

Radio for Education in Bangladesh: Trends and Future Scope

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***Abstract:** Radio, FM Radio and Community Radio have been used in different formats for educational purposes the world round. These tools proved to be the most effective media in promoting education and development particularly as a tool for the delivery of quick information. In this paper, attempts were given to demonstrate the trends and potential scope of the above mentioned tools or devices for the greatest interest to the education system in Bangladesh: one of the largest densely populated nations in this World. The desk analysis revealed a steady growth of Radio devices and communication system though much can be done in its existing form.*

***Keywords:** Education Systems, Radio, FM Radio, Community Radio.*

1. Introduction

Bangladesh has a large educational system consisting of some 150,000 institutions, 34 million students and over 900,000 teachers. There are about 20 million students in primary education (including madrasas and non-formal programs) and 11 million at the secondary level (including madrasas). At university level, there are 31 public and 54 private universities. The nation has achieved an enviable near-100% enrollment in primary education, but, at the same time, the dropout rate is an alarming 50% by the end of the 5-year primary cycle (Karim, 2010).

It has been observed that a little over 1% of the students who complete primary schooling acquire the standard competencies. 25% of the primary graduates drop out at the initial stage of enrollment in secondary education. Radio, one of the tools of ICTs, has been identified as a key enabler to address the quality component of the education equation. Attractive e-learning environments in schools, and distance learning through TV, radio, mobile phones and internet will increase retention. The government plans to make ICT education compulsory at secondary level by 2013 and at primary level by 2021. Teacher training will be increasingly decentralized through the use of ICTs already in place at the Upazilla Resource Centres for primary and model schools for secondary.

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Radio has been used extensively as an educational medium in developing countries like Bangladesh. Published reports confirm that it has supported educational programs in a wide range of subject areas and in many different countries. In some cases it is supported by the use of printed materials, by local discussion groups, and by regional study centers. It is sometimes designed to permit and encourage listener reaction and comment. Indeed, in some cases, there is provision for the audience to raise questions and to receive feedback. The current government's Digital Bangladesh by 2021 vision proposes to mainstream ICTs as a pro-poor tool to eradicate poverty, establish good governance, ensure social equity through quality education, healthcare and law enforcement for all, and prepare the people for climate change.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to identify the role of radio, community radio and FM radio in educational purposes in Bangladesh. In this regard, the study attempts to look at the following issues.

- A brief history of radio, community radio and FM radio.
- To highlight the use of radio, community radio and FM radio in education.
- To identify the potential scope of radio for education.

3. Methodology of the Study

This study is basically descriptive in nature. Both primary data and secondary data have been used in this study. In-depth interview was conducted to collect primary data. Officials of different radio stations have been asked about their programs and thoughts regarding this issue. Radio listeners have also been interviewed to know about their responses to educational programs of radio.

Secondary data were collected from various publications, daily newspapers, IT magazines, and internet. Useful websites, like- Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Education Board Dhaka, websites of radio channels were also visited for this study.

4. Literature Review

Radio has been used in different formats for educational purposes the world round. Radio technology was first developed during the late nineteenth century and came into popularity as an educational medium during the early twentieth century. 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. Radio is capable of delivering high quality educational programming to highly diversified audiences located across broad geographical expanses – all at a low per unit production cost (Couch, 1997).

Studies conducted by the Open University UK have demonstrated that, when used as a supplementary learning tool, radio benefits weaker students (Tripp and Roby, 1996). The Agency for International Development has shown radio to be more cost-effective and capable of exerting greater learning effects than textbooks or teacher education (Tripp and Roby, 1996). Radio has the advantage of permitting the teaching of subjects in which classroom teachers are untrained or lacking certain knowledge sets. Another benefit for multi-grade classroom use is that radio can provide instruction for one group of students, whilst the teacher is occupied with another. Radio can also bring new or previously unavailable resources into the classroom, thereby greatly enhancing student learning (Muller, 1985).

Jaminson and McAnany (1978) report three main advantages of radio: (1) improved educational quality and relevance; (2) lowered per student educational costs; and (3) improved access to education, particularly for disadvantaged groups. Muhlmann de Masoner, Masoner, and Bernal (1982) described the use of radio in Columbia for various educational subjects. Long (1984) reported the use of radio in India for rural development. Ouane (1982) described the use of radio in Mali for literacy training. Ginsburg and Arias-Goding (1984) examined the use of radio for literacy training and other programs in Mexico. Academy for Educational Development (1979) described radio being used in Paraguay to offer primary school instruction. Cooke and Romweber (1977) reported adoption of radio in the Philippines for nutrition education. Academy for Educational Development (1980) reported the use of radio in Sri Lanka to promote family planning and health education. Galda (1984) reported the use of radio in Thailand to teach mathematics to school children and Faulder (1984) reported its use for teacher training and other curricula. White (1976) reported adoption of radio in the Dominion Republic to support primary education. Saettler (1990) revealed that the University of Wisconsin and the University of Minnesota received licenses to establish educational radio stations in 1922. Gueri, Jutsun, and White (1978) reported the use of radio in Trinidad and Tobago to promote knowledge of breastfeeding.

5. Historical Perspective of Radio, Community Radio, FM Radio in Bangladesh

Bangladesh Betar is the largest electronic medium in the country. Radio broadcasting began in Bangladesh territory in 1939, when the British government set up the first radio

station in Dhaka. In 1971, radio changed its role as a propaganda machine and emerged as a front to assist the nation to achieve the independence. With the historic declaration of independence on March 26, 1971 the 'Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra' started functioning playing vital role in broadcasting motivational programs and championing the cause of liberation war. Radio Bangladesh started function from all the stations since Bangladesh victory on 16 December, 1971. The journey of Bangladesh Betar is summarized below.

Table 1: Events of Bangladesh Betar

Year	Events
On 16 December, 1939	Started journey as All India Radio at Nazimuddin Road
In 1962	Shifted to Shahbag
On 26 March, 1971	Changed into "Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra"
on 16 December, 1971	Radio Bangladesh started function
In 1976	Radio Bangladesh installed 1000 KW transmitting station at Dhamrai, Dhaka
On 30 July, 1983	Shahbagh turned into Head Office of Bangladesh Betar

Radio broadcasting crossed a history of 70 years. There are private FM radio stations in the country having started broadcasting programs in recent years. Seven private radio stations-Radio Today, Radio Foorti, Radio Amar, ABC Radio, DHAKA FM, People's Radio and BBC Bangla transmitting their programs through FM band surrounding Dhaka and many other districts along with the state-run radio. The list of the private FM radios of Bangladesh is given below.

Table 2: Private FM Radios in Bangladesh

Name of the Radio	Year of Establishment	Frequency
Radio Foorti	On September 21, 2006	88.0 FM
Radio Today	May, 2006	89.6 FM
Radio Amar	On December 11, 2007.	88.4 FM
ABC Radio	In 2007	89.2 FM
DHAKA FM	In 2009	90.4 FM
People's Radio	On December 11, 2011	91.6 FM
BBC Bangla	On October 11, 1941	100.0 FM

Bangladesh government uses Wireless and Telegraph Act 1885, The Telegraphy Act 1933 and Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Act 2001, to allocate frequency and oversee technological aspects of the broadcast channels (Ullah, 2006). Generally it is believed that people of rural and remote areas across Bangladesh possess at least one radio set each in their home and it is considered a vital medium for the government to disseminate development news and programs with good effects (Salam, 1997 and Bhattacharjee, 2007). Considering the prospect of community radio in development activities, some more than 200 NGOs have applied for setting up radio stations in Bangladesh. In 1998, for the first time in Bangladesh history, Mass Line Media Centre (MMC), a media NGO, submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Information for setting up a community radio station- Community Radio for Grassroots People- in the southern coastal Patuakhali district. The aims of the radio as stated in the application is “to bridge the gap between people and the policy makers, create an interactive environment of communication, serve as a platform for debate, exchange of ideas and reactions to plans and projects, preserve cultural identity, enhance emancipation and self-worth and uses as the voice of the voiceless, the mouthpiece of the oppressed and as a tool of development” (Snigdha, 2002).

In the same year, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) drew an advocacy plan entitled "Policy Advocacy of CR in Bangladesh". In 1999, first National Mass Media Conference was arranged by Centre for Development Communication (CDC). Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communications (BNNRC) was established in 2000 to continue advocacy program with other concerned organizations for Community Radio (Tarafdar & Khan, 2012).

The demand for community radio in Bangladesh came into the forefront again in 2002 during the ‘South Asian Broadcasting and Development’ workshop organized by Institute of Development Studies of the University of Sussex in Dhaka. Participants strongly voiced for establishing community radio to ensure a well-balanced information flow in Bangladesh. Department of Journalism of Chittagong University also conducted a small-scale survey on ‘the public perception on community radio in two upazillas (sub-districts) of Chittagong’ in 2002. The survey revealed that though respondents have very limited knowledge about community radio, 96 percent of them showed their interest for setting up community radio in their respective areas after discussing the benefits among them (Chowdhury, 2002). FOCUS, in association with MMC, produced the Bangla translation of UNESCO’s -‘Community Radio Handbook’ Edited by Colin Fraser and Sonia Restrepo Estrada in May 2004 with support from DANIDA. FOCUS also published Bangla version of- How to Do Community Radio- by Louie Tabing in 2005 with support from UNESCO. To convince the government for incorporating community radio in a comprehensive broadcasting legislation, a united platform was formed in 2005 through

organizing a two- day consultation meeting in December, 2005 with support from UNESCO, UNDP and UNICEF.

Along with those advocacy programs, there were many more movements and mass people awakening strategies organized mostly by NGOs, pro-active partners and alliances which made the government enable to approve and implement the policy. Finally, Government prepared the 'Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2008' through a gazette notification on March 12, 2008 aimed to initiate community radio broadcasting climate in Bangladesh (Ullah and Chowdhury, 2006). After 14 years of dedication, today 14 community radios are broadcasting 100 hours programs in a day.

Moreover, there are many online radios in Bangladesh which broadcast 24 X 7 days programs over the internet, such as Radio GoonGoon, Radio 2fun, Radio Apon, Radio Kolahol, Radio Etune24, Radio Bijoy, Aktara Bangla, Radio dream, Bangla Radio24, Radio Circle, Radio Lemon24, Radio Anuvuti, Radio Bestway, Radio Shadhin, BBC Bangla, Radio Dhaka and many more. Bangladeshi online radio stations spread the Bangladeshi culture worldwide. These are promoting Bangladeshi Culture & Specially Bangla Songs all over the world.

6. Education Systems in Bangladesh

Education in Bangladesh has three major stages-primary, secondary and higher educations. Primary education is a 5-year cycle while secondary education is a 7- year one with three sub-stages: 3 years of junior secondary, 2 years of secondary and 2 years of higher secondary. The entry age for primary is 6 years. The junior, secondary and higher stages are designed for age groups 11-13, 14-15 and 16-17 years.

Higher secondary is followed by graduate level education in general, technical, engineering, agriculture, business studies, and medical streams requiring 5-6 years to obtain a Masters degree. In the general education stream, higher secondary is followed by college/university level education through the Pass/Honors Graduate Courses (4 years). The masters Degree is of one year's duration for holders of Bachelor Degree (Honors) and two years duration for holders of (Pass) Bachelor Degree. Higher education in the technical area also starts after higher secondary level. Engineering, agriculture, business, medical and information & communication technology are the major technical and technological education areas. In each of the courses of study, except for medical education, a 5- year course of study is required for the first degree.

Primary level education is provided under two major institutional arrangements (stream)-general and madrasa, while secondary education has three major streams: general, technical-vocational and madrasa. Directorate of Non Formal Education (DNFE) has also run a range of non-formal primary education programs, with NGOs as implementing partners. Higher education, likewise, has 3 streams: general (inclusive of pure and applied science, arts, business and social science), madrasa and technology education. Technology education in its turn includes agriculture, engineering, medical, textile, leather technology and ICT.

Madrashas (Arabic for educational institution), functional parallel to the three major stages, have similar core courses as in the general stream (primary, secondary and post-secondary) but have additional emphasis on religious studies. Education System in Bangladesh is being managed and administered by two Ministries, Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Division in association with the attached Departments and Directorates as well as a number of autonomous bodies. The educational structure through which the government responds to educational needs is diverse, with 11 categories of primary schools. Two of these categories, Government Primary Schools (GPS) and Registered Non-Government Primary Schools (RNGPS), together serve approximately 84 per cent of enrolled children (Zia-us-Sabur and Ahmed, 2010).

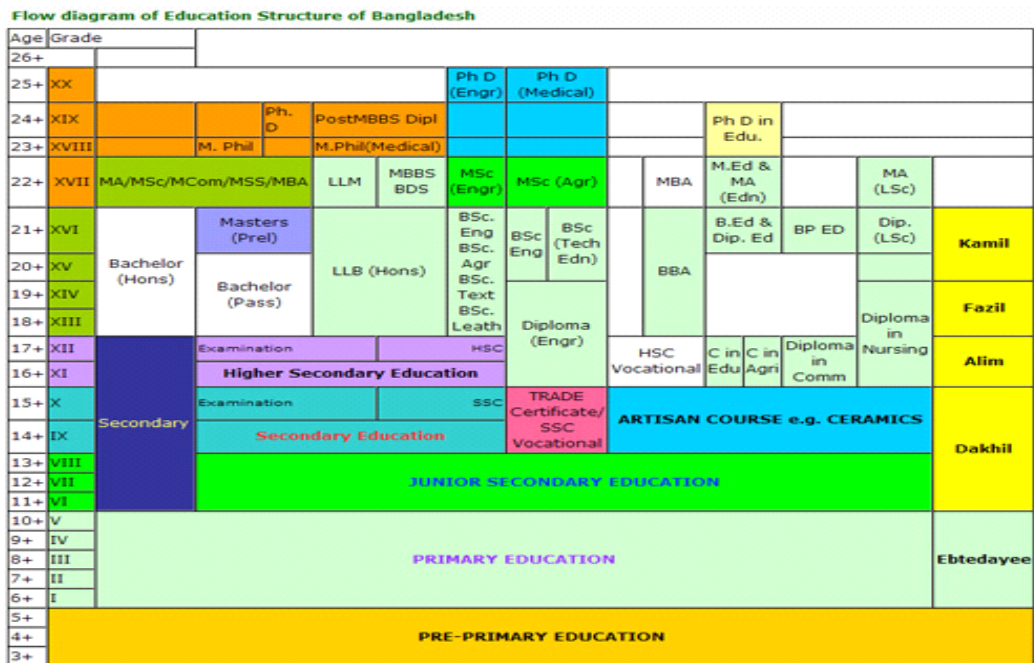


Figure 1: Education Structure of Bangladesh

7. Different Programs in Radio in Bangladesh

FM radios of Bangladesh are mainly designed for entertainment. The main element of this entertainment is music. Most of the radio channels broadcast news, talk show on current affairs, documentary, information updates (Traffic, Outdoor Event, Stock Market, Bazaar, Weather, Culture, Time Queue and many more), live show with RJ's, talks show with celebrities and listeners etc. List of the some main programs of radios in Bangladesh is given bellow:

Table 3: Programs of Private Radios in Bangladesh

Name of the Radio	Programs
Bangladesh Betar 103.2 FM	News, external services, gitali, ganerdali, bangle natok, krishi shamachar, shonali fosol, shasthoi shukher mul, esho gori soto poribar etc.
Radio Today 98.6 FM	Good morning Dhaka, today's adda, rush hour, hello friends, post box, bioscope, world music, green news etc.
Radio Foorti 88.0 FM	Hello Dhaka, tea stall, Dhaka calling, No Tension, Foorti Unlimited, Bhoot FM etc.
Radio Amar 88.4 FM	Music train, rock the town, Sunday night, amar valobasha, third generation etc.
ABC Radio 89.2 FM	Traffic update, holudbati, share bazar, meghbarota, la classic etc.
Dhaka FM 90.4	Dhakar sokal, besto Dhaka, ghore pherar gaan, hit hit hurrey, shopner canvas, sports show etc.
BBC Bangla 100.0 FM	Daily news about Bangladesh and rest of the world

The Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, considers community radio a special area for intervention. Community radio stations are a strong step in empowering rural people. Initially, the government approved 14 community groups for these following purposes:

Table 4: Community Radios in Bangladesh

Name	District / Community
Community Radio SagorGiri 99.2	Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)Sitakunda, Chittagong
Community Radio Nalta 99.2	Nalta Community Hospital, Satkhira
Community Radio Mukti 99.2	LDRO, Bogra
Community Radio Pollikontho 99.2	BRAC, MouliviBazer
Barandro Community Radio 99.2	Naogaon
Community Radio Mahananda 98.8	Proyas, ChapaiNababgonj
Community Radio Padma 99.2	CCD, Rajshahi
Community Radio Jhinuk 99.2	Srizoni, Jhinaidhah
Community Radio Bikrampur 99.2	EC Bangladesh, Munshiganj
Community Radio Lokobetar 99.2	MMC, BargunaSadarUpazila
Community Radio Chilmari 99.2	RDRS, Chilmari, Kurigram
Community Radio Sundarban 98.8	KoyraUpazilla, Khulna
Community Radio Naf 99.2	Teknaf ACLAB, Cox's Bazar
Community Rural Radio 98.8	Agriculture Information Services (AIS) Community Rural Radio, Barguna

8. Radio for Educational Purposes in Bangladesh

Radio has been used in education ever since it became available (Butcher, 2003). Pennycuik (1993), of the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex, states a bit more specifically that interactive radio instruction (IRI) is characterized by “highly coordinated” instructional materials and delivery strategies. Though Bangladesh government introduces many projects on ICT enabled education, the state owned radio, FM radios or community radios are still very far from such projects.

8.1 Educational Programs in Bangladesh Betar

Bangladesh Betar, the national radio network has been discharging the responsibility of disseminating information, education, and entertainment with utmost commitment, honesty and objectivity. It functions to support nation building efforts of the government

upholding social values and the country's rich historical and cultural heritage. Betar has been playing a pivotal role towards developing a knowledge based information society taking advantage of its unique and distinctive capacity as the cheapest and most versatile medium to reach to the grass root level. At present, Betar with the help of 15 medium wave, 2 short wave and 13 FM transmitters has the strongest logistic network reaching across the breadth and length of the national boundary and beyond. Apart from the central News Desk, spewing out hourly bulletins incorporating latest national and international events, Betar as a true public service broadcasting medium has been propagating programs and news from its 71 studios round the clock reflecting national requirements through 12 stations and 6 units namely External Service, Transcription Service, Commercial Service, Population-Health & Nutrition Cell, Traffic Channel and Farm Broadcasting.

Bangladesh Betar, the only state owned radio station of Bangladesh broadcast different informative programs but focus on agricultural sector, health and hygiene factors of people, population problem etc. Bangladesh Betar broadcasts for approximately 3,285 hours per month altogether including external services. Programs generally consist of entertainment (63 percent); cultural and religious (9 percent); educational (5 percent); news (3 percent) and others 18 percent. Radio broadcasts Parliament proceedings directly from the Parliament since 1996 (Bhattacharjee, 2007). PRSP ((Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) has the vision to provide quality education at primary secondary and vocational level. The educational unit of Bangladesh Betar has taken necessary arrangements to broadcast different type of education programs. This initiative includes 10 hours programs per week for the students of primary, secondary, higher secondary level and for students under Open University. Bangladesh Betar is also actively involved in women education. Everyday varieties of programs are broadcast from the ten regional broadcasting stations of Bangladesh Betar to create awareness of female education. Illiterate rural women are encouraged to non formal education by these programs.

8.2. Educational Programs in FM Radios of Bangladesh

The private radios are mainly design their programs on music or commercials. They concentrated on entertainment rather than socio-cultural developments. One of the major reasons of such negligence is that the target groups of audiences are city centered people of Bangladesh. Recently, some FM radio channels are showing their concern to the society and took initiative to start different informative programs.

Radio Today: Radio Today FM 89.6 has started a project since 2009 with a slogan-committed to green earth. A dedicated show is called Green Hour under the project is designed to do better for environment. Environmental degradation and depletion of

natural resources are often observed in Bangladesh due to poverty, over-population and lack of awareness is the subject. It is manifested by deforestation, destruction of wetlands, depletion of soil nutrients, etc. Natural calamities like floods, cyclones and tidal-bores also result in severe socio-economic and environmental damage.

Radio ABC: For the first time ever, popular cartoon characters Meena, Mithu and Raju have gone live on radio as presenters interacting live with other children. This initiative, the first of its kind, led by UNICEF Bangladesh in partnership with ABC Radio FM 89.2, has been taken to provide a platform for children, especially vulnerable and marginalized children to air their views and concerns on a national platform through a live children's show for two hours every weekend.

BBC: BBC Janala is a mobile service which helps learn English via mobile phones in Bangladesh, has delivered 1 million English lessons. Janala, which means window, was launched in November last year and is run by BBC World Service Trust and funded by UK's Department for International Development. The services are based on the mobile interactive voice response system (IVR). Users in Bangladesh dial 3000 and get access to 3 minute long audio lessons and SMS quizzes. The lessons vary from Essential English for beginners to storytelling lessons for advanced learners. According to the blog post, 39 percent of the callers return to the service, and lessons for beginners gets 69 percent repeat usage. In Bangladesh there is a return rate of 5 percent for other mobile information products and services.

8.3. Educational Programs in Communities Radios of Bangladesh

The South African Institute for Distance Education (2004) stated that "radio remains the key media to which most rural people have access. This statement is applicable for the community radios which design their programs mostly in the local language based on their local issues. Though community radio is an important media for the rural people for information and communication, Bangladeshi community radios mainly design their programs based on agricultural problems, social and cultural problems, women rights, natural calamities etc.

9. Conclusion

There is a difference between the perceptions of city dwellers and rural people about radio as a medium of basic, primary and higher education for them or for their children. The city dwellers are mainly the FM radio listeners who enjoy radio during their drives and on mobile phone. They remain busy in the rush hours of city life and prefer radio as a means of entertainment. However, many of them believe that radio could be very

effective for learning because one radio could be shared by many people and because of its portable nature they could carry it wherever they would go. On the contrary, there are many parts in Bangladesh where radio is the main medium of communication or information. The rural people would like to use radio for celebrating their local communal festival events or sharing regional knowledge about their own wellbeing, information exchange or updating knowledge about local markets as well as medium of education. Since their children don't have teachers to teach English or Mathematics, their children could learn the lessons from the radio. Rural people trust on community radio and Bangladesh Betar rather than the private radio channels. So, there is no doubt that the appropriate use of radio can be very contributory initially for creating informed and updated mass people of Bangladesh. It may require training and development of human resources to activate radio suitably for each type of formal or non-formal educational needs of the locality.

Though the commercial radio model is market- driven and government broadcasting seeks to create and maintain nationwide public values based on pluralistic democratic principles; whilst the community radio is focused on the common citizen's day-to-day concerns and local aspirations, now this is the time to take more initiatives to develop radio as one of the strongest medium of education in Bangladesh. Such as,

- Activities of radio in Bangladesh are seriously suffered by lack in coordination, which are resulted in lack in continuity in educational programs. These programs should be regular and the approach of educational radio content should be need based.
- Government can create an educational development platform to work together with NGOs, private radios and other social activists within the concerned realm of focus sharing with others' experiences around the globe.
- Radio can play an essential responsibility in achieving universal primary education. In this regard, government should take initiatives for developing teachers and preparing separate syllabus of radio education.
- Develop educational programs for the out-of-school youth and broadly underserved populations.
- Radio should most effectively be used for non-formal education for adult people, awareness programs, youth development programs, local community knowledge sharing, recycling of knowledge, ethnic community preservation programs.
- Projects should be taken for radio education in the areas, where density of population is sparse, where access to school is difficult like char (land within a river) and hilly areas of the country and also isolated places because of less access

to road or other communication, and where access of qualified teachers are very few.

- Bangladesh Open University needs to adopt the radio base strategies to provide education for all.
- Government should set policies prescribing compulsory educational programs for every private radio and community radio channels.

Learning is the liberating force of human development and every individual has a right to education. To serve the aforesaid considerations, radio may help to create education for flexible learning system. Having their own infrastructures, these radio stations could be turned into Radio Learning Centers (RLC) for the open and distance learning institutes and these stations can be worked as local facilitators for the academic programs of both formal and non-formal education.

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