broadcast on radio to serve the needs of men, women, youth and children. Some of the advantages of radio to the development of literacy education in Nigeria according to Chander & Sharma (2003); Van Zyl (2004) and Aromolaran (2007) include:

- Radio is capable of teaching everybody. One radio facilitator can reach out to too many learners at the same time.
- Learners do not have to go to learning centres before they can learn. They can even learn in their bedrooms.
- The reach and immediacy of radio provided adult educators with a new and potentially powerful medium through which to support and modify literacy education.
- One radio set can serve a family for the programme.
- It can reach every nook and cranny of the country. Radio has power to annihilate distance and to reaches everybody in the cities as well as in the rural areas, remote, and even inaccessible and isolated communities.
- Lots of developing programmes are broadcast on radio to meet the needs of everybody.
- Both the rich and disabled can also learn through the radio.
- It is not expensive to own and run a radio. One can purchase a radio set for less than five hundred naira only, to run it on batteries (AA size) will cost about fifty naira only a week. Compare with buying and running a television set. In essence, radio is very cheap to maintain.
- It is more available and affordable than television sets.
- It can be used effectively to teach adult learners.
- It is very easy to operate by both old and young.
- Lack of electricity does not affect its use.
- It is very convenient when listening to, no matter how busy your work is, you can listen to radio while still performing your duties. It is a tool when combined with other.
- Radio appears to be the most accessible medium (both in terms of geographical reach and the prevalence of radio per capital across developing countries).

- The cost of radios as well as unit production costs is relatively low.
- It can be used to fulfil certain teaching functions, i.e. to motivate learners and increase interest in specific topics and it has proven its worth as far as pedagogical importance is concerned.
- It can be used in combination with other media such as print, face-to-face teaching, and so on.
- It transcends literacy barriers and yet is credible, because it addresses the single listener personality.
- It can be used in interactive contexts.
- High quality educational programming can be delivered to highly diversified audiences located across broad geographical areas.
- Radio programmes can benefit weaker learners when used as supplementary tool.
- It can bring previously unavailable resources to learners.

Radio therefore provides an array of educational options to those desiring to improve their educational qualifications and upgrade their academic skills. It establishes a direct bridge between education and vocation, thus extending the scope and reach of higher education to the youths and adults. The educational objectives for use of radio in literacy education programmes are numerous to catalogue. Adelokun and Abidoye (2013), quoting Abimbola (2006), identified the following educational objectives for use of radio broadcast in educational institutions (literacy education inclusive) in Nigeria thus:

- To strengthen the nations education enterprise by reducing imbalances and improving educational opportunities in rural educational centers handicapped by lack of qualified facilitator and equipment.
- To improve the quality of education through the use of teaching method (as can be seen in Interactive Radio Instruction.
- To improve attendance rate at all levels by motivating adult learners by means of interesting programme materials audio technique and increase personal attention in large classes.

- To assist in curriculum development through speedy and effective delivery.
- To disseminate information of interest, to promote and keep facilitators up to date on curricular innovation and practice.

Possible Barriers to the use of Radio for Literacy Delivery in Nigeria

Chander & Sharma (2003); Van Zyl (2004); National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2010) & Adelokun and Abidoye (2013) quoting Abimbade (2006) listed some barriers to effective use of radio for development of literacy education in Nigeria:

- Poor infrastructural facilities such as electricity, space and other facilities.
- Inadequate training of personnel such as technicians, management staff and so on.
- Poor maintenance of existing equipment and facilities.
- Negative attitude about media.
- Timing and scheduling (inadequate of radio channel(s) to air literacy programmes.
- Equipment procurement.
- Field capacity depletion: Many facilitators trained in the field are moved to either urban area instead of rural areas that experience more of high illiteracy rates within a programme implementation period. This has affected many learning centres in the rural areas and thrown learners into confusion as backups are hardly readily available to them.
- Poor technical base. The Technical Committee in the states is yet to function effectively.
- Monitoring and evaluation are not carried out and commitment on the part of facilitators is lacking because of poor incentives.
- Decentralized educational system (federal, state, local and radio stations) can frustrate facilitator's attempt to use broadcast regularly. States and local governments support for the programme is still low and this is a setback for the project.

- Access to household radio can be limited and ownership is usually a problem even if radios are readily available.
- It is still difficult for people in the rural areas to purchase radios and to get them repaired while the cost of batteries is inhibitive in places without electricity.
- Reception can be poor in some areas and it is sometimes necessary to broadcast on more than one station in order to achieve national coverage.
- Facilities for recording and broadcasting programmes are not readily available or of the desired standard and there is normally competition for studio facilities or broadcast slots.
- Broadcast schedules (time-slots) tend to be inconvenient.
- Most broadcasters charge for airtime these days regardless of the fact that it is for educational purposes.
- Learners have no control over the pace and time of broadcasts and the lack of visuals can be problematic.
- There is normally a lack of skilled professionals' who can produce high quality educational radio programmes.
- Educational radio is essentially one-way medium with no or limited interactivity.

Some other related problems militating against the effective use of radio for the development of literacy education in Nigeria include the inability of literacy centres to secure adequate transmission facilities; and most importantly, most radio station in Nigeria are owned by government that are not directly involved in the management of literacy centres. These stations are commercialized and to buy air time from them is always expensive. In her own view, Aromolaran (2007) stated that the disadvantages of using radio as a literacy education medium include the following: Adult learners are deprived of face-to-face interactive opportunity that the formal system of education provides; it denies the learner the privilege of seeing their instructors demonstrate what he says; and it does not give room for immediate response from learners.

Strategies for Overcoming the Barriers

Some of the ways of overcoming the challenges of application of radio in literacy programmes in Nigeria include the following:

- The need to expand literacy by radio to accommodate post literacy and still continue with the basic literacy scheme calls for additional funding for capacity building, material and provision of logistics. Without the support of the states and local governments through payment of airtime, Literacy by Radio may be stopped by many radio stations currently airing the programme due to inadequate payment for airtime.
- There should be a collaboration between broadcasters, education authorities and educators in implementing radio based literacy programmes.
- States and local government areas should support the use of radio for the development of literacy education and should be involved in the management of its centres in their various domains.
- Only professionally trained adult educators should man radio based literacy programmes.
- The tutor in should acquaintance themselves with the scheduled and programmes of these broadcasts through the relevant available literatures.
- The facilitator should endeavour to prepare the learners as adequately and possible educational as well as psychologically to get the knowledge and experiences properly which is imparted through a radio broadcast.

Conclusion

It has been established in this paper that effective use of radio can contribute greatly to the teaching and learning of literacy education and how it serve as spring board in reducing non-literates in Nigeria. It has equally been pointed out that literacy by radio programme aimed at mobilizing, sensitizing, awareness-raising, sharing and discussion on the issue of literacy with general public and empowering communities. It is therefore designed to serve in the fight against illiteracy, provide services for the benefit of adult non-literates and to assist those concerned with educational broadcasting, where radio could be used on a large scale to draw the maximum benefit from this medium of communication to reduce illiteracy rate in the country.

Recommendations

Based on the roles of radio in the teaching and learning of literacy education with the aim of reducing non-literates in the country, the following recommendations were made:

- The need to expand literacy by radio to accommodate post literacy and still continue with the basic literacy scheme calls for additional funding for capacity building, material and provision of logistics. Without the support of the states and local governments through payment of airtime, Literacy by Radio may be stopped by many radio stations currently airing the programme due to inadequate payment for airtime. The states and local governments should therefore awake to their responsibilities and commitments to their own people who are beneficiaries of literacy by radio. In essence, adequate funding is vital to the sustainability of effective literacy programmes delivery on radio.
- The literacy by radio programme should be opened up to corporate organizations, philanthropic individuals and non-governmental organizations for support and sponsorship. On the ground that government alone cannot cope with the enormous problem of eradicating illiteracy in the country.
- The radio listening sessions should be increased (where applicable) by all stakeholders in literacy programmes as a part of efforts to reduce non-literates in the country.
- All stakeholders should intensify more efforts through public enlightenment campaign using the mass media, local government town-criers. Traditional rulers, religious leaders should also be involved to mobilize to generate public interest as well as get people involved in mass literacy activities.
- Management of radio stations in Nigeria should join hand in the crusade of reducing illiteracy rates in the country by making sure that they provide appropriate and convenient time for airing literacy education programmes and also, allotted sufficient time to literacy programme at affordable rate.

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