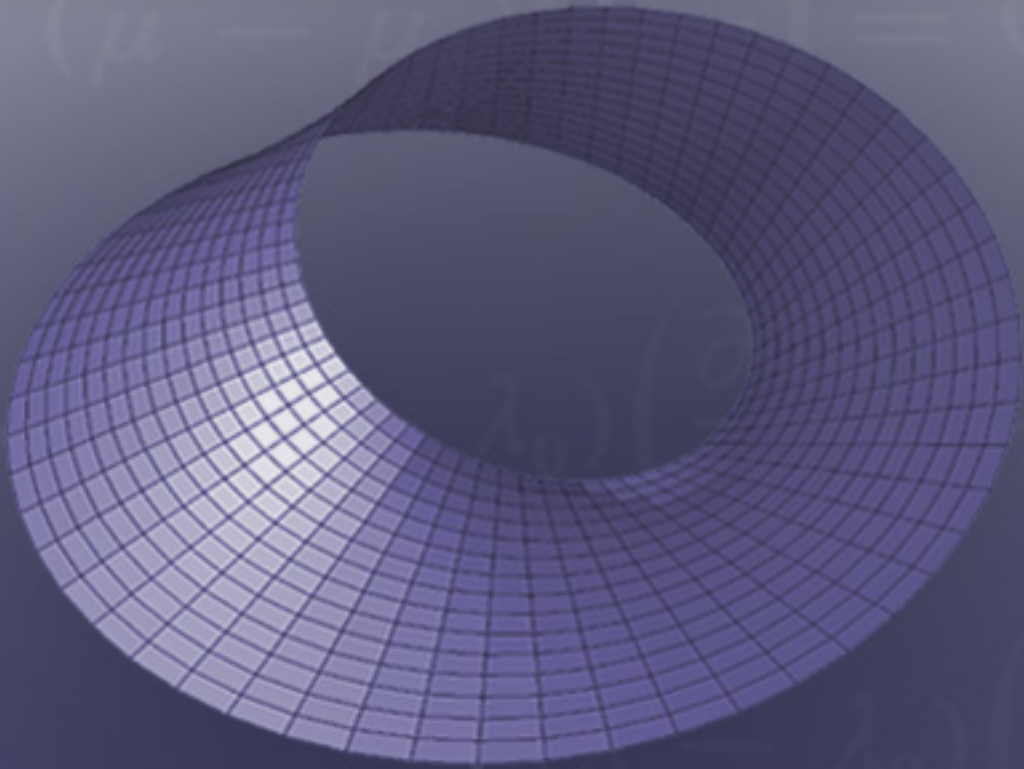


Educational Broadcasting in Greece



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ABSTRACT *The development of educational broadcasting in Greece experiences disproportional delays in comparison to information and entertainment broadcasting. This paper underlines the reasons that cause this delay. Specifically, this paper (a) provides an overall view of the present state of educational broadcasting in Greece, (b) discusses the main reasons that hinder its development, and (c) proposes pertinent solutions for improvement. It is suggested that the development of Greek broadcasting programming in general, and educational broadcasting in particular, could be successful once free from government control and the direct imitation of foreign broadcasting programming.*

Introduction

Globalization of television programming has affected, undoubtedly, educational broadcasting in all parts of the world. It was inevitable that the free flow of informational entertainment and educational programs (some of which are officially welcomed by the various countries and others invented by them) would affect the broadcast industry and the people of the various nations, positively in most cases and negatively in others.

The free flow of all types of broadcasting programming, whether they fall under the information, entertainment, or educational categories, has positive or at least no real effects on developed and prosperous countries. On the other hand it is devastating, and indeed detrimental, to technologically less developed countries. In this paper we argue that the free flow of global broadcasting programs has negatively affected Greece, as the present state of the country's educational programming suggests.

The development of educational broadcasting in Greece

The brief history and overview of the present state of Greek broadcasting that follows provides a better understanding of the reasons that hinder the development of educational broadcasting in Greece.

Radio broadcasting in Greece started experimentally in the early 1920s at a time when the country was heavily involved in the Asia Minor military invasion and the

inevitable defeat and disaster that followed (Zaharopoulos & Paraschos, 1993). It was an experimental effort undertaken by the army to communicate the news regarding the war and the Greek defeat.

Radio broadcasting remained in the hands of the Greek military from 1920 to 1941 always serving the needs of the army and tightly controlled by the authoritative government of George Metaxas and others. During this time the Greek Ministry of Posts, Telegraph, and Telephone assisted the development of radio broadcasting technologically and allowed its expansion to cover most parts of Greece (Keshishoglou, 1962).

During the German occupation, from 1941 to 1944, the development of radio broadcasting in Greece was halted, programs were censored, and stations were destroyed. The development of Greek broadcasting suffered its greatest setback that had enormous consequences in the following years as it is later explained.

After the Second World War the Greek Government established the Hellenic Radio Foundation under the direct control of the Ministry to the Premiership. During the subsequent years of 1945–1954 the Ministry managed to develop both AM and FM stations, some under the immediate control of the army and all under the direct control of the government.

Television started experimentally in Greece in 1960 at the Thessaloniki International Trade Fair. By June 1963 a second television station began operating experimentally, two hours per day, in Athens and at the same time a third television station was created in Attica, owned and operated by the Greek Army Forces. Thus, by 1966, there were three experimental television stations broadcasting for two hours per day, mostly news and travelogues, which, according to Dinopoulos (1987) were “acquired from various embassies” (p. 17).

As the first official television broadcasters of the Greek television stations started developing their programming, the military dictatorship of George Papadopoulos took over Greece in the Spring of 1967 and the first buildings seized were the television and radio stations that remained under the tight control and operation of the dictators until their ousting in 1974.

During the last 20 years various important historical developments occurred in Greek broadcasting that are significant to the present discussion.

First, under the alleged democratic rule the National Foundation of Radio (EIR) expanded to incorporate television broadcasting and was named the National Foundation of Radio and Television (ERT). This became an article of the Greek Constitution and a law (Greek Radio and Television Law) which made ERT an independent public corporation similar to those of the BBC and RAI, yet the ERT was never left alone to create its hardware and software. As Zaharopoulos & Paraschos (1993) state:

However, the true supervisory authority of ERT, according to this law, rested in the Ministry of Premiership. Specifically, the deputy minister appointed the director-general of ERT as the Head of the daily operations, assisted by the assistant directors, also appointed by the cabinet. As such

the legal and operational structure of ERT, even as a public corporation, was heavily controlled by the Government. (p. 46)

The second significant development was the disengagement of ERT from the Greek army, as it was indicated and suggested by the Radio and Television Law of 1976. Although the implementation of this law was considerably delayed, it was a positive step towards the freedom of expression that arrived much later. It should be pointed out that the disengagement of the army from Greek broadcasting has succeeded only in principle and many observers suggest that it will take years before the army will be convinced that broadcasting belongs to the people.

The third important development occurred with the government of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (P.A.S.O.K.), led by Andreas Papandreou, which enforced the 1976 law to do away with the broadcasting by the army forces, creating the country's three official television stations ERT-1, ERT-2, and ERT-3 each of which develops its own programming, yet, always with the supervision and the approval of the government. In addition, the P.A.S.O.K. Government passed the law of privatization of the radio stations of the country, except the ones owned and operated by the Government's ERT-1, ERT-2, and ERT-3.

Finally, the most significant developments of the Greek broadcasting industry of the last six years are two laws passed by the New Democratic Party's government. The first refers to the establishment of the National Radio Television Council (NRTC) as a vehicle by which the state controls broadcasting. As Zaharopoulos & Paraschos (1993) speculate:

Although the creation of the NRTC seemed to move Greece closer to similar broadcast regulations of other western countries the Government was not willing to give the NRTC complete authority over broadcasting. Because of this the powers of the council are primarily advisory. (p. 138)

Politics, personal gains, and antagonisms among the heterogeneous members of the NRTC have caused severe damage and have resulted in serious drawbacks in the development of contemporary Greek broadcasting.

Another devastating law brought forth by the New Democratic Government of Konstantinos Mitsotakis, to finish what the P.A.S.O.K. Government started, was the privatization of television stations and the establishment of free broadcasting in Greece. The situation is alarming considering the chaos that this has created and the decisive drawback effects in the development of educational broadcasting in Greece.

The following statistics illustrate the results of the privatization of the Greek broadcasting industry:

1. Three official Government television stations in Athens and one in Thessaloniki with affiliate stations and transmitters in 21 cities throughout Greece as follows: Akarnania, Alexandroupolis, Chalkidiki, Chania, Drama, Florina, Gerania Mountains, Heraklio, Ioannina, Kalamata, Kastoria, Kavala, Cephalonia, Corfu, Mytilini, Pelion Mountain, Rhodes, Thasos, Thera, Thessaloniki, Tripolis.
2. Eight privately owned and operated stations: Mega, Antenna, Sky, Star, New

Channel, Seven X, Tele-ora, Telecity. These major stations have created and operate 27 smaller provincial stations throughout Greece.

3. There is daily access to 13 available satellite channels as follows: RAI-UNO (Italy), RAI-DUE (Italy), TV-5 (France), Superchannel (Britain), MTV (USA), CNN (USA), TVE (Spain), Eurosport (Britain), RIK (Cyprus), Horizon (Russia), SAT 1 (Germany), Screensport (Luxembourg), RTL (Luxembourg).

What these stations broadcast and how they effect the development of educational broadcasting in Greece is discussed next.

Article 1 of the National Broadcast Law #230/1975, and all subsequent broadcast laws, state that the purpose of Greek broadcasting is to provide *information, education, and recreation* for the people of Greece. Article 3 states, in effect, that the programs must be enhanced with democratic spirit, awareness of cultural responsibility, human interests, and objectivity (Zaharopoulos & Paraschos, 1993). In practice, this is not at all the case as can be witnessed by observing what goes on daily on the Greek television screens.

In an average week, the four most popular major television stations, ET-1, ET-2, Mega, and Antenna present the following *locally produced educational programs* in a percentage of the total that includes documentaries, arts, culture, travelogues, children's programs, instructional shows, etc.: ET-1: 2%, ET-2: 9%, Mega: 1%, Antenna: 1%.

The percentage of *imported educational television programs* in an average week of the above four stations are as follows: ET-1: 7%, ET-2: 65%, Mega: 8%, Antenna: 2%.

The production of educational broadcasting programs by the Greeks is minimal, if non-existent, and the imported educational programs are overwhelming. The recent addition of new commercial channels to the Greek homes, via satellite signals, will be a serious competitive force, which, it is hoped, will enhance the development of educational broadcasting in Greece. As is the case in countries such as Japan and England, where such factors as (a) legislature requirements, (b) licensing regulations, and (c) adequate resources for production not only protect but definitely encourage competition and diversity. (Sources for the statistics above were *Radioteleorasi*, the ERT program guide magazine, 1994 and *Athenorama*, a weekly entertainment guide magazine, 1994.)

Drawbacks in the development of educational broadcasting in Greece

On the bases of the previous discussion and the programming statistics above, the main reasons that cause the drawback in the development of educational broadcasting in Greece can be underlined.

1. Military intervention

From the very beginning, the development of Greek broadcasting was in the hands of the army and the military personnel that not only control the production of programming but also imposed a military ideology, limited in scope, and anachronis-

tic. The Greek military's allies were the US Army, the Voice of America, NATO, the CIA, and generally the US diplomatic personnel, all of which provided programming for the army controlled and operated radio and television stations in Greece.

2. Government regulations and control

Since its inception and throughout its 70 year history Greek broadcasting in general, and educational broadcasting in particular, has been regulated, directed, and controlled by the various dictatorships and political parties. The direct government interaction and control produced serious obstacles in the development of educational broadcasting as follows: (a) Each political party imposed its own political ideology as to what goes on the air and what does not, (b) when one party succeeded the other in the government, all laws and regulations, policies, and directions provided by the previous party in power had to change to fulfill the needs and to propagate the ideologies of the new party in power, and (c) the direct government interaction and control in practice meant that the bulk of the broadcasting programming was propaganda, monopoly of ideology, overemphasis in news and information programs, political antagonisms, etc.

3. Drawbacks in the country's historical evolution

From the history of the modern Greek nation, which emerged after the war of Independence in 1821, we know that while Europe made enormous strides and moved forward with the cultural transition that took place due to the Industrial Revolution, Greece remained suppressed under the Ottoman Empire. Therefore Greece missed this significant intellectual period in the history of Western Civilization during which educational, political, and economic developments took place. As Zaharopoulos & Paraschos (1993) observed: "The absence of natural evolutions of civic behavior and collective standards and practices through which other European nations had gone, brought the Greeks into a nineteenth century political climate with which they were not prepared to cope" (p. 182). One cannot overlook this factor in the long history of modern Greece and the consequences it has had in the development of Greek broadcasting in general, and its educational broadcasting in particular.

4. Cultural barriers which hinder the introduction to modern technology

This factor was introduced earlier and it is commonly found, to a greater or lesser degree, in all less technologically developed countries. Greece is not an exception. The broadcast technology, like all other forms of technology and industry remain underdeveloped. For example, in the age of Direct Broadcasting Systems through satellite, page transmissions, transmissional publications, magalogs, desktop publishing, and desk top television productions, Greece still has analogical telecommunications systems, minimum application of computer technologies in all of its industries and business, and mostly in its broadcasting industry. It is embedded in the

traditional Greek culture that technology in general hinders human creativity and mechanizes the individual. Cultural barriers and out-of-date thoughts in the use of technology have resulted in the increase of imported programming of all sorts, particularly educational programming (Metallinos, 1983).

5. Lack of formal journalistic and broadcast education and industrial training

The modest number of children's programming, documentaries, travelogues, literature, and cultural programs, all of which constitute educational broadcasting programming in Greece, are written, produced, and presented by people who have had little or no formal training, experience, and knowledge of broadcast media. This is quite evident when educational programs discussing, for example, the poetry of well-known Greek poets such as Constantine Kavafis, Yannis Ritsos, or Odysseus Elytis turn out to be informal and static round-table discussions rather than entertaining and vivid presentations through the proper use of the television medium. This is a frequently occurring phenomenon in today's Greek broadcasting which emphasizes the need for formal education and training in radio and television writing, producing, and directing (Paraschos, 1979).

6. Direct interaction and imposition of imported educational television programming

It is our view—as stated earlier—that the free flow of television programming in Greece and Europe hinders rather than supports the development of local broadcasting programming and has covert, negative effects in the development of educational broadcasting. This view is shared by numerous observers, scholars, and researchers of the subject (Garitaonandia, 1993; Emanuel, 1993; Glastra & Kats, 1993; Venturelli, 1993; Zaharopoulos & Paraschos, 1993) and it has raised the concern of the European Union that has created special council, investigating and exploring this issue.

There should be a genuine need that creates an educational broadcast program which stems from the society and its inspired people. An imported program reflects the needs, expresses the wants, and fulfills the desires of the country that has created it. For example, an educational program referring to the recent floods of Iowa has a limited, if any at all, educational value in Greece, particularly when it is presented with Greek subtitles that do not accurately present the content. Imitations of foreign educational programs by the Greeks have produced devastating results, especially when they virtually copy both the format and the content as is true with a great variety of American educational programs adopted by the Greeks—mostly those referring to sciences and technology.

In summary, obstacles that occur in the areas of (a) military interference, (b) government regulation and control, (c) Greece's delay in its historical evolution, (d) cultural barriers that hinder the introduction of technology, (e) lack of formal media education, and (f) unrelated imported programming are significant barriers that hinder the development of educational broadcasting in Greece.

Suggested solutions for improvement

The discussion of the areas in which the major drawbacks occur provided, indirectly, the suggested solutions for improvements of educational broadcasting in Greece summarized as follows:

1. Careful synthesis, authority, and power of the National Radio Television Council that should expand to include bipartisan representatives as well as people from all social structures. This is a crucial body that will warrant both objectivity and real development.
2. Complete withdrawal of governmental and military interference and influence in Greek broadcasting not only in theory, but in practice. Although military intervention is now less, government control hinders the development of educational broadcasting.
3. Creation of government-supported academic institutions based on traditional telecommunications, mass media, and mass communications curricula that would provide the greatly needed formal education in broadcast media (formal knowledge, practical attitude, critical ability). Hopefully, the newly developed communication and mass media departments of the universities of Greece will provide such opportunity.
4. Implementations of the Broadcast Regulation Act by the NRTC in the form of the English Broadcast Authority, the American Federal Communication Commission (FCC), or the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC), which will generate and enforce policies and guidelines governing the media in all their ramifications and primarily in programming standards, content, and formats.
5. A unified policy, tighter screening, and control over imported broadcasting programs by a special body of the NRTC so that those educational television programs, for example, which arrive in Greece are not damaging to, hinder, or discourage domestic educational programs. Not all imported television programs are good or appropriate for the Greek people and the perpetuation of their culture.
6. To use media themselves, including the press, to discuss and promote the media so that the viewers are informed about the workings of the media. This will start to develop media literature and viewers whose choices of program watching are based on knowledge rather than inferences or chances.

The implementation of these suggestions is neither impractical nor impossible as long as the present Greek broadcasting authorities, and particularly the Minister of Premiership, the NRTC, and the Press, realize how important educational broadcasting is for Greece, how powerful the media can be in improving the quality of life, and how much Greece needs to reach the rest of Europe (and the world) technologically, industrially, and economically.

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