

RADIO BROADCASTING AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL IN COMOROS

Information sheet

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CONTEXT

Educational radio programs are a way to reach a large number of children and to appeal to their listening skills when they can't attend school. In contexts where the Internet is not easily accessible and cannot be used for remote education, it represents an interesting alternative. It can be used in interaction with other materials, such as workbooks, or in conjunction with classroom instruction.

In May 2020, Maeеча (Comoros) launched a radio program, with pre-recorded broadcasts accompanied by a workbook, to enable fifth-grade children who could no longer attend school to follow the essential lessons in their curriculum and pass their end-of-year exams. The programs, broadcast on 3 radios, covered 3 themes of the school program: mathematics, French and awakening. 84% of students in the affected areas passed their 6th grade entrance exams (compared to 80.9% in the rest of the island).

The workbook and the program were created at the same time, to mobilize several learning levers and allow the child to work with the help of the radio program.



Mobilized resources

- 10 volunteer teachers, rewarded with bonuses, meeting every Saturday for 15 weeks;
- 03 pedagogical supervisors, rewarded by bonuses (1 per group of teachers) brought together for 20 Saturdays;
- 03 people forming a project team within Maeеча (coordination);
- 03 local radio stations (purchase of 3 spots per day of 5/10 min) doing the recordings;
- 01 One notebook per student (50% of the price payable by the family);
- 50 50 radio sets distributed.

What is important in creating an educational radio program?

- Choose an appropriate teaching approach and focus on the essentials;
- Select, prepare, train teachers;
- Effectively communicate the existence of the programs in the communities where the children live and involve parents (or other guardians), teachers, and school principals;
- Monitor the students and encourage their participation after the program (workbook);
- Choosing the right radios.

Steps

Choice of program format

A radio program poses very different constraints than in the classroom: the teacher does not have direct access to the students, cannot correct them or complete his explanations as they go along. The length of the radio program and the student's attention span are also very limited in time. The length of the program is also constrained by the available slots and the price of buying spaces (spots) in the radios, and by the cost of creating programs (in time in particular).

The choice of a short and clear format, which goes to the essentials, and which then gives the child the opportunity to "extend" the lesson is therefore essential.

For its radio show, Maeеча made two strong choices:

- The use of an **explanatory** teaching approach, that is to say through which the child is shown the rule to remember, using examples and observation; this approach involves "grinding the words", i.e., ensuring that each word is simple and easy for the child to understand, or that he understands the previous and next word;
- The link between the radio program and an assignment notebook, which allows both the child to have a visual complement to what is said in the program, and then to do exercises during and after the program – these exercises are also communicable to teachers.

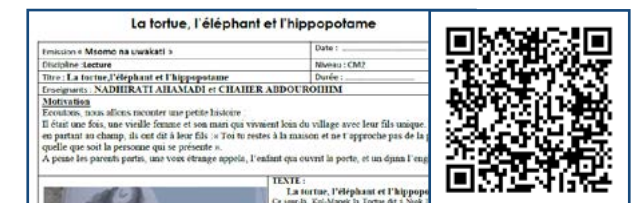


Get to the essentials so that the child can follow

In concrete terms, each lesson should focus on **a single essential element**: exposition of the rule, one or a few telling examples, all in words that are easily understood by the child. If the instruction is not understood, the example not clear... the lesson "goes off the rails" with no way to catch up. The more straight forward it is, the less this risk exists.

To build each lesson, Maeеча simply used summaries of existing lessons selected from the textbooks. The selected lessons were those that seemed most important to the teachers, and were to the point, so they could be transmitted over the radio in 10 minutes. The teachers and supervisors have worked to simplify the terms and instructions as much as possible. The radio lessons were very simplified summaries of the rule, and a step-by-step description of the instructions.

The student workbook from Maeеча allows students to visualize the lesson they are listening to, and to practice. The pages are very standardized so that the students can easily find their way around.



Hints were also given at each lesson to encourage attention: "listen carefully, we are now going to explain the lesson"; "go to page 10; did you understand? open your book to page 10".

Select, prepare, train teachers

When preparing a radio program, it is better to choose motivated, quality teachers rather than teachers who "would sound good on the radio". It is then possible, with the support of the radio station or someone more experienced in this format, to get the teachers to prepare the format properly and then to "pitch their voice" for the show. The most pedagogical teachers will better prepare the materials of the program.

For the purposes of the program, Maeеча selected teachers who were very comfortable with French (which is not their native language) and who had a good reputation - both in terms of their students' success and their level of involvement. The pedagogical supervisors, who know the teachers well, made this selection.

The teachers gathered by Maeеча were divided into 3 groups, to work on early awakening, mathematics, and French. Each group worked with a pedagogical supervisor who reminded them of the requirements of the material and ensured the choice and quality of the sheets. The work was mainly about "pruning" the lesson and choosing the most appropriate words.

The groups made two sheets in parallel: one for the teachers (the program sheet), the other with the content of the lesson but also exercises to integrate the student's notebook. Once the sheets were completed, they were validated by the larger group and then sent to Maeеча's Board of Directors (of retired educational coaches) for approval, before being registered. The teachers then took turns recording the lessons according to their availability and preferences, sometimes doing as many as 4 or 5 takes to make the reading suitable for the radio - coached by the radio team.

Teachers have their own version of the student workbook. It is this version that they read to record the radio programs.

La tortue, l'éléphant et l'hippopotame	
Chers élèves, auditeurs, auditrices, vous suivez l'émission « Moema au wakali », un programme proposé par les CPE de l'école maternelle avec l'appui de FONG MASECHA à destination des élèves de la classe de CM2, vous êtes accompagnés par Madame NADHIRATI AHAMBAZI et Monsieur CHAHER ARDOUBOHIM.	
Mme. & Mr. Bonjour, qu'est-ce que vous nous proposez aujourd'hui ?	
Bonjour, Aujourd'hui nous vous proposons l'étude d'un texte de lecture intitulé « La tortue, l'éléphant et l'hippopotame ». Prenez le document à la page 5 et lisez moi attentivement.	
Les élèves vous avez bien entendu, ceux qui ont le cahier de l'élève, prenez-le et allez à la page 5.	
Émission : « Moema au wakali »	
Concepteur : Lecteur	Titulaire : CM2
Titre : La tortue, l'éléphant et l'hippopotame	
Enseignants : NADHIRATI AHAMBAZI ET CHAHER ARDOUBOHIM	
Comme vous venez de l'entendre, nous allons suivre tout de suite une leçon sur un texte de lecture intitulé « La tortue, l'éléphant et l'hippopotame ».	
Motivation	
Mais de suite d'abord la petite histoire suivante :	



The teachers recorded the programs themselves, reading the lesson, with the technical support of the radios

Inform parents/relatives and give them a place as tutors... but also teachers and school directors

Inform and involve parents

Since the program does not allow for a direct relationship with the teacher, it is important that a tutor be with the child to facilitate the use of the technical device (find the program) and understand and implement the instructions. This role can be given to a person in the household, a neighbour... who must nevertheless know that it is important that they accompany the child.

Maeеча informed the "tutors" in 3 ways of the broadcast schedules and the interest of the program and the notebooks, as well as what was expected of them to accompany the children. During the mobile or radio outreach activities related to hygiene (Covid-19), the program was announced. Maeеча also mobilized the School Council to raise awareness among the school's parents. Finally, the parents had to purchase the notebooks, which again provided the opportunity to tell them the program times and increased their involvement. Afterwards, it was sometimes older brothers or sisters, or the parents of a nearby student, who took over, depending on availability.

Inform teachers and school principals

Teachers and school principals are the point person for students, even when they are no longer attending class. The success of the radio program is partly linked to the support it receives from the teaching staff. Entrusting them with a role in the creation, broadcasting, and accompaniment of the radio program helps to gain their support and to better articulate with their work.

Maeеча informed school principals and teachers about the radio program from the beginning, recruiting teachers to record the programs. Some principals then asked to have the radio spots on a USB stick so that they could broadcast them to students in their classroom. So, Maeеча put the spots in MP3 format (the most used) on USB sticks, which allowed the directors to have a more active role in the broadcast of the radio show. Finally, the teachers were all directly connected to the program and the students via the transmission of the student's notebook for corrections.

Monitor the students and encourage their participation after the program : student's notebook

The program is a very short time for the child, and even if it is done correctly, it is important to be able to check the child's comprehension so that you can "catch" him when he stalls, answer his questions, and help him correct his mistakes. This role can be filled by parents/guardians, teachers, support groups, or a combination.

Maeеча introduced the student notebook that works in synergy with its radio broadcasts. During each lesson, the child uses the notebook to visualize the lesson (for example, if the program talks about a WORD, it is written on the notebook); but also after the lesson to perform exercises. Every week, the notebook can be returned to the teachers by the parents/guardians, so that they can correct the exercises. This helps to maintain the link between teachers and children, to identify the difficulties of the student. The teacher would then take phone or Viber time to check in with the students, collect their questions and reinforce where they were struggling.

Choosing the right radios

The choice of the radio station(s) on which the program will be broadcast, as well as the time slots, is important to ensure access to the program for the greatest number of students (depending on the area to be covered). Depending on the context, national, local or web radio will be preferred. Local radio is generally cheaper and more accessible for local action. Program times should correspond to times when households have electricity and if possible, when an adult is at home. But in reality, they are also constrained by radio programming, availability and possibly the price of available space.

Maeеча has contracted with 3 local radio stations, as the rural areas in which they work are poorly covered by national radio (let alone television). The contract covered both the purchase of radio spaces (3 per day) and the recording of lessons. According to an evaluation carried out by Maeеча, about 65% of the students of the 25 schools supported by the association were able to listen to each program. Maeеча also provided about fifty radios for households that had no other means of listening. Each program was broadcast 3 times (morning, noon, evening) to facilitate listening. Families had been informed by the passage of radio messages during awareness programs around Covid-19, then by school council members visiting their homes.

Monitor and evaluate the system

The monitoring of the radio system can be both quantitative (how many children have access to the program, how many pass the exams at the end of the year?) and qualitative (what do the children think of the program? are the lessons understood correctly? who helped the children when they were listening? teacher satisfaction...).

To measure the success of the program, Maeеча's supervisors for example went to the areas at the time of the broadcast and noted groups of children around the radios, had their own children listen to the program, collected listening statistics... This allowed them to identify that the program was a little too long and to aim for even shorter programs. The teachers also continuously monitored the students' progress through the notebooks. Maeеча also conducted an in-home evaluation to measure the proportion of students who reinforced their learning through the program, as well as the appropriateness of the pace and difficulty of the lessons offered.

Alternatives

The radio programs can also be filmed with the children. They then become a different pedagogical tool, which encourages expression in the classroom, then the revision of concepts (replay), and can also mitigate the effects of an absence in class and help respond to other crises (rising cost of transportation, insecurity ...).

When the children returned to class, Maeеча recorded programs directly in the classroom with the teachers and the children, on specific sequences. These programs can then be made available to children as podcasts, especially for support groups. Children can listen again to remember the lesson, and then their achievements are checked. It also makes them feel valued.

It is also possible that older students shoot programs for the little ones, so that they learn by identifying with their peers.

If a student workbook cannot be created, it is possible to refer to a textbook that may or may not be used in the classroom, or to other sources that are accessible to all children, but this will be less suitable. One can also imagine working directly with the teacher at the end of the week to "reread" what has been learned.



Why is this interesting?

The educational radio program is interesting to fill a lack of classroom instruction and bring "essentials" to a regular rhythm, or as a support tool to review lessons:

- It allows the child to work on his listening skills, while at a distance the work is often visual (notebook, platform...); used in addition to material supports, it becomes a complete tool;
- It can reach a large number of children;
- It has an event and social aspect that can allow children (and adults) to get together; on a daily basis, it is a motivating moment for the child;
- Teachers focus on the heart of the matter and are able to produce more synthetic lessons that emphasize the essentials - which is also applicable in the classroom;
- When it is associated with an educational notebook, it can keep a link between the teacher and the child, via the notebook which shuttles between one and the other.

Points to watch out for

- The format is very constrained and can only be very short; the teaching is therefore synthetic, but one should not want to put as much content as in a course;
- The radio program takes time to create; everything must be ready before you start recording and broadcasting;
- It is important to check the effective radio coverage of homes; a complementary device (live broadcast + podcast) can improve availability;
- The radio program does not allow for participation/interaction with the children; therefore, it is necessary to provide other forms of interaction with the children so that they are not left alone with their doubts; the role of the tutors is also important in this sense;
- Be careful, when the program is offered in parallel with other lessons not to be broadcast during class time, for example.

www.partage.org

French association of international solidarity created in 1973

The association PARTAGE helps the most disadvantaged children in the world to grow up in the respect of their fundamental rights.
PARTAGE supports actions that help remove the obstacles to the global development of children.

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