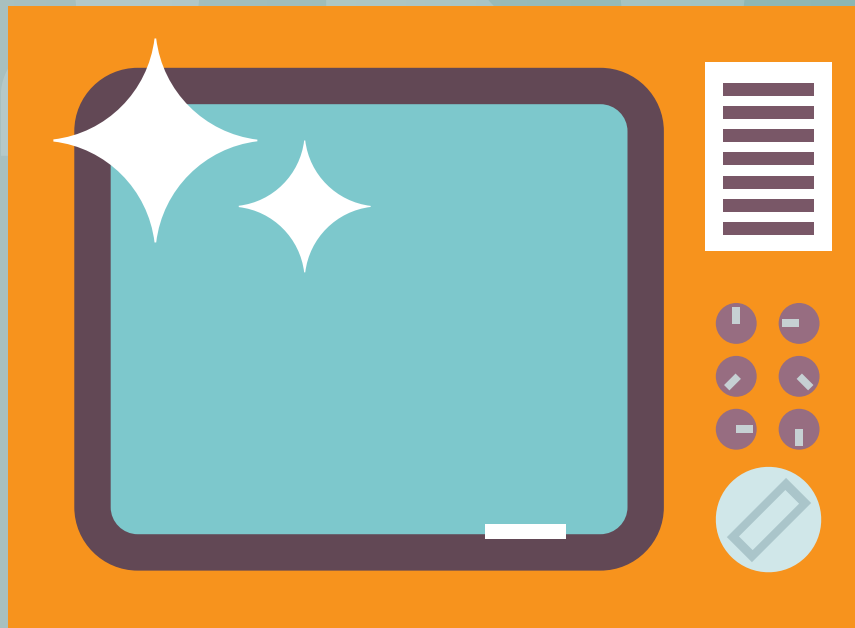




Pratham

Every Child in School & Learning Well

ANYBODY CAN MAKE A TV EPISODE



BACKGROUND

Why are learning and engagement important during these times?

The number of children, youth, and adults, who are not attending school or educational institutions because of COVID-19 is rising across the world. Though temporary, school closures have a significant impact on students, especially those in underprivileged context.

Over the past 25 years, Pratham has been at the forefront of addressing the educational inequality facing India's children and youth. Today, as the world confronts an unprecedented challenge, Pratham is leveraging their experience and agility to both navigate the pandemic and continue to engage in children in a fun and practical learning activities.

Pratham has explored and implemented learning via various platforms ever since they took on the vision to support learning in the exigent times of this pandemic. Currently, Pratham has leveraged technology and their expertise in learning to reach out to learners via SMSes, Whatsapp messages, Radio, and Television.

In the month of May, Pratham opened up a dialogue with the Bihar government regarding developing educational content for TV for 1-5th grade learners. Subsequently, the team at Pratham submitted a sample that was well received by the Government. Henceforth, Pratham received the opportunity to create TV content in partnership with the Bihar government.

THE RATIONALE BEHIND USING TV AS A DELIVERY MODEL

Learning is always fun and fulfilling when the textbooks are substantiated with both audio and visuals. Moreover, e-learning has been a part of the educational paradigm for a very long time. The same concept of AV learning has the power to transcend beyond the usual online learning platform and take a channel such as televisions.

TV and radio is an effective mechanism to promote interactivity. 'Interactive TV' and 'interactive radio' directly reference programs that spark engagement among users. A few methods to create interactive Radio and TV are introducing pauses and having a facilitator to encourage responses from listeners. Given the school closures, it is beneficial to take advantage of parents and caregivers who have time as they can assist in ensuring that activities are interactive. In order for parents and family members to participate, the instructions should be simple and easy to follow. This includes ensuring that the language of instruction is the one parents are most comfortable with. Even though many children have become reliant on TV learning due to school closures, this experience has made it evident that TV can be used as a medium for learning far in the future, for those who have dropped out of school or are unable to attend because of work and other responsibilities.

STAGES OF TV EPISODE DEVELOPMENT

The process involves three main stages of the individual TV episode creation process, which Pratham has designated as pre, mid, and post. Within each stage, there are different goals as well as teams involved. One of the most important parts of the process is delegating roles and curating the content of the episode, as an adequate organisation is a catalyst for the episode's success. A brief introduction to each stage and its targets is provided below.

PRE - PRODUCTION

Ideation

In this section, the content team focuses on competencies targeted for the episode, brainstorms the structure, and curates the necessary content for the program.

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Segmentation

The content team chooses how to divide the episode. The episode is usually split into subjects, and then the subjects are split accordingly into shorter segments that will both impart knowledge and capture children's attention.

The format (video game or story) for each segment is decided during this stage. Preliminary scripts and animations are also developed in this stage.

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Roles and responsibilities

The team designates roles for each person depending on the segments and content chosen. The key is to harness people's existing talent. If one team member is experienced with PowerPoint, they can be given the task of creating the PPT's animations. Similarly, if another member is passionate about being the voice of the story, they should be given that role.

Delegating roles and responsibilities is essential. They should be detailed in full before the creation of the episode because any confusion can result in significant setbacks. It is also crucial to keep the communication loop open. There are always unprecedented challenges that can occur and open communication will allow the team members to effectively overcome any hurdles that may be presented before them.

MID - PRODUCTION

Recording

In this step, the voice over is recorded and the PPT and visual elements are designed by artists. For content that is existing such as games, there is an option to record one's screen playing the games. The voice can then be recorded afterwards. It is important to note that voice and visuals are almost always separated, as it creates better results. The voice-over and visuals are stitched in post-production stage by the media team in preparation for the episode premiere.

Data Procurement

Once the raw content has been created, the resource team member will collect and save and organize all data. It is also advisable for all content to be in one place. This allows for the material to be better organised and limits the possibility of missing or mixing up.

POST - PRODUCTION

Data Sharing

Data is arranged by script sequence and shared with media team members, such as the editor.

Editing

Editor stitches the various videos in accordance with the scripts. The editor will also stitch the various segments to each other, thereby creating a full TV episode.

Final Rendering

The editor will then share the draft with all parties involved and will take any necessary feedback before finalising.

Within each stage of developing a TV episode and program, multiple different technologies were used, which will be detailed in a later section. Once the foundation of the TV programme is laid out, then each episode comes to life through two major processes detailed out in the next section.



PROCESS

In creating educational content for TV, there are two main processes.

- The structure and plan of the TV curriculum as a whole.
- An individual TV episode that requires the knowledge of content creation and design.

Pratham has firsthand experience with both of these processes and has undertaken both efficient and thoughtful mechanisms to ensure that the TV program flows smoothly and each episode of the programme is engaging and helpful to children. Refer to the work done with the Bihar government to get an overview of the work carried out.

THE PARTNERSHIP WITH BIHAR GOVERNMENT

A CASE STUDY

The Bihar Government requested Pratham to provide TV content in such a way that it focused on Hindi and Maths for Standard 1-2 and Standard 3-5 once a day for an hour for each group. Pratham's experience allowed the teams to structure episodes that not only adhered to these requests but were inherently interesting to children.

Since Pratham has always been centred on fieldwork, the teams were able to make decisions that best suit the children. Pratham had a good understanding of the level of content that needed to be presented for each group and additional guidance was taken from the NCERT curriculum. In terms of engagement, Pratham used strategies such as character development, stories, and games. In addition, Pratham has ensured that none of the TV episodes requires any materials, outside of the TV, pencil and paper. Pratham is also working towards increasing the number of languages and dialects used in TV episodes. While the Bihar TV programme is in Hindi, the Pratham team is aware of the nuances and differences in Hindi spoken in one region versus another and is working to incorporate that into the program. These numerous strategies have ensured that the reach of the program is as high as possible.

The structure of each episode was somewhat dependent on the government's request for Hindi and Maths, but Pratham chose to cover about 3-4 concepts per episode and spend less than 6 minutes on each concept. Pratham also chose to keep the structure of each episode consistent. While there was flexibility within the episodes, the process of creation and foundation of the episode was consistent, which gave children a sense of familiarity.

Pratham was in a unique position and a very advantageous one because of its existing content. The vast number of games, rhymes, stories, and videos on the Pradigi App was a great resource and Pratham has had the opportunity to channel these for use on another medium. Pratham decided very early on that each episode should be independent of each other, in order not to limit children who are unable to watch every day; however, there is a gradual progression of content from episodes in one month to the next month.

A sample in the specified format was submitted to the government on May 25th. This sample got approved and the production of TV learning programs started henceforth. The requirement was 2

one-hour-long episodes that were supposed to air 5 days a week, which means 10 episodes in a week. The Bihar government mostly wanted to focus on Math and Language (Hindi) through this program.

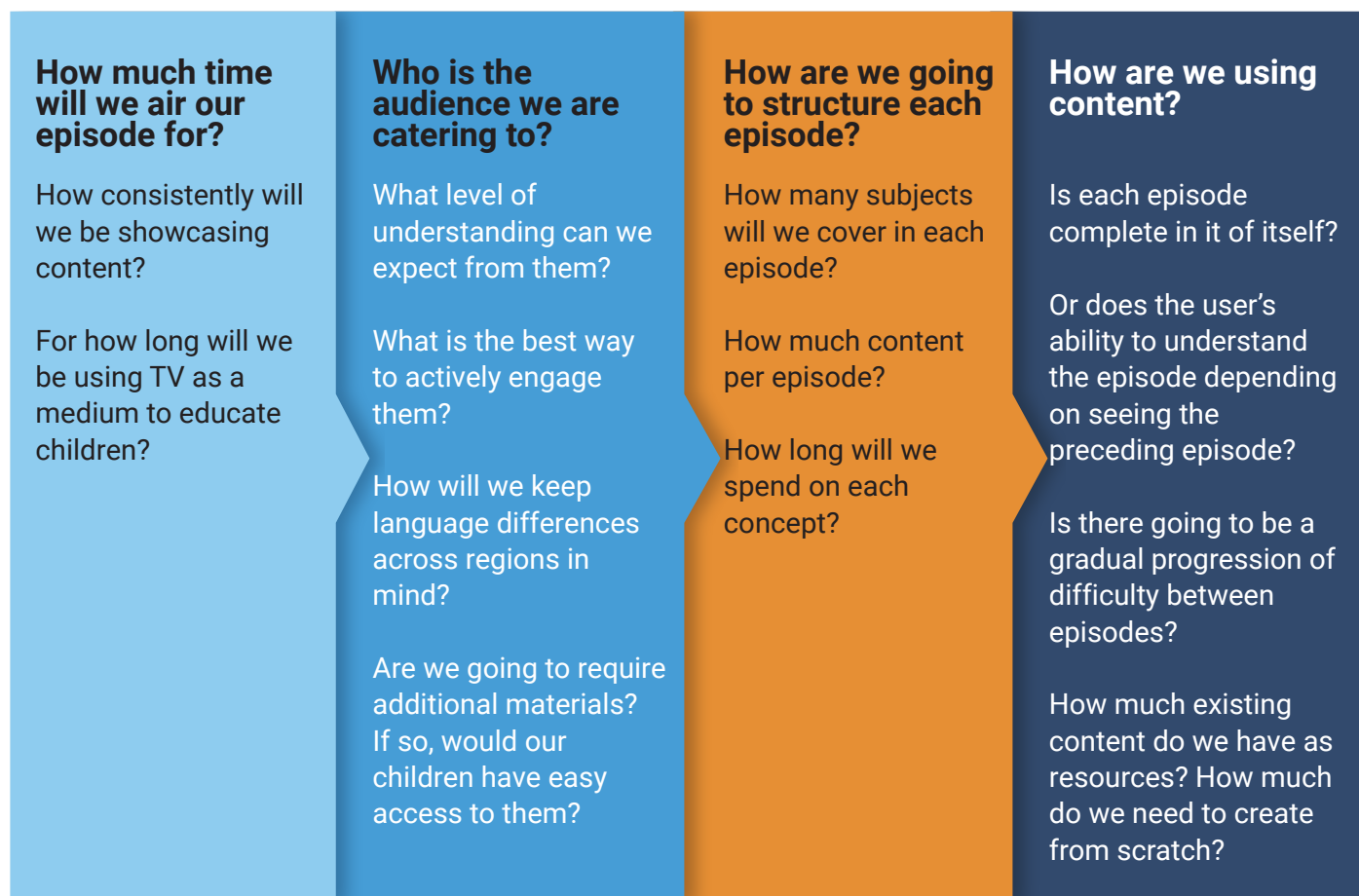
The Pratham team meticulously worked together to deliver the first two episodes on June 1st, which were well received by both the government and the learners. However, the major challenge was the rate at which the programs were getting created. Initially, the team was creating 10 episodes in 10 days (1 episode per day), which is a very low rate as per the requirement. This probed the team to find more sustainable ways of producing one-hour-long TV programs.

After careful and enhanced planning, the Pratham team today is able to produce 10 episodes in 7 days, which is almost a 50% improvement from the previous (10 episodes in 10 days) efficiency production rate. The purpose of this document is to provide the necessary insights to other creators, who wish to use TV episodes as a platform to teach children, not just in the times of the pandemic, but beyond.

Pratham's various initiatives have enabled the TV program to have a significant impact on children in Bihar.

Our learning from the work done for the Bihar government has been outlined in this document in the form of recommendations. Recommendations and suggestions are for the overall production of the TV episodes, which also includes the content design, technological hacks and certain thumb rules that one can keep in mind while creating an episode.

When designing content for TV, there are a couple of questions that can help guide content teams, relating to logistics, the context of users, the structure of episodes, and existing content.



By answering these questions and ironing out the foundation of the TV program, it becomes easier to visualize and create individual TV episodes.

Following elements can act as parameters to gain context of the learners and can later contribute to the part in which the structure is created and detailed with the underlying elements.

An illustration of a hand holding a lightbulb, with the lightbulb positioned over a target. The target has concentric circles, and the lightbulb is in the center. The hand is orange, and the lightbulb is yellow with a black base. The background is a light blue gradient.

CONTENT CREATION

Learning requirement of my learners- This is everything from subjects to prioritised topics and competencies. This is an essential parameter as it defines the guiding tool of the curriculum that needs to fit into the structure.

Age group of my learners- The attention span of learners is very much related to their age group. Younger kids do not have more than 4 minutes of attention span. This knowledge can come in hand while setting the timings of the various segments in the structure.

Available internal resources- Curriculum is usually internally available in most of the organisations. In Pratham, for example, a lot of fun stories, games, and the pre-designed curriculum was available on the PraDigi App, Pratham Open school and Story Weaver. The curriculum and learning content available on all these platforms have been created over the years for various projects and purposes. Since the TV production is an extensive process, already available content within the organisation is also a great starting point for deciding the structure.

Key pointers for creating content

Content can be created in both the ways- one can either generate from scratch or refurbish the content that is already available. Whatever the method maybe, there are some important points that build the essence of the content, and add to relevance and suitability of the episode.

In this section, we will cover some of these points with the examples from one of our created episodes. It is advisable for the content designers to keep these elements in the content that they either create or select.

Engaging material- Engagement is an essential and desirable element of every kind of learning. This factor becomes even more important for audiovisual learning. Fun and engaging content appeals to the curiosity of the learner. Engagement becomes even more important when the learners are learning at their homes without the guidance of a teacher. While it is good and desirable to have parents' investment in the learning of their children, it still is an unfair expectation as the parents might be engaged in other activities. Therefore, the onus of learning is entirely on children. Given this, it is imperative to make content that can capture the attention span of the learners and make learning more interesting for them.

Breaks- Our daily school timetables are also planned in a way such that the children get enough and adequate breaks in between to rejuvenate and internalise the learning. TV episodes designed by Pratham have 2 kinds of breaks in their entire episode- one is a fun break and the other is an English learning break. These breaks act as rejuvenating fillers that also impart knowledge in some way or the other.

Asking questions- Questions are a great way of piquing curiosity in the child of mind. In a learning model in which there is no teacher, curiosity becomes even more necessary, as the learning is mostly driven by the child.

Developing consistency- While one can experiment with the content within the episode, it is highly advisable to keep the structure consistent throughout the broadcasting timeline. This conditions the mind of the learners and allows them to know what to expect. This greatly increases their concentration on learning. It is easier to compromise on this factor and confuse it with uniqueness; however, this could deviate the mind of the learner as she watches something unexpected or different from her set expectations. Uniqueness can be included through content within the structure.

Limited dependency on other materials- By design, aim that learning through these TV episodes only requires a pencil and paper. This makes learning hassle-free, something that is desirable especially in challenging times of the pandemic. It also makes learning more equitable as each family has access to different materials at home, and requiring certain materials may automatically exclude children who do not have access to them.

Advancing storyline through characters- The TV episodes by Pratham had three characters that became a part of the content delivery. As consistency is highly valued, these characters have been kept throughout the episodes. The characters are generally introduced at the starting of the episodes to introduce the theme or learning objective, with an interesting script that appeals to the learners. The characters are made very relatable. The voice should also be in their regional language. This also adds to the fun aspect of the video.

Voice-Over by Peers - Evidence of enhanced learning through peer learning is even seen in classrooms. Children learn best with each other. Picking up from this trend, it is advisable to do the voice-overs for the teaching material in the voices of children. This again makes the content engaging and relatable.

LOGISTICS AND TECHNOLOGY TIPS AND TRICKS

Within each step, there were opportunities to take advantage of multiple types of technologies, from video creation software such as Streamlabs to simple voice over apps found on a mobile phone. The technology programs used by Pratham in each phase are noted below.

Under the Pre-production stage:

-All episode planning takes place on Google Sheets, allowing for open communication and constant updates among multiple members. Marking roles and responsibilities on Google Sheets is especially helpful as it keeps everyone informed regarding the division of labour for the episode.

-PowerPoint is an effective tool to create engaging animations. Oftentimes people think that complicated software is needed, but the best option is always to take advantage of the resources one has at their hands.

Under the Mid-production stage:

-Since the mid-stage includes the majority of the creation process for the episode, there are multiple technologies used to form the product.

- For screen recordings of games and other content, Streamlabs is used.
 - Note that only the visual screen recording is done via this program. The audio is recording separately.
 - Note that if Streamlabs is causing difficulty, there are many other free software that can be used.
 - Pratham found Streamlabs to be the most effective after trying out multiple methods, including screen recordings on Zoom and Free Cam.
- The voice-over for screen recordings is done by a voice memo app that can be found on most phones.
- Videos, such as ones starring team members' children, can be done by any camera app on a mobile phone.

Under the Post-production stage:

-Video editing apps and programs such as Viva Video and inShot are used to stitch together content, perform any necessary scrubbing of audio, and finalise the episode.

-Hangouts is used for team members to review the completed episode together.

Main Technology Tips:

1. Be flexible with technology:

a. There will be times when a software is not working correctly or a team member's internet is slow. Ensure that your team has methods in place to easily pivot from the original plan and use alternative options when needed.

b. For similar reasons, do not rely on only one software/ program to complete the episode. By using multiple different technological resources, the episode flows smoothly as each technological aspect assists in building the program in a unique way.

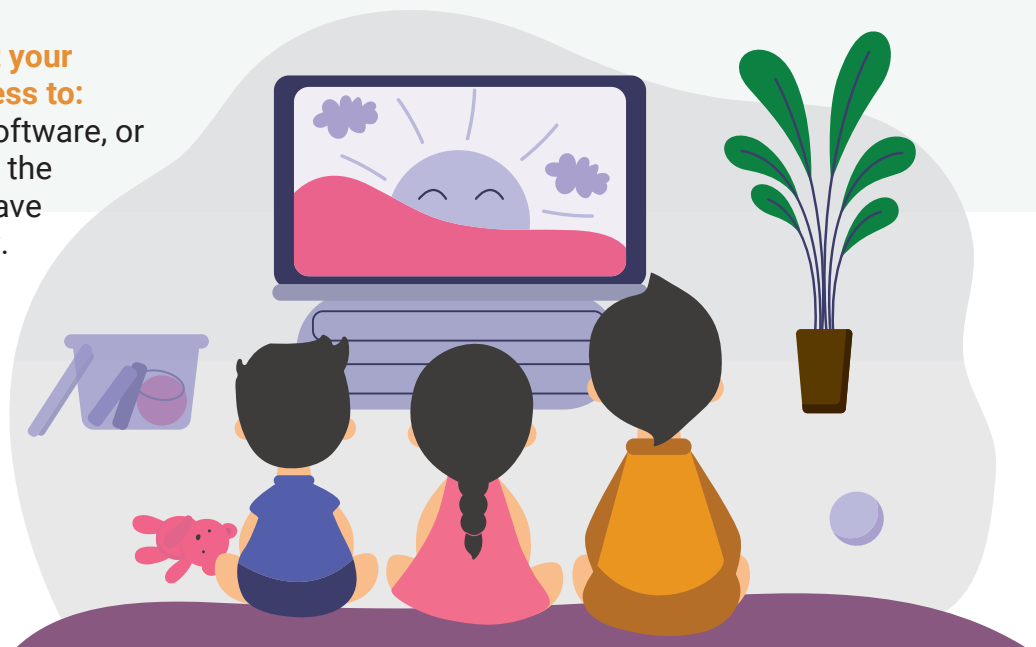
2. Because of the many technological limitations, do not aim for perfection:

a. Recognize that hindrances will occur, but devise adequate solutions and understand that the finalised product will not be equivalent to that which can be produced in a professional recording studio.

b. Some potential challenges include slow internet, problems with software depending on the device being used, limited backgrounds, props, and lighting, intensive design requirements, and electricity cuts.

3. Harness the resources that your organisation already has access to:

a. Whether it be content, software, or experience, take advantage of the talents your team members have to create programs effectively.



MONITORING & EVALUATION:

It is essential to have some type of monitoring and evaluation methods in place before implementing any type of educational program.

- Pratham has taken advantage of CRLs and external partners to convey important feedback regarding the TV episodes. The response Pratham has received has been overwhelmingly positive, with most families who have access to a TV taking advantage of the TV program.
 - Pratham teams have received many pictures of children watching Pratham's TV programs. While this does not gauge comprehension, many a time, these children also record themselves playing the roles of characters in the TV program and taking advantage of the peer-centred learning approach.
 - The questions that Pratham asks during the TV program serves as another checkpoint for comprehension. While Pratham does not have the real-time answers of children watching the program, the questions can help children and families understand the learning targets expected from the episode. Parents who have the time may also be seen helping children through the TV content and guiding them, so the children may successfully answer the questions asked of them.
 - As mentioned in the background, not all families are able to access a TV and even those who are able to may have prior commitments at the times of the showings. In order to receive more comprehensive data, Pratham will be asking for TRPs as the program progresses.
- While Pratham is still awaiting comprehensive statistics, it is evident from the feedback that the TV program has been extremely beneficial to the children.