CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

Community radio stations have emerged as the potential media of grassroots communication and development in a pluralistic society like India. The organizational structure and management perspective of CRS in India has long been under scrutiny for its betterment and long-term sustainability. The present study is an attempt to understand the management requirements of CRS in Karnataka through case study analysis of two Community Radio Stations namely Krishi Community Radio, Dharwad and Namma Dhwani CRS, Budikote, Kolar. The qualitative in-depth analysis of the organizational and management aspects of the CRS tries to highlight some structural inputs for community radio stations and their practitioners.

KEYWORDS: *Community Radio Station Management, Infrastructure, Human Resources, Funding*

INTRODUCTION

Community radio stations are established all over the world to provide grassroots level development support to the urban and rural audience who represent the socially and economically backward sections of society. Community radio stations are regarded as the voice of the voiceless millions across the globe. They have also filled the vacuum created by the mainstream media in the context of grassroots development communication. Community radio provides multi-faceted education to the masses on local issues and concerns. Community radio also provides connectivity between the masses and other stakeholders of grassroots development.

According to the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC 1998), the objective of community radio is to use the medium as a voice of the voiceless. CRS should act as the mouthpiece of the oppressed people and the marginalized in the society and generally as a tool for development. Community radio is defined as having three aspects: non-profit making, community ownership and control and community participation. AMARC further states that community radio is not about doing something for the community but about the community doing something for itself, i.e., owning and controlling its own means of communication.

In the context of the Community Radio Movement, India had late awakening to the potential of community radio and until late 2006, government regulations only allowed educational institutions to set up campus radio stations with a transmission range of 10-15 km. However, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India has come up with updated policy guidelines for setting up Community Radio Stations in India which has incorporated non-profit agencies, agricultural research institutes and schools in its ambit. There has been a slow but steady progress since then and

according to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting by November 2009 more than 40 community radio stations were operational in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Farren (2007) examined the qualitative aspects of the management of community radio in modern society. The study revealed that community radio stations had laid strong emphasis on studio production values and manpower development. The scholar noted that community radio had provided opportunities for practitioners and members of the community to develop their own identities and communication skills. The study emphasized that community radio had gained social recognition as prominent sources of grassroots development communication. The scholar suggested that community radio should be developed on the basis of creative approaches and partnership with grassroots level organizations.

Wong (2001) examined the impact of new media technologies on the management of community radio stations in Canada. The study revealed that community radio sector had emerged on the basis of application of new communication technologies in modern society. The scholar noted that community radio had functioned effectively in the campus of the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. The study emphasized that application of new media had widened the scope of management of community radio and enhanced connectivity between the service providers and audience. The scholar suggested that new web technologies should be utilized by the community radio to obtain information from a broader spectrum of sources.

Tucker (2013) examined the role of community radio in the contexts of political theory and development practice. The study revealed that community radio had become significant sources and resources of development communication in modern society. The scholar noted that community radio had also facilitated increasing democratic political participation in the rural areas. The study emphasized that community radio had bridged the gap between the development projects and beneficiaries of various development programmes. The scholar suggested that community radio stations should reach out to the marginalized groups of people and enable them to participate in the management of community radio stations.

Tawileh and Edward (2012) examined the application of ICTs in the management of community radio in Africa. The study revealed that community radio had utilized new information and communication technologies to facilitate connectivity among the geographically dispersed communities. The scholars noted that community radio stations had focused on education, peace, reconciliation, agriculture and health prominently. The study emphasized that community radio stations had provided numerous benefits to the people as alternative communication source. The scholars suggested that community radio stations should improve programming, information sharing and outreach to other remote communities on the basis of research and development endeavors.

Sow (2014) examined the role of women in the management of community radio stations in Africa. The study revealed that women had used community radio stations as alternative community media for their empowerment. The scholar noted that women had broadcast a large number of social justice and gender justice specific programmes at the community level. The study emphasized that women were not fully equipped to manage the community radio stations on the basis of professional excellence and managerial competence. The scholar suggested that women should be motivated and oriented to manage the community radio stations on the basis of better skill and competence.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher has conducted an in-depth qualitative research to understand the organizational structure, aspects and requirements of the Community Radio Stations in Karnataka. The case study method has been adopted and two fully functional Community Radio Stations of Karnataka namely Krishi CRS, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad & Namma Dhwani CRS, Budikote, Kolar have been taken for the study. The qualitative analysis has been done on the basis of the parameters of human resources, infrastructure, programme production, funding agencies and ICT integrated system.

Krihi CRS

The University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad has become the first Agricultural University in the country to set up Krishi FM channel for the benefit of farmers with the catch line of Raitarinda Raitarigagi (by The Farmers, for The Farmers). The basic idea behind the station was to reach the farmers to address the farmer's problems and transfer of technologies. The station has become the platform for the languages, voices and views of local farmers and addresses all the issues concerning farmers and agriculture.

This Krishi FM, the countries first community radio station (FM 90.4 MHz) for farmers was dedicated to them by Agriculture Minister Sri Bandeppa Kashempur on 17th May, 2007, started broadcasting for three hours each in a the morning and evening. The evening programmes aired from 5.00pm.- 8.00pm. and are the fresh programmes and the morning programmes aired from 6.00am.- 9.00am. are the repeat of the evening programmes. The effective coverage of the station is around 15 – 20 km. The station committee includes all the divisional heads of the University, development departments, input agencies, NGOs, farmers and farmwomen.

Krishi CRS Infrastructure & Equipment

The studio for the station has been setup at the campus in third floor of the Administrative Building of the University of Agricultural Sciences. It covers areas in and around the University with the 15 - 20 Km radius. Krishi CR 90.4 MHz FM broadcasts community related programs as well as those dealing with farmers' issues. The station conceptualizes programs that combines education and information and help in reaching out to the people.

The University has provided INR 15 Lac for the studio equipment and the other requirements. The radio programs are broadcasted for 6 hours each day - Evening: 6pm to 9pm and Morning: 6am to 9am. The duration of broadcast each day was 8 hours pre-covid. But, due to lack of manpower and limited funding the broadcast hours were affected adversely.

The CRS is well equipped with latest transmission equipment comprising - 50watt FM transmitter, FM Antennae, Feeder Cable, State of the art Studio of 4x8x10 ft equipped with Uni and Omni - directional microphones, DVD player, Headphones, Cassette Desk, Micro Cassette Player, Audio-Mixing Console (12-Channels), Active Monitoring Speakers with Amplifier, Distribution Amplifier, Audio-Editing and Recording System - Compact with PC based Cassettes to CD with platinum Sound Card. The CRS has a sound-proof multipurpose studio announcer room of approximately 10x10x12ft x 2 units. The studio also comprises of Indian musical instruments like Tabla, Khanjiri, Harmonium etc.

Figure 1: KCRS Studio Setup: Recording Booth and Edit Table.

Krishi CRS Latest ICT Integrated System

The software used for programming is Sony Sound Forge Pro Audio. The Krishi CRS is using the online platform of i-RadioLive to podcast-selected programmes on the Internet. The CRS shortly plans to start internet streaming for its programming keeping in view the increasing shift of its listeners' base from conventional radio to web.
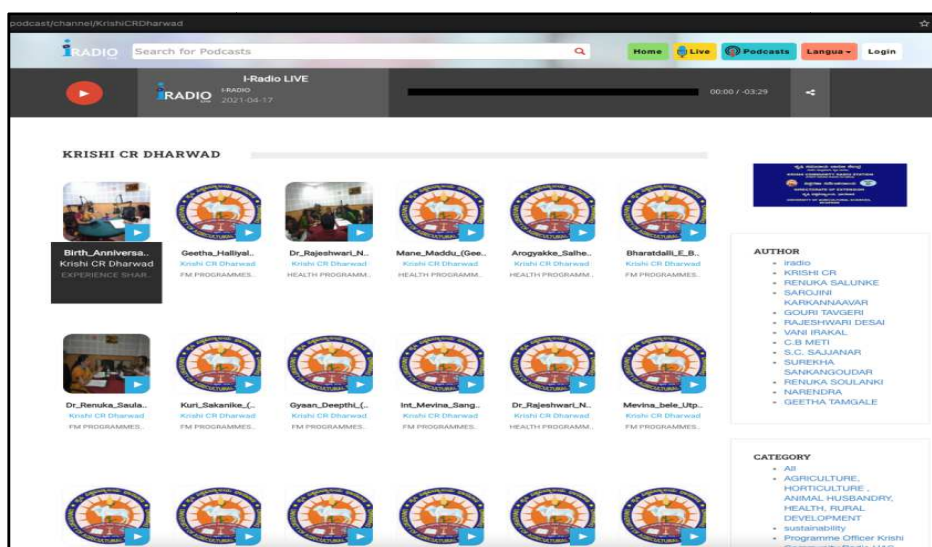

Figure 2: https://i-radiolive.com/podcast/channel/KrishiCRDharwad.

Krishi CRS Human Resources

The Krishi CRS Staff currently consists of 4 Full time members in 2020-2021 consisting of Programme Officer and Head, Radio Announcer, Technician and Field Facilitator. In interview with Ms. Nirmala, Radio Announcer, it was found that the KCRS consisted of 7-8 staff members in the pre-covid times. But, there has been a decrease in the number of staff due to constraints in funding owing to the pandemic.

Figure 3: Staff Information Board at KCRS, Dharwad.

Krishi CRS Funding Avenues

Dr. Devendrappa S informed the researcher that the primary source of funding is from the Government of Karnataka allocated funds to the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad. In this case, the University charts out the budget allocated to each department and in that order certain funds are disbursed for the functioning of the CRS. The CRS also receives project-based funding from external agencies such as UNICEF, SMART (Seeking Modern Applications for Real Transformation) NGO, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. Of India etc.

The Krishi CRS also generate revenue through advertisements of local brands of seeds, fetilizers and allied agricultural products benefiting the agricultural community of listeners. But, these advertisements are kept to the minimum to adhere to the non-commercial purposes of the community radio tenets.
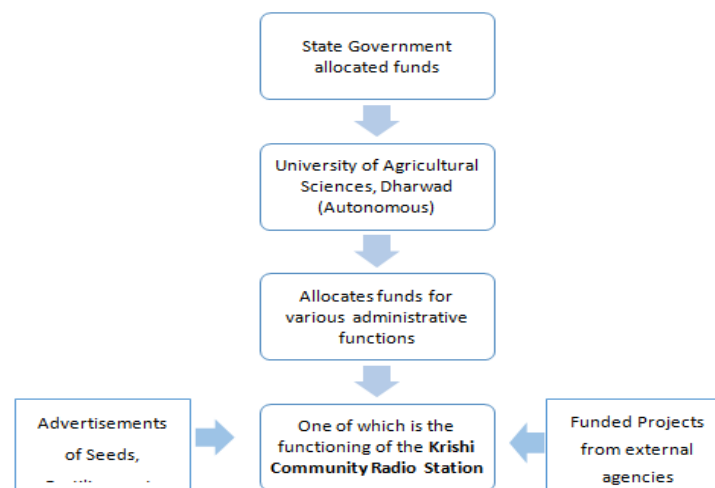

Figure 4: Flowchart of the Funding Agencies for Krishi CRS.

Management of Content Creation at KCRS

The technical advisory committee situated in the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad holds meeting twice a year to discuss the progress of the KCRS and the way forward. The planning committee sets the agenda for content creation with regards to the current issues. The committee also takes into account the previous workings of the CRS with regards to programming and broadcast and its impact on the listening community.

The KCRS in the recent times has also setup a Agri-War-Room which is a kind of a helpline service meant for the benefit of the farmers community. The inputs from the Agri-War-Room is collected by the CRS and information based programmes are fashioned out of the concerns aired by the farmers in their conversations.

The CRS in order to understand the pulse of the listener farmer community has deployed field facilitators who are connected to the community at the grassroot level. They act as a bridge between the CRS and the community to understand the requirements of the community for the CRS, in terms of programming, broadcast timings, agricultural issues and concerns etc.

This strategy also helps bringing the members of the community to the CRS for active participation in content creation for programming and broadcasting. This also aids in the increase of the listeners base as the concerns and issues taken up in the programmes are from the community, and are also in the voices of its community members.
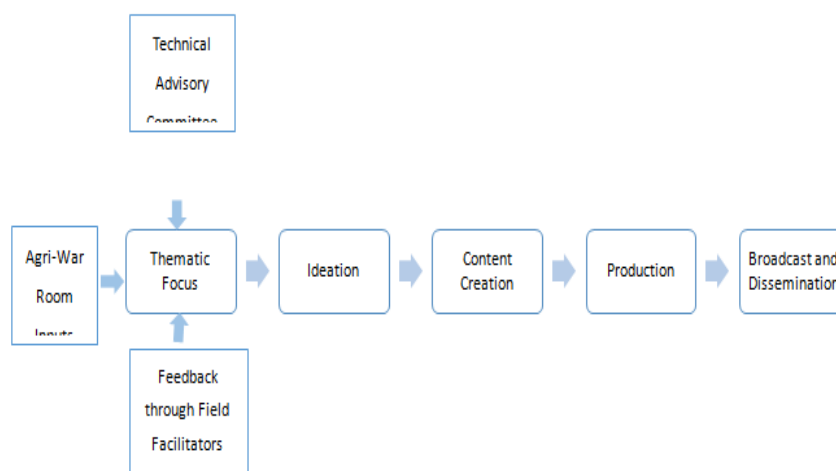

Figure 5: Flowchart of Content Creation for Krishi CRS.

Namma Dhwani CRS

In 2001, UNESCO made funds available to set up a recording studio in space provided by MYRADA, and the Namma Dhwani Management Committee (NDMC). In 2002, Namma Dhwani CRS started functioning in Budikote, Kolar through its association with the local NGO partner MYRADA. At that time, the centre was connected with the Self-Affinity Groups (SAGs) as the Local Information Networks. As structured community associations, the SAGs served as ideal reference groups for Namma Dhwani. In addition, through its connections with the SAGs, Namma Dhwani gained access to extensive social networks that expressed intricate caste and kinship linkages. These in turn embodied the dominant forms and deep structure of Budikote's communicative ecology. As well as its partner ship with MYRADA, Namma Dhwani is also partnered by the NGO VOICES (Voices of Individuals and Communities Empowering Society through Vehicles of Information and Communication Enabling Social Change). VOICES are thus fundamentally "committed to communications for social change". It has actively lobbied for community radio (CR) legislation in India and is currently concerned with the role of media and communications in promoting transparency and accountability within government institutions. Namma Dhwani represents an attempt by VOICES to stimulate the 'voice' of rural communities. In an attempt to explore the potential of community radio in India, in keeping with this ideal, Namma Dhwani initially collaborated with the local cable operator to produce local content, an activity that falls under The Cable Television Networks Regulation Act, 1995.

Namma Dhwani Infrastructure & Equipment

Namma Dhwani CRS is managed by self-help group of women and men which is known as community managed resource center. This is further promoted by MYRADA in Budikote Village. The CMRC is run by the local community and they operate from a single story building situated in the heart of the Budikote Village. The SHG women and men come regularly to this CMRC to hold meetings and at times set agenda for the CR services.

The CRS is well equipped with latest transmission equipment comprising - 50watt FM transmitter, FM Antennae, Feeder Cable, Basic studio facility equipped with Uni-directional microphones, Headphones, Audio-Mixing Console (12-Channels), Active Monitoring Speakers with Amplifier, Distribution Amplifier, Audio-Editing and Recording System. The CRS has a sound-proof multipurpose studio announcer room of approximately 10x10x12ft x 2 units. The software used for programming is Audacity.
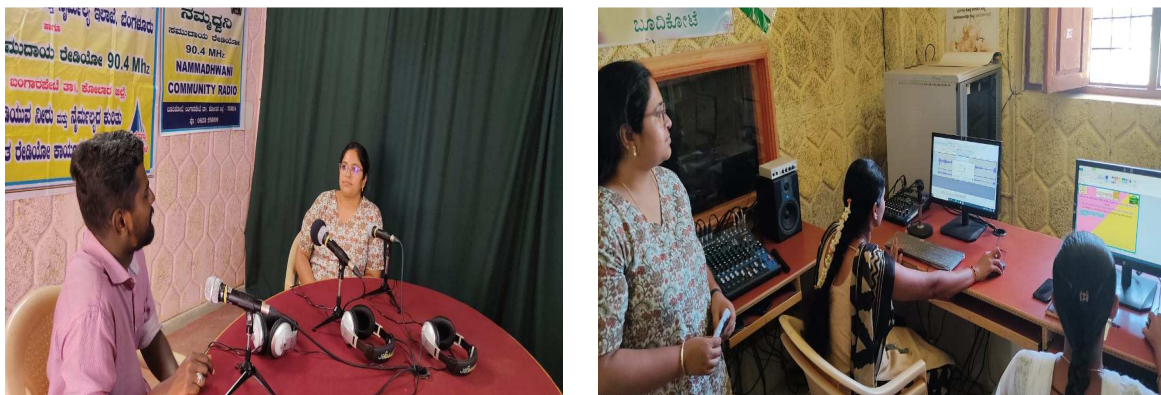

Figure 6: Namma Dhwani CRS Studio: Recording Booth and Edit Table.

Namma Dhwani ICT Integrated System

The Namma Dhwani CRS has developed a mobile app to broadcast live and podcast-selected programmes on the Internet. The Namma Dhwani mobile app has enhanced the broadcast potential by increasing the reach of the programmes to a world-wide audience, which is a revolutionary concept in the workings of CRS in India. The app also ensures transparency in the working of the CRS station and provides unlimited access to its programmes not only to the audience, but also showcases their works to various funding agencies which helps them to generate further revenue for making quality programmes.

Figure 7: Namma Dhwani Mobile App Interface.

Namma Dhwani Human Resources

The radio station is managed by full-time staff consisting of CMRC Manager, Programme Officer, Station Manager, two field programmers and a technical person in the present context. On interacting with station manager, Mr. Vishwanath Reddy V, the researcher was given several inputs on the funding premises and the kind of programmes being generated on the basis of the collaborations with various funding agencies to facilitate the need of the local community being served by the radio station.

Namma Dhwani Funding Agencies and Content Creation Management

The Namma Dhwani CRS is collaborating with several government offices such as Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Department, Gram Panchayat, Directorate of Health and Family Welfare Services, Public Health Department, Central Government Schemes. In context of receiving funds for content creation for programmes, the CRS drafts action plans for various government projects, which are then presented before the authorities for approval. On grant of approval, the programmes are thereby produced and broadcast resulting in the release of appropriate funds and scope for renewal of projects and further funding. Currently, the CRS is closely working with the rural drinking water and sanitation department and have produced numerous programmes for the past three years. "The programmes on hygiene and sanitation of drinking water, rainwater harvesting, water well preservation etc., has been highly appreciated by the funding agency in generating awareness among the rural community on appropriate usage, preservation and processing of water", said Mr. Vishwanath, Station Manager, Namma Dhwani. He further went on to share the possibilities of renewal of the contract with Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Department, for producing further programmes.

Several programmes are being produced and broadcast on themes like rural development, consisting of sanitation, sericulture, pond development, storage under KMF, Swachh Bharat cleanliness drives, livelihood oriented programmes such as Tailoring, Computer training, local businesses, Banking knowledge, job vacancies etc. Health related programmes on Malaria, Dengue, Children health and nutrition, Cancer health camp and recently, Covid-19 awareness programmes.

Findings of the Management Aspects of both Krishi CRS and Namma Dhwani CRS

- In terms of inception, Krishi Community Radio Station founded by the University of Agricultural Sciences structurally acts as one of the departments of the University trying to facilitate the farming innovation and practices to the nearby farming communities. Namma Dhwani with its foundation in SHG practice and facilitated by local NGO has the objective of social welfare according to the requirements of the local community.

- In terms of funding, Krishi Community Radio Station has certain ready access to the University allocated funds in order to maintain the basic infrastructure development and staff strength. At the same time, the KCRS has to strive for project funding from external agencies in order to make quality programmes on diversified topics besides agricultural themes. On the other hand, Namma Dhwani though has quality support from NGO MYRADA & SHG; in terms of funding, it has to collaborate with government funding agencies and accordingly device programmes to meet the objectives of the external agencies. In Namma Dhwani CRS, infrastructure development and staff remuneration has to be taken into account on the basis of the funds received from these external agencies.

- In terms of infrastructure, KCRS has a well developed studio facilities with latest technology and equipment. At the same time, Namma Dhwani CRS being one of the first CR setup in India, has proven to be a visionary by launching mobile app Namma Dhwani to further the prospects of the community radio station.

- The training and expertise of the staff are as per the requirement of the community radio station objectives wherein they are putting in excellent efforts in making quality programmes in various rural development, agricultural development, health and sanitation related issues.

- In terms of programming, both KCRS and Namma Dhwani are striving to device creative and impactful content to attract more and more listeners. In case of KCRS, the experts involved in the radio discussions are mostly from the University facilitating the research outputs of the agricultural practices being generated in the University, but at the same time, the farming community is equally involved in voicing their requirements, suggestions for the CRS. In case of Namma Dhwani, the experts from the government agencies, are often involved in giving diverse opinions on the topics for discussions. At the same time, local experts like teachers, researchers in the local community are often called to share their knowledge and experiences as per the needs of the local community.

- It has been an aforementioned goal of the CRS movement to bring women in decision-making roles in aspects of management and participation of the CRS. Here, it has been noticed that both Krishi CRS and Namma Dhwani with its rich history and contribution in the community radio movement in India has largely been managed by men in the roles of Programme Officer and Station Manager. Women participation is fully observed in the staff roles of radio announcer, field facilitator and technician. However managerial roles for women still elude the in terms of hierarchy of the CRS organization management.

CONCLUSIONS

In India, CRS movement has seen several ups and downs in terms of sustainability and longevity in terms of functionality community radio stations. But by and large it has been observed that community radio stations are fashioned to integrate in the social and cultural fabric of the local community that it serves. The parameters of infrastructure development, human resources, programmed production, and avenues of funding are unique to the requirements of the local community that the community radio station serves. There can be no fixed criteria after the start of the CRS as its functioning, programmed production and management takes the flavor, talent, strengths and opportunities of the local community it is associated with as it has been observed in case of Krishi CRS and Namma Dhwani CRS in Karnataka.

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