In “That Wave Is for Sure” (Chapter 4), Edgard Patrício introduces the radio-schools of Brazil. In contrast to IRFA’s early work in taking the classroom to the home using radio, Catavento, an educational communication organisation in northeastern Brazil, has brought the radio to the classroom and the school. Each radio-school functions as a joint school-community workshop space to develop practical communication skills among teachers and students. Through both face-to-face interactions and radio broadcasting, the whole community learns.

More information: www.col.org/LearningWithCM

COL’s Healthy Communities programme: www.col.org/HealthyCommunities
That Wave Is for Sure: The Radio-School in the Socio-cultural Management of Learning

Edgard Patrício

Concept
The very name radio-school suggests a learning environment mediated by the radio. The required radio equipment can be installed in a school, a community, a child- or youth-oriented centre or any other context in which the radio may be useful.

Introduction
Integrating technology into schools has been difficult. In part, this is due to the resistance of educators in using new technologies. However, it can also be traced back to the attitude of technicians and technology-promoters who have no knowledge of the intricate fabric of relations and symbolic relations established through the practice of schooling — a practice that involves teachers, students and the community.

There are two key factors involved in creating effective technology-supported learning. First, approaching educational technology from the standpoint of symbolic processes is essential if that technology is to be taken up by the school community. Second, cultural values must be understood as part of understanding these processes.

These matters are addressed in this chapter, which discusses the goal of combining radio — which is an accepted and long-used technology for reaching communities — with Internet technology in order to share the cultural and life experiences of the community in an educational setting. “That Wave Is for Sure,” the name of this radio-school approach, aims to contribute to the creation of a high quality of education for all.
Objective

That Wave Is for Sure means to bridge the gap between radio, education and community within the socio-cultural reality of the participants. It does so through the use of contextualised educational processes and enjoyable learning methods. Results are evident in improved school performance and the enhanced self-esteem of teachers and students, which in turn provide a foundation for actions that have impact at a still broader level.

Justification

What is the relation between the radio-school and quality education? For education to be effective, it has to be properly contextualised. In other words, it must be done in close relation with cultural considerations. Therein lies the key to social transformation. Local radio itself is one of the most appropriate technologies to sustain such transformation, as it is culturally embedded in the context of the communities in which it operates, be they rural or urban communities, on the periphery or at the centre.
Far from a coincidence, the idea of working with radio as a means of communication for the education of children and youth is a very intentional strategy. Working with and through radio at the local level builds ties with the community and its schools. It allows for a process that strengthens the culture of the communities at the same time that it improves pedagogical performance and educational practice in a simple and efficient manner.

**Methodology**

*Presentation and discussion of the radio-school project with the whole community*

In discussions about the project, there is representation of the whole education community: parents, adult caregivers, teachers, students, technical and administrative personnel, as well as project promoters. Representation should also extend to small businesses in the community in order to foresee the sustainability of the project through local support.

*Creation of workshops for the training of teachers and project promoters*

About 80 hours of training are provided to project promoters and teachers in groups of 20 for every school. The contents of the training include: the relation between communication and education; the relation of student-teacher-student; radio as a pedagogical practice; curricular performance and educational communication; and pedagogical practice of educational communication.

*Creation of workshops for the training of students*

Students receive 120 hours of training, 25 students for each school. Training covers technical aspects of equipment, previously installed at participating schools. Training also covers the rights of children and youths, the relation between education and communication, and interactive techniques of radio communication.

*Set-up of the work plan and definition of the degree of programming of the radio-school*

A work plan for each radio-school project is made, taking into account the demands of the teachers, promoters and students that are defined during the training process. Issues discussed include: the structure and responsibilities of the Work Group, which is established to handle the administration of the radio-school; institutional arrangements (partnerships); adherence to ethical codes of the radio-school; the programme schedule; and the self-reliance and sustainability of the
radio-school. The work plans are finalised after the workshop training, in a process lasting 36 hours.

Follow-up of the programming of the radio-schools

Follow-up mentoring and monitoring is carried out through a visit to the site every 15 days. Site visits include an analysis of: programme diversity, level of participation of teachers and students, use of the radio-school as a pedagogical tool, involvement of the community in the functioning of the project, cultural support perspective, and presence of cultural aspects in the programming.

Results

Beyond the work carried out through the radio in relation to specific subjects, the method aims also to contribute to citizenship formation among the students. These objectives are reflected in the following results that have been observed from the radio-school’s efforts to date:

- **In relation to the attitude of the students** – Findings show an improvement in speaking and oral presentation skills, particularly among quiet students who previously generally avoided sharing their points of view. Improvements have also been noted in the acceptance of criticisms and in the attitude of students towards working in groups. As well, students have shown a better disposition to reading and a stronger desire to write correctly.

- **In relation to the participative management in school** – The Catavento team has observed that by supporting better communicative processes, the radio-school has also become an instrument for highlighting conflicts that were previously invisible because there was no proper means of dialogue among different groups. The resolution of these conflicts adds a positive element in understanding the overall development of schools.

Sample of Radio-School Testimonials

“For me to participate in this project is a privilege, a cause of great happiness and learning. I gained more experience than I could express in words.” (Danilo, 17-year-old student)

“Raquel used to go to bed early, but lately she doesn’t because she only goes to bed after she has watched the news on the television.” (Isabela, mother)

“People can see that this project has helped our children. The importance of learning with these kids is immense. So, people are happy and grateful with each one of you for the love you give to the kids.” (Alenir, teacher)
In relation to school violence – There are a growing number of teachers whose testimony points to a decrease in physical violence in the schools reached by the radio-school project. For example, the confrontations and quarrels between students were notably reduced after the effective functioning of the radio-school. This has been particularly evident during breaks between classes when the radio is most active.

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Catavento Comunicação e Educação is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) located in Fortaleza, the state capital of Ceará in northeastern Brazil. Catavento originates from the initiative of teachers and students of the faculties of Social Communication and Law at the Federal University of Ceará. Today, communication and education are its strategy for human development. Catavento works with and for children, adolescents and youth.

For further reference, see:

- www.catavento.org.br