

Are You Both Practical and Visionary? _____

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THE QUALIFICATIONS, functions, relationships, indeed, the very title of the person who may be in charge of an audio-visual instruction program have been the subjects of much writing and discussion. In fact even the desirability of having such a person has been questioned. However, the audio-visual program, in spite of controversies about who may direct, how, when, where and under whom, has grown slowly and painfully from a nebulous and indefinite beginning some twenty years ago to its present status, still a little nebulous, still a little indefinite.

There are many reasons for this labored growth, for the lack of acceptance of the audio-visual program, and for its poorly defined place and functions. In the last twenty years we have had many important developments for communicating social experience. These include the radio, sound motion pictures, sound film strips, home and school recording devices, and others. They have come into our experi-

ence much more rapidly than we realize. We have accepted them generally, but as far as education is concerned, we still stand in awe of their complexities and their possibilities. We give them a place in our lives but still we are not sure of all their ways and all their uses for even now their characteristics, qualities, and values change overnight.

It is no wonder then in the face of these rapid developments that the audio-visual program is not clearly defined and that the person who may head it is as yet somewhat without a place and status in education.

The Little-Red-Schoolhouse Complex

School boards and the school-supporting public have to be convinced that the audio-visual program, the purchase of audio-visual aids and equipment, and the hiring of "specialists" are valid and worthwhile. After all, many school board members found the little red schoolhouse entirely adequate in learning opportunities—and even comfortable physically! Their school days are now surrounded with a "rosy" hue of sentimentality and though they were hard days they were the days of rugged individualism, days when neither learning nor anything else was made easy. As a result, many school boards have to be brought up to date and made to realize that this mid-twentieth century world changes rapidly, that we are more interdependent, and that we have to learn more and learn it better and faster. They have

The increasingly important role of audio-visual materials in education has focused attention on the qualifications of those of us who manipulate the projector or operate the turntable. As the author of this article points out, the person who uses learning aids is in a position comparable to that of an auto mechanic who is expected to understand both the social significance of the automobile and what makes the motor knock. Lieut. Orville Goldner is head of the Training Film Branch, Photographic Division of the Bureau of Aeronautics, U. S. Navy. Before entering the service, he was educational exhibit technician for the State Department of Education in California.

to be shown that the audio-visual program is legitimate, that it gives flexibility, stimulation, interest, and a new potency and reality to the teaching-learning experience. So too, many administrators and supervisors, many teachers and parents have to be shown that these "gadgets," these paraphernalia are legitimate, useful, forceful, in fact, necessary. And, all the prejudices, all the lack of understanding surrounding the new tools of education must be overcome before the audio-visual program will become the mature expression of a mature educational method.

Day by day we get more accustomed to motion pictures in the classroom, radio in the classroom, voice recording in the classroom, and other electrical-mechanical experiences in the teaching-learning process. Little by little we are learning to use and evaluate, plan and organize, new classroom procedures to gain the optimum effectiveness of this new flexibility and in the meantime we are not too sure what to call what we are doing or going to do and we are not too sure who is supposed to do it.

Any statement on these subjects and on what constitutes an effective audio-visual education program must be built on the premise that no effective audio-visual education program is possible without aggressive, informed, and imaginative leadership. The emphasis in this article is on the director and leadership of the audio-visual education program.

Why Have a Director?

The place and value of audio-visual aids in instruction have been studied and evaluated in a substantial number of research studies. These studies show conclusively that audio-visual materials have great value in education and that the complexities surrounding the selection, use,

and evaluation of audio-visual materials demand the employment of a specialist whether the audio-visual program is city-wide, countywide or statewide.

In spite of the fact that literally millions of dollars have been spent on research in this field and that the results have been accepted generally, there are still those who think that a specially qualified director of audio-visual instruction is not necessary. Further, there are those who continue to think that audio-visual instruction programs consist of having available a miscellaneous collection of equipment and materials on a warehouse basis. Frequently so-called departments of audio-visual instruction are nothing but storage and distributing centers under the part-time direction of some administrator, supervisor or teacher, or a full time clerk who knows how to rewind, clean, and repair film and how to wrap packages and keep simple records. Undoubtedly, the shortsightedness on the part of school people that makes this type of audio-visual instruction department possible in a modern educational program is partly responsible for the indefinite status of audio-visual instruction.

A list of reasons for having a specialist in charge of the audio-visual program must include the following:

1. To guarantee effective use of audio-visual aids in the classroom.
2. To conduct research and evaluation projects for improvement of teaching methods with audio-visual aids.
3. To extend the use of audio-visual materials and devices.
4. To determine the need for new materials and devices in terms of the instructional program.
5. To establish efficient storage, cataloging, and distribution methods.
6. To establish budgets for the opera-

Soldier-Sailor Education

For a description of training in the Army and Navy, including discussions of the use of audio-visual aids, we suggest *Education in the Armed Services*, a new publication of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development. Written by members of the training staffs of the Army and the Navy, this pamphlet reveals major policies and practices underlying educational programs in the services. Included are twelve pages of reproductions of training materials, such as instructor training bulletins of the Navy and pages from the *Army Reader* used in teaching illiterates. *Education in the Armed Services* may be purchased for 50 cents from the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, NEA, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

- tion of the audio-visual department.
7. To carry on an informing program in the system and in the community on the place and value of audio-visual aids in education.

The importance of this last reason for having a specialist in audio-visual instruction cannot be over-emphasized. It implies a selling job to establish audio-visual aids in the system and the community as essential and necessary tools of instruction to rank with textbooks and all the other realia already accepted for the modern educational program.

A comprehensive program of administration, supervision, teacher training, and promotion is implied in the above reasons for having a specialist director of audio-visual instruction.

What the Job Consists Of

The work to be done by the director of audio-visual instruction dictates certainly the qualifications necessary for effective prosecution of the work. There are few other positions in the modern educational program which demand the unique combination of aptitudes necessary to the director of the audio-visual program. A comparable situation would be

that of the auto mechanic who had to understand the social significance of the automobile and who at the same time had to determine, establish, and implement techniques and uses that would guarantee its effectiveness in the service of man. From *Motion Pictures in Education* we have this relevant paragraph: "Administration of visual aids has both mechanical and educational aspects. It is concerned on the one hand with the organization of materials from the standpoint of assembly, classification, care, physical production, and distribution; and on the other with their integration into the educational program, through courses of study and the development of teaching techniques by means of teacher training, supervision and experimentation".¹ It is obvious that there should be an extensive list of qualifications for the person who undertakes this job.

An exceptionally clear and full text on the qualifications for a director of audio-visual instruction was written by Anna V. Dorris in 1928.² The statement by Dorris

¹ Dale, Edgar, Dunn, F. W., Hoban, C. F. Jr., and Schneider, E.: *Motion Pictures in Education*, a Summary, New York; H. W. Wilson Co., 1937, 472 pp.

² Dorris, Anna V.: *Visual Instruction in the Public Schools*, New York; Ginn & Co., 1928, 477 pp.

on the director's qualifications appears to be as complete as any in print. However, at that time we did not have the intricacies of sound as combined with motion pictures and film strips, classroom recording devices, or radio on a large scale. Inasmuch as all these new devices and modifications of old are considered a part of the audio-visual department and a responsibility of the director of audio-visual instruction, his task is much more complex than it was in 1928. And these multiplying new responsibilities demand additional qualifications. They demand that the director be imaginative and open-minded toward new tools and techniques; they demand an awareness to trends and an ability to anticipate new areas of expansion. And further, they demand the ability to understand and manipulate an ever increasing number of electrical-mechanical devices and an ability to evaluate and compare the intrinsic and extrinsic values of similar devices in order to guarantee wise procurement.

The Director Cooperates

Most research agrees that the director of the audio-visual education program should be responsible directly to the superintendent. The relationship of the director of audio-visual instruction to other members of the staff is largely determined by the status of the audio-visual department in the school system and its position in relation to other departments of the system. The important point is made in most literature on the subject that the audio-visual department should bear a "staff" relationship rather than a "line" relationship with other departments because of its large number of "service" functions.

The close cooperation between the

audio-visual department and all others in the school system, although emphasized frequently in the literature, has not always been observed in practice. This is due, in part, to the degree of emphasis placed on the audio-visual program and its poor integration with the total teaching-learning experience. In school systems where audio-visual departments are without their own organization and are attached to some other department, the status of the audio-visual program and its director may be such as to render close cooperation impossible.

Cooperation with regular and special supervisors, curriculum specialists and coordinators is one of the *keys* to an effective audio-visual program. A qualified director will realize the advantages and necessity of this cooperative relationship.

If any one relationship of a director of audio-visual instruction can be more important than any other, his relationship with the classroom teacher is that one. There can be no genuine success in the audio-visual program regardless of the quantity and quality of the equipment, materials, and devices available unless the director's relationship with teachers is on an understanding, helpful, and cooperative basis. The director will work more with teachers, both singly and in groups, than with any other members of his school system. Only through close cooperation with teachers can the director of audio-visual instruction become fully cognizant of the problems of the classroom and implications for audio-visual departments.

Finally, the relationships and functions of the director of audio-visual instruction should be considered as implying the same democratic principles as those accepted for other supervisors.

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