

# ROLES OF BROADCAST MEDIA FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING: NIGERIA AS A CASE STUDY

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## Abstract

Broadcast media involve the transmission of information, ideas and opinions through the usage of electronic devices. The Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is becoming more and more relevant and accepted as a form of global education. Radio broadcasting was introduced in Nigeria during the colonial age in 1932. Since then, it has been used for social, political and mass education. This paper examines the roles of broadcast media for educational delivery in ODL using Nigeria as a case study. It further examines the concept of ODL, broadcasting delivered through the usage of information and communication technology tools and the constraints in the use of broadcast media as an ODL educational delivery.

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**Keywords:** Broadcast Media, ICT, Open and Distance Learning, Instructional Delivery

## Introduction

Broadcasting is a primary means by which information, opinions, ideas and entertainment are delivered to the public or private concerns in virtually every nation around the world. It refers to transmission of electromagnetic audio signals (radio) or audio-visual signals (Television) that are accessible to a wide population via standard readily available receivers (Ogunmilade, 1998).

Broadcasting is a crucial instrument of modern source and political nature in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Radio and television (TV) broadcasting has been employed by political leaders to address nations, because of their capacity to reach and influence large number of people (Agbari, 1992).

Historically speaking, the broadcast media got to Nigeria in 1932, when the radio broadcasting service of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) started as empire service of the BBC. But in 1933, after realizing the role of Broadcasting within the educational field the BBC transmitted the first educational programme to her West African overseas service. The 1<sup>st</sup> Nigeria educational radio broadcast programmes were for English language via the radio distribution service under the posts and telegraphs department. However, Abimbade (2006) confirmed that in 1957 the Nigeria Broadcast Service was established which eventually took over the transmission of educational programmes.

Renewed demands and requests by various interests groups for the expansion of the Nigeria Broadcast Service (NBS) to cover the entire nation led the ancient colonial administration to invite Mr. Richard Postgonte (an ex-head of BBC school broadcasts) to look into the possibility of introducing an educational radio service in Nigeria. It was his report that brought about the establishment of a school broadcast unit in the NBS. According to Abimbade (2006), by 1957 the NBS has been transformed to Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC).

The NBC was established by an act of Parliament no 39 of 1956, but began operations as a statutory corporation on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1957. It was in activity till 1978 when the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) came into being owing to the Decree no 8, in 1979. This decree dissolved the NBC and handed over twenty radio stations to various state government retaining only those at Ibadan, Lagos, Enugu which were all merged with the former broadcasting company of Northern Nigeria all which formed the FRCN at inception (nbc. 2012).

The first television station in the country was established by the then Western Nigeria Regional Government headed by the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The Western Nigeria Television at Ibadan was established with the sole objectives to entertain, inform and educate. However, other regional governments in Nigeria namely, Eastern and Northern regional governments and the Federal TV in Lagos were established for the same purpose.

In addition, the use of broadcast-media in education was initially limited to primary, secondary schools and teacher's training colleges. But with the assistance of the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Institute of Education University of Ibadan in 1962 established an Audio-Visual Unit. The institute workshops were related to the use of audio-visuals and established a closed circuit television (CCTV) for teaching education related courses. Olumorin (2006) observed that from this time, other tertiary institutions in the country have taken steps to integrate the use of broadcast media in teaching and learning at various levels.

## **Broadcasting As An Educational Delivery Tool**

The potentials of broadcasting media as a powerful educational delivery tool is exemplified in its unique characteristics and advantages that differentiates it from similar electronic media. These are:

1. According to Dike (2012) broadcast media as educational delivery tool has the feature to distribute signal to several audiences who are located at different places at the same time..
2. It has the characteristic to present information and event with a sense of immediacy at the same time it is unfolding.
3. Broadcast media have universal value because they can break the barrier of literacy and social class, as their signals do not discriminate human beings on the basis of socio-economic and educational backgrounds.
4. In terms of flexibility, broadcast media allow different times to adapt to daily lifestyle of the audience/student so that learners can use them at their convenience.
5. They are useful in giving a sense of reality in subject content conceptualization. They provide necessary condition whereby students can capture and relay actualities and real life experiences with audio-visual equipment rather than just telling or describing them abstractly.
6. Broadcast media provide access to information at low cost, i.e. it is economical to convey knowledge, since a single teacher could teach millions of students simultaneously nationwide/globally.
7. Radio and TV sets are cheap, when compared to computer sets/systems and less cumbersome to handle worldwide. It helps to preserve expert teaching skills of teachers on video for later use.
8. Annaih (2012) observed that the use of radio and TV promotes developmental objectives and can be aired to enhance good quality education in literacy, problem solving, skill acquisition value, attitudes and other range of knowledge to a large section of the population.
9. According to Yusuf (2002) broadcast media have the capacity of presenting vividly physical teaching because of its audio-visual nature, thus have great direct and indirect influence on the audiences making learning livelier, more motivating, more concrete, more efficient and more effective.
10. Broadcast media provide possible close-up magnification of small objects. Components, intricate mechanisms, diagrams, and so on, give students a “front-row-seat” message.

The forgoing characteristics and advantages may have been considered among other ways in making or formulating the National Policy

of Education, (FRN, 2004) which highlighted that the broadcast media are a veritable instrument for the achievement of the national educational objectives, moreover it is claimed what follows:

*Radio and television are products of technological age, designed among other things, to improve communication. They are also being used for the development and improvement of education as well as for the expansion of instructional techniques, where the facilities exist, radio and TV broadcasting will form a permanent feature of the education system... (Abimbade, 2006, p. 31).*

### **The Concept And History Of Open And Distance Learning**

The concept of Open and Distance Learning are composed of two terms. “open”, and “distance”, the two terms are different concepts but are inter-related in several aspects.

The history of open learning according to Men-Ching-Hu, (2005) is traceable to the development of some initiatives belonging to the United Kingdom educational bodies such as National Executive College in 1963, Open University in 1969, Open technology programme 1983-1987, Open Long Education 1988 and Open School 1989. In his submission, Jegede (2010) stated that open learning concept allows a learner to point out every step of his/her studies, what to study, when to study, how to study, how many courses to study at one term or semester, when to feel ready for examinations and when to graduate.

To go further on the concept of open learning, UNESCO (2002) stated that it relates to policies such as open admissions, freedom of selection of what, when and where to learn. It also means helping learners to exercise their freedom of choice or move over the main processes of learning that is, ensuring a learner centred-learning approach whereby learners take responsibility for their learning related activities. According to UNESCO (2002) the openness attends to the flexible organizational structures, delivery and communication patterns coupled with the use of various technologies to support learning and further differentiates it from the conventional face-to-face learning.

In addition, the problem of admission requirements which discriminate against candidates geographically, ethnically, gender, religion, age, social status, quota system syndrome, rigid evaluation system and social cultural barriers are checked. Hence, the major concern for openness is for openness of education to all, in order to provide enhanced access and success in education for all, who previously have been denied such opportunities (Jegede, 2010).

The concept of distance learning has been variously defined by different scholars with more similarities than differences. In this regards (with no s or in these regards), it is (has been) observed that as distance

education metamorphosed from one generation to the other, definitions of the term previously accepted become obsolete. Thus, distance education is explained in various ways and contents with each perspective representing a shift of phenomenal changes. According to this perspective Ganiyu, Ismail and Blessing (2010) stated that most definitions present six common elements, which are:-

1. Separation of teacher and learners in time, or place or in both time and place.
2. It has institutional accreditation i.e. learning being certified by an educational institution.
3. Use of mixed-media courseware-print, radio/TV broadcasts, video audio cassettes, computer-based learning, etc.
4. It involves two-way communications i.e. synchronous and asynchronous.
5. Possibility of face-to-face meetings for tutorials, learner interaction, laboratory work, practice or counselling sessions.
6. Use of industrialized processes, division of labour involving course team development and other task groups to accomplish the set goals.

The historical antecedents of distance learning have four main phases, each with its own organizational form derived from the main form of communication. The first phases related to the happenings towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in England when Isaac Pitman began offering shorthand lessons through the medium of mail. (Spector, Merrill, Jereom, & Mercy, 2008). Almost at the same time Mackenzie (2005) reported that in America by 1883, the 1<sup>st</sup> American study society began to encourage studies at home. The efforts of this society got a boost when universities of Chicago and Columbia began to offer their major programmes via correspondence in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interaction method in the correspondence system was mainly by a study guide in printed text or written documents sent through postal systems.

The second phase was the era of multi-media in which the print media audio tape, video tape and computer interactive video with some face-to-face learner supports are delivered to individuals and groups, (1950's-1960s). In this phase, it was observed by UNESCO (2002) that instruction was no longer an individual work, but the work of teams of specialists, media specialists, information specialists, instructional design specialists and learning specialists.

In his submission, Jegede (2006) highlighted that ODL is a gradual democratization of education and learning that are “closed” by various barriers, which ODL now addresses. According to him, ODL has the following advantages:

1. Accessibility: - ODL breaks the various bottle necks of admission requirements and liberalizes many who have been denied the pursuit of higher education.
2. Students can study at any age and time to suit themselves and their circumstances.
3. Learning materials are delivered to /or transported to the students at their location-whether at work place or elsewhere.
4. In term of pace, students can work according to their own rhythm fit to their ability and achievement.
5. It is very cost effective as a result of multi-media application, hence the number of learners involved in ODL make it cheap and affordable.
6. It reduces the problems often experienced in conventional education which include higher rate of failure, drop-out, repetition, prolonged academic years due to incessant strikes, overcrowded lecture rooms, over stretched facilities, etc.
7. It serves to cater for increasing large number of University aspirants who could not get admission through Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board.

The origin of ODL in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial age, when the first Nigerian graduates were recorded through the University of London using mainly correspondence courses (Adegbija, 2010). In the 1950s and 1960s the precepts of such correspondence institutions as Wesley Hall, Rapid Results College, Bernett College, Oxford Delicacy, Pitman Institution and College were prominent (Osuji, 2005).

During the colonial era, ODL was an household phenomenon, a kind of commodity that gave empowerment to boost sustainable development, as it produced needed human resources for those who had no access to formal education and who cannot travel abroad to acquire education as a result of many disabling factors (Pityama, 2010). According to Okopi, (2010) correspondence education served as a forerunner to modern ODL that started in response to the demands of the educationally able but neglected and underprivileged Nigerians for the provision of more access to continuing higher education.

In the realm of higher education via ODL, it is on record that the University of Ibadan made the pioneering effort with “pilot correspondence programmes in science subjects”. It was meant to prepare pre-University science students through correspondence, face-to-face contacts and possible use of radio and television. Unfortunately, Osuji, (2005) reported that the programme collapsed due to lack of fund and other logistics.

The failure recorded did not stop the University as its senate approved the establishment of external studies programme (ESP) which took

off with its first set of students on April 8, 1986. Since then ESP has been on course adopting instructional modes via print materials, production and supply of texts and face-to-face contact sessions at the University for at least 12 weeks Intensive teaching and examinations.

In another report, Osuji (1981) stated that the Ashby's 1960 report served as the first Nigeria's needs in the field of post-secondary education up to 1980s. The 1961 Federal Government policy paper following Ashby report led to the establishment of private correspondence colleges (Exam Correspondence College) and between 1964 and 1970, the number of such colleges increased from six to eighty five. At the University level, UNESCO (1960) as reported by Okopi (2010) recommended that University of Lagos had to be established as a dual mode of institution to use correspondence, mass-media, teaching techniques for non-residential, distance learners, in combination with face-to-face residential teaching for full-time students. This recommendation was effected with the establishment of distance teaching system in 1974 at the University of Lagos as the correspondence studies unit (COSU) now known as Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSIT) took off in January, 1976.

The National Teachers Institute (NTI) Kaduna was established in 1976 as a response to a pressing issue-the rise in enrolment in primary schools across Nigeria at the time. Oladimeji (2011) explained the surge in primary school enrolment from 5.5 million to 8 million on account of the introduction of Universal Primary Education policy which created an urgent need for more qualified teaching personnel. Hence NTI was set up as a model institution for teacher education to use distance learning approach, utilizing printed-self-instructional materials, weekend face-to-face interaction with tutors at study centres scattered all over the country. It also emphasizes the use of audio-visuais with a gradual shift to online technology.

Other institutions such as Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Imo State University, Okigwe; Olabisi Onanbanjo University, Ago-Iwoye; University of Ilorin, Ilorin; Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, to mention a few of them, are also involved in the provision of ODL, programmes.

The National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos (NOUN) is the first and the only University in Nigeria, for ODL programme. According to Jegede (2008) NOUN took off with the sole objective to make education openly accessible, affordable, and equitable to all Nigerians who may have missed the opportunity earlier in life or have been denied the traditional conventional face-to-face formal education, due to socio-economic career, family and other circumstances.

## **Incorporating ICT into Broadcasting for Open Distance Learning**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is made up of three terms – Information which deals with data that are processed, analysed, interpreted and made meaningful to the sender and receiver of a message; communication which is a process of transferring, transporting information from an encoder, source, and origin from one person or value sharing through some artefacts, language laboratory, media and technology that relates to techniques, systems, channels or forum that are often employed to ease control over nature, to survive challenges and changes in the environment, so that a civilized life of higher standard of living could be achieved.

In the light of these definitions, ICT can be explained as the collection, storage, processing, dissemination and use of information. It is related to the sourcing of information, the encoding, the processing of it, and distribution of vocal, pictorial textual and numerical information by micro-electronics based-combination of computing and telecommunication (Ajayi & Salami, 2002). In recent years, there has been an increasing convergence of digital and information technologies. Thus, there are arrays of communication and technological tools available within the broadcasting media for the delivery of Open and Distance Learning programmes. A number of new technological tools and expanding bandwidth exists – all changing the facet of learning. Novak and Hoffman (1998) observed that the technological advancement is becoming multimedia. Radio sets also as multimedia, interactive tools – web blogs, mob logs, and video blogs, podcasts, etc. feeds with uploaded images on cell phones. All these according to them, bring diverse elements into a course of study to assist in meeting a variety of training styles in Open and Distance Learning.

In essence the exponential expansion in ICT has brought convergence of telecommunications, computer and audio-visual technologies telecommunications, computer, and audio-visual previously separated by techniques, legislations and modes of distribution.

Within the Nigeria context, the following are broadcast media technologies in use within Open and Distance Learning providers.

**Radio:** Radio is an electronic device that transmits human voice electro-magnetically through air wavers over a long distance (Matthew, 2007). It is an important Open and Distance Learning instructional delivery strategy as it enables one to transmit or receive information to a large number of people even in the remotest areas. There are 24 campus radio stations active within Nigeria's institutions as at date and some owned by providers of Open and Distance Learning.

**Television:** - This medium enables information to be transmitted live or recorded to a large number of people directly in audio – visual form. It



has been used successively in Open and Distance Learning programmes in many countries such as Brazil, China, and South Africa. Its use in the Nigerian context is at best asynchronously, as there is no functional dedicated TV station for Open and Distance Learning. Besides, there are no campus\_TV stations in any Nigeria higher education institution as none of them has ever applied for such across the country, yet the NBC is prepared to consider applications for this category.

**Teleconferencing:** This tool enables many people to get connected simultaneously so that discussion/interaction takes place even though the participants do not meet physically. It is a good ODL instructional strategy that could be used to connect a teacher and students who are widely dispersed and separated because of geographical location. This facility is available only in private high-brow cybercafé scattered in the cities of Nigeria, but not yet in use by ODL providers.

**Interactive video and interactive Radio Instruction:** Interactive Radio instruction is related to given instruction via radio which individuals or participants partake in audio discussion, and serves to stimulate active participation in the teaching-learning environment so created.

**Personal Broadcasting tools** – These include blogs (web blogs), mob logs (mobile blog), vlogs (video blogs), podcast (video podcasts) or podcasting – These tools are nowadays integrated as broadcast media into ODL of the developed world. UNESCO's (1998) report showed that these tools provide avenue for students to spend more time on tasks, for sharing ideas and understanding the course contents that represent their learning whether in the traditional or on online classroom.

**Mobile Learning (Mob logs):** This relates to specially designed gadgets – (iPods, MP3 players' podcasting Java quizzes, PDA's media collection using camera, etc. It was concluded in the report of UNDP (1999) that these tools collectively brought under mobile learning broadcasting provide opportunities for learners at anytime, anywhere, the chance to brush up on facts, study for upcoming examinations/tests or access information needed on research work using mobile technological devices such as cell phones, laptops, that accommodate wireless communication.

The use of broadcast media in ODL has a number of advantages over other instructional delivery modes. The scenarios in vogue with the digitization syndrome will in no time open up opportunities as they are being integrated in conventional school setting. These help to break the barriers of communication across geographical distance. Broadcasting media give easy access to pools of information and participation in new learning and partnerships. However, UNESCO (1998) observed that this development is unbalanced, as there exists digital divide in most developing countries including Nigeria, where they lack infrastructure and training is needed for

gaining access. The digital divide compounds existing inequalities between people and within countries. In view of the following, Novak & Hoffman (1998) observed that these inequalities or disparities in access are not random but correlate strongly with income, education, ethnic origin, location and gender.

### **Conclusion**

It is observed that as a result of rapid exponential technological developments across the globe, many radio/TV broadcast equipment, and facilities are rapidly being replaced to conform with the digital age. This poses the problem of inability on the part of the government and the population grappling with them. Most of the campus Radios and other radio/TV stations do not have enough trained educational broadcasters, instructional designers and script writers for ODL programmes.

The epileptic electricity power supply in Nigeria poses a great challenge to adequate production and utilization of various broadcast tools available for use in ODL. Also, it is observed that inadequate funding is responsible for inability of ODL providers to fully tap into the potentials of broadcast media as a veritable tool for instructional delivery.

Broadcast media have the potentials which if explored, could solve the problems of access to quality mass education. Other countries such as Brazil, China and England to mention a few have utilized it, and are still using it as instructional delivery mode with reported successes. The achievement of Nigerian government's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of education for all through ODL could be sustained, and improved if broadcast media are well integrated into the ODL programme.

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