

# ETV's Role in State and Region

*What are curricular implications  
of state and regional  
ETV networks?*

WHAT are some of the principles upon which curriculum development in this country traditionally has been based? I believe that the way in which the following statements are worded would be fairly consistent with a point of view held by most curriculum workers today. The principles are these:

1. The ideal unit for curriculum development in its specific and detailed aspects is an individual school faculty operating under the leadership of the school principal. This recognizes the fact that no two schools are exactly alike. Since individual schools differ, curriculum adaptations must be made in a particular school and in each classroom within the school.

2. Since many common problems, conditions and needs exist in any local school system, there are many aspects of curriculum development which can be worked out most satisfactorily for the local school system as a whole.

3. By taking this one step further, we bring the state into the picture. We recognize that some of these problems, conditions and needs are common to the entire state and can, therefore, be worked on state-wide. It is, therefore, desirable to have a broad general curriculum framework developed at the state level. Within this framework, local school systems and individual schools are encouraged and assisted to develop specific programs most appropriate to their situations. I am certain that this could be taken still another step and applied to a region of the country to the extent that problems, conditions and needs are found to be common throughout the region.

4. Changing the curriculum means changing people. Processes used in development of curriculum materials and content should not only provide useful materials but should also provide for professional growth of those engaged in the process. Then too, people understand better and tend to support those decisions they have helped to make.

5. Administration and supervision of individual schools throughout our nation

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are delegated by state laws to local school districts. State-wide and regional educational groups, therefore, should always work with and through local leadership and should be active in the discovery and development of educational leadership at all levels.

If we believe these principles to be sound, then there need be no controversy over whether the curriculum should be built at the state level or at the local level. It is not an "either/or" proposition. It becomes readily apparent that some aspects of curriculum development are most appropriately worked on entirely at the individual school level. Others are more appropriately handled at the system-wide level and at the state level. I am certain that some aspects would profit from regional as well as nation-wide consideration.

### Meeting Varied Needs

It would seem to me, then, that the effects of educational broadcasting networks would be beneficial to local school communities to the extent that these principles were carefully observed. This would mean that aspects of curriculum development undertaken for network use at either state or regional levels would be those which met needs considered to be most common and most widespread throughout the state and the region.

In other words, persons responsible for developing programs of network educational broadcasting should carefully study and select those aspects of the curriculum which can most appropriately be developed and presented via the educational broadcasting network. Just now a vast amount of experimentation and research is going on in attempting to determine what subjects and what goals of education can be best enhanced

through television. Similarly, we need to determine how widely it is appropriate to standardize curricular offerings through network presentations.

It is well known that effective teaching depends greatly on a knowledge of the learner's personal characteristics, including his capacities, interests and aspirations. The problems of providing for individual differences, motivation, development of the so-called intangible outcomes of education, and the like, which already exist in local television and radio teaching simply become more intensified in considering network programming.

Curriculum workers are extremely interested in other problems in the consideration of broadcasting and of telecasting networks. The extent to which network presentations will be expected to provide for direct teaching and the extent to which they will be intended to serve as a supplementary aid to teaching are problems which need careful study. Perhaps, here again we can expect no "either/or" answer.

The effect of education via the network will be good only to the extent to which programming takes into account tested knowledge regarding conditions essential for desirable learning. For example, teaching a course to students in medical school where a high degree of maturity and motivation can be assumed is quite different from trying to teach arithmetic to a second-grader who may or may not want to learn arithmetic at that particular moment.

The effectiveness of network teaching, then, will depend to a considerable degree upon how well local teachers

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*This article is a portion of the statement made by Dr. Moorer, who represented ASCD during the Washington Conference on the "Feasibility and Role of State and Regional Networks in Educational Broadcasting."*

believe that they are part of the team which has a job to do in having students motivated and ready to learn that which is about to be taught via the network.

### Experimental Attitude

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is interested primarily in the improvement of education and in the extension of high quality education to all children and youth. We are not interested in doing the same old thing just as well through some other means. We are interested in continual and substantial improvement of the entire educational process. I think this point of view was well stated at the ASCD's annual conference in Cincinnati in March 1959, where an assembly on educational television came to this conclusion:

The unanimous agreement of the panel was that educational television is used advantageously when its primary purpose is better education—not solving the teacher shortage. Further, an experimental attitude toward educational television *must* be maintained because we know so little about this medium.

I would not want to be misunderstood at this point and labeled as being one opposed to the extension of local educational broadcasting through state and regional networks. I am convinced that we can learn how to use television as a most powerful instrument in upgrading and extending education for old and young alike throughout our nation. I am simply trying to point out some of the cautions which, it seems to me, should be observed in the process of extending our efforts.

In line with the principles of curriculum development previously enunciated, I believe that we already have a well-developed and generally accepted

rationale for curriculum development at the state level which would certainly be applicable to state educational broadcasting networks. In addition, in some sections of the country patterns of regional cooperation have been emerging for many years.

In the Southern states, for example, the Southern States Work Conference, sponsored by the state departments of education and the state education associations of the Southern region, has met annually at Daytona Beach, Florida, since 1940 to consider educational problems of common interest and concern throughout the region. This conference has produced publications which have been widely used throughout the Southern states, including a portfolio of programming practices entitled "Public Schools and Television" issued in 1958.

Another example of regional cooperation in the South has been the Southern Regional Education Board.

I would urge that we continue to maintain adequate safeguards against diminishing local responsibility for curriculum development as we work at state and regional levels to extend educational broadcasting networks. Perhaps one of the strongest traditions in American education is that of local control of the schools in each community.

In this country most educators and lay citizens have always believed that the education of American youth can best be served and our freedoms best preserved by keeping the control of education close to home; yet, as you all know, this concept has been subject to a considerable amount of challenge within the past year or so, as witnessed by various proposals for a so-called "national curriculum."

This statement should conclude with a quotation which brings into sharp focus  
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given plan when compared to other existing methods of organizing learning experiences and of attaining stated goals. In addition, evaluation which seeks to answer whether or not certain types of courses and learning experiences really are preparing students for citizenship, for college, and for their own life goals, must come to have a central role in the process.

It is a time for change, to be sure, but it is also a time for experimentation, for examination and for clear thinking about those values which should be primary in

the school program and those which should not. Until the need for a decision on fundamentals is instilled in the hearts and minds of people, it is not likely that they will demand experimentation or even examine alternative proposals. This is obviously a time for educational leadership in which the professional educator must help to guide as well as to respond to the clamor for change. Only when such a leadership role is widely perceived can we expect an adequate answer to the question, What shall the high schools teach?

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#### ETV's Role

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what seems to me the most crucial question of all in relation to the effects of the educational network upon curriculum development in the local school community. The quotation was made by one of the most highly respected authorities in American education:

If there is a possibility that television may be used to teach all pupils within a state or several states or the nation, we must appraise with care what the effects will be on our prized principle of local control of the curriculum. It is difficult, in terms of our tradition, to view with equanimity a situation in which every pupil throughout a state or the nation in the tenth grade would be taught biology at precisely the same hour and in the same way; or where one professor of history would teach all college students in American history his particular interpretation of the causes of the Civil War.

Such a condition would be comparable to that existing in the most centralized

systems of education. Local control of the curriculum has been a great safeguard against any one point of view dominating the education of students, and it has provided a highly effective means of stimulating progress by combating uniformity and undesirable standardization. Television, as envisioned by some, could well erode this principle over the years, an outcome which I personally would view with apprehension.

It will be desirable, in my judgment, as we test the uses to which television may be put, to check persistently against the broader criterion of the kind of curriculum and teaching we wish in our schools and colleges. If some things have to be done for the sake of expediency under the pressure of numbers, let us at least recognize when we compromise with desirable standards of teaching and let us be sure that we are not sold an approach to teaching which will save dollars but will impoverish the educational opportunities of American children and youth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hollis L. Caswell. "A Curriculum Viewpoint on Educational Television." *Educational Leadership* 15:114-15, November 1957.

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