

THE SUPERVISOR AND MEDIA

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MANY persons in education today seem to believe that in the teaching-learning situation of tomorrow the student will relate only to machines and that the teacher will become as important as the horse in today's modern transportation system.

There can be little doubt in the minds of those involved in education that the impact of educational technology is growing. While the dangers of an impersonalized, dehumanized teaching-learning process are unmistakably present, it is our position that the teacher does have a role, an important one, in any modern system of education. Furthermore, it is the supervisor who can help the teacher maintain and redefine

his role as educational media become increasingly significant in education.

Media in the Schools

First, let us define what we mean by "educational media." In this article we are including any and all materials and equipment which communicate ideas and facts to students. Further, we are talking about using these in a man-machine-materials *system* with components in proper relation with one another so that optimal learning will take place with students of varied interests and aptitudes. It is in the development of such a system that the supervisor has a large and very important role.

We perceive the supervisor's role in the development of these systems to be that of a catalyst. That is, the supervisor can improve the teaching-learning situation by supplying ideas, inspiration and guidance which will cause a reaction when the right mixture of students, teacher and materials is brought together.

But what do we mean by "ideas, inspiration and guidance" in relation

to media? Or to put it another way, why are these especially important in fostering intelligent use of media?

It obviously is impossible to spread new ideas unless one keeps up with new ideas. In a very real, tedious sense, this means that the supervisor has to keep abreast of new methods and new materials. To some, this will sound like absurd advice. We read countless pieces of mail, visit endless numbers of booths at conventions and take time to talk to salesmen. While this does not provide a lot of worthwhile information it is still one way of learning about what is new. Actually there should be no need for such a cumbersome way to collect materials. The technology is available so that a person could walk to the phone, "dial" his question to a materials center, and receive a packet of materials in the mail the next day. The cost to the school of such a telephone unit has been estimated at approximately \$4.00 a month plus the cost of the call.

Of value also, is the kind of visitation program all too often discouraged for lack of travel funds and staff time. If possible, the supervisor should find where the newer materials are being tried nearby and obtain an evaluation from the users as to the effectiveness of their particular program. We should keep in mind that personalities, both of individuals and of schools, vary considerably and that what may be good for Brown is not good for Green. Nonetheless, personal observation still remains one of the best ways to spread ideas.

Art of Inspiring

We use the word "art" at this point because we simply have little concrete

knowledge about how one can take an idea, transmit it to a teacher, and create the kind of atmosphere in which new ideas are welcome and subsequently tried. What little we do know suggests that the variables are exponential to the number of people and ideas involved.

However difficult the problem, few deny the need in most of our school systems for that kind of atmosphere wherein people are excited enough to tackle the problems of tomorrow (and if we do not, those *outside* of education will) and still do the work of today. What is the best bridge between inspiration and the problem? We suggest it to be research and development.

Few other sectors of our society spend so little on research and development as does education. The cry used to be that there "is not enough money for research, we have a job to do." With the advent of greatly increased federal funds, plus the willingness of industry to test materials, there is little excuse left in the financial arena. Supervisors need to become familiar with the guidelines set by the U.S. Office of Education and to urge faculty members to apply for small research grants.

Other kinds of media research can result through university affiliation. Of considerable concern to many persons in higher education is the lack of communication between the "ivory tower" and the "firing line." We suggest that the distance between the public school and the university needs desperately to be reduced—by both academicians and practitioners. Furthermore, the practitioners have as much or more responsibility for generating testable ideas as do the theoreticians. What this will

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mean is an attitude of critical analysis toward some sacred cows as well as a willingness to experiment with new tools of education.

What this also means is that the supervisor must guide faculty into thinking more deeply about what is actually going on in the teaching-learning process. We do *not* mean we should tell the teacher what he or she is doing is wrong, which is apt to lead to alienation. Rather we must develop a climate in which the supervisor feels free to suggest new ideas, new materials and new systems. The supervisor and the teacher can then work together to see if the idea has merit.

Primary Technology

As our society becomes more complex we rely on what might be termed primary technology. In our house this means that we have electricity, gas, sewage services, etc.

We believe that education is one of the most backward and underdeveloped segments of society when it comes to primary technology. We have little excuse not to rectify this. For example, let us automate the routine procedures in pupil accounting, in test scores, in all of the multifarious types of house-keeping details faced to a degree by every classroom teacher. Data processing equipment is a part of the administrative patterns of most school districts and these machines could well be used to eliminate a considerable share of teacher paperwork.

There is also a primary technology of teaching-learning materials. There is a need for adequate, easily retrieved materials, sufficient and easily run machines, and classrooms that are designed

to allow for more than talk, talk, talk, to take place.

Let us be done with the notion that the teacher's role is to present information. The teacher's role is to *organize learning experiences*. It is at this point that the supervisor can be of considerable help in working with the teacher to utilize the kinds of primary technology that should be available in every school. If this primary technology does not exist, then the supervisor will need to work with administrators, librarians, audiovisual specialists, and others who are involved in developing the necessary learning systems.

The Supervisor and Media

Again, let us state that we perceive the supervisor to be in a catalytic position regarding the use of mediated instruction. We have indicated that the supervisor must bring to the teacher the pertinent ideas, in an atmosphere of inspiration, and help guide the change process that occurs.

What must emerge from this interaction, and this growing sophistication with the use of teaching-learning tools, is an ability to look objectively at the process of education and to be able to say: (a) This is what this material will do for the student; (b) this is where it fits (for this group, and time, and place); and (c) this has accomplished what it set out to accomplish.

We urge that teachers view all of instruction in a "programmed" manner. That is, as a series of steps leading to some identified objective, with each step scrutinized for its effectiveness in leading from the past step to the next step. We are not suggesting that this is

easy, but we do maintain that it is necessary.

Encourage and Aid Innovation

How can the supervisor encourage and develop innovation in the school setting? First, he can single out several teachers who are willing to try new ways of instructing. Administrators are usually willing to battle for improved services, once the need for these services has been demonstrated. Second, by urging both teachers and administrators to visit schools that are trying new methods, and who are effectively demonstrating the use of media. Third, by developing a need for the use of media based on a critical analysis of those present patterns of instruction which can be viewed as wasteful of the time and talents of administrators, teachers, and students.

Real instructional leadership is needed to take full advantage of the technological advances that are becoming more and more available to teachers of the future. The simple fact is that technology is capable of assuming responsibility for large sections of the educational effort, though teachers must learn how to manage and use it with judgment and skill.

If curriculum leaders and planners develop this judgment and skill in fostering the use of educational media, educational techniques can change, and change rapidly, without a depersonalization and dehumanization of the learning process. Technology can then solve many of the problems we face, and at the same time can create conditions for truly effective, efficient learning in the schools. ☞

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