

ROLE OF MEDIA

IN THE OPEN SCHOOL

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EDUCATIONAL telecommunications, computerized instruction, learning suites at home, and Laser Communications are no longer a dream of the educational world but a disconcerting reality. The problem of harnessing these forces for learning is difficult. Educators may take a decade before they determine the proper placement of these forces and another two decades to establish their proper utilization and general acceptance.

The glitter of promising channels and methods of instruction must not blind the innovator. The media presently known need exploration in depth. While a major focus is on the innovations, there is still a great deal to be learned about present media as well as about learning itself.

Transmitting Knowledge

The basic elements of communications have again come to the forefront in education. The educational communications field is breaking down each element of communications theory to find the application for transmitting the

knowledge that needs to be so exactly and rapidly channeled to the children of our nation. If the efficient and accurate communication is to be coupled with the learning process today, teachers can no longer rely upon the usual verbal medium. Far too many educators in our colleges and public schools still perform on the stage of Shakespeare, encoding their message in poetic language that will with ease make of the student a mentally slumbering receiver.

Categorizing new and old media is similar to evaluating Title III ESEA projects as to the innovative factor. An innovation in one area of the nation may not be an innovation in our local educational community or state.

When one travels about visiting schools, he may observe the lack of proper media utilization, even a total abstinence from the use of media. Therefore the "older media" may still be termed "new media" in many classrooms. Most literature includes programmed material, 8mm single concept films and tapes, overhead projection,

copymachines, kits, combinations of "newer" and/or "older" media, as the newer media.

Television is not to be denied, but the term "educational television" is in need of repair. Educators concerned with instruction must be thinking of the telecommunication field. Services such as tele-lecture, VERB, facsimile, slow scan, computer lines, must be included in the educational telecommunication thinking. Instructional materials locally produced must be included, whether they be old or new media.

Unshackle the Elements

Although the amount of research, publicity, and scholastic discussion is extensive, teachers are still unaware of what the full utilization of newer media should be. Why? Teachers are still coming off the assembly line of professional training with little or no true understanding of and contact with the newer media.

A survey made by the Division of AV and TV Instruction, Department of Public Instruction, of the four state universities in Indiana during 1963 showed that only approximately 23 percent of the graduating teachers received any training in the utilization of educational media. A similar survey two years later gave an improved picture. Approximately 40 percent of the teacher graduates were receiving some media training. Only one of the four state institutions surveyed required such training, and it is very limited.

The responsibility for media competency cannot be totally shouldered by the teacher-training institutions. The local school corporation must assume part of the responsibility. Through fed-

eral financial aid, NDEA media institutions, and other means, the local school now is capable of bridging this gap.

Today, the classroom teacher is overburdened with sundry non-instructional duties. In reality, the children are not receiving the fullest potential of the teacher's services. In the normal business and military structure, the front line personnel have a large amount of support services. The teacher should also receive this support service. The material and media specialists are in similar situations; the media specialist is expected to schedule the equipment and materials, produce transparencies, and repair the equipment. These are clerical or technicians' duties. The para-professional, the clerically-trained person, and the experienced technician should be able to perform with a very high degree of efficiency many tasks now performed by the professionally trained teacher. They could catalog material, prepare visual material, and perform the clerical duties for the teacher. This assistance may result in the unlocking of the pent-up instructional energies and innovations to be found in our professionally-trained educators.

Role of the Teacher

It is not difficult for the administrator to see the budget factor in hiring a technician or para-professional person. The ramifications and potential of this approach are fascinating. It means the teacher would have more instructional time with the student; more planning time would be provided for the media specialist to work with teachers in designing for special needs and selection of the instructional materials.

Locally produced material is a valuable support to the teacher. The following example illustrates this point. A sixth-grade lad thinking of the day's work in school, asked his mother why a certain part of Africa was referred to as the "hunger belt" when most of that area was controlled by the leading European countries. "Capable of supporting themselves, the European countries should be able to help the controlled areas," the boy thought.

After further discussion with his mother, the lad was referred by her to the week old copy of *Time*. Reading this issue, he was astounded to learn that most of the area under discussion was no longer controlled by the European countries. In fact, 28 new nations had been born within the past decade. True, the textbook was not up-to-date. Nor was the teacher. With this same issue of *Time*, the teacher could have made a meaningful piece of instructional material to bring the iron-clad textbook, himself, and the children up-to-date.

Supervisors and administrators have toured school buildings and have found valuable materials lying dormant in a desk or closet, and even in the instructional materials center or library. There are many locked storage areas within our schools today that hold valid instructional materials. The central collection of instructional materials, or at least the cataloging of them, has been advocated for years; still schools are falling short of rendering a full service to the teacher.

The sacred cow of allowing only the teacher to use non-print material (as a filmstrip, 16mm film, tape, record) is being slaughtered. The cow is dying,

but it is a slow, agonizing death. More material is available today than ever before—good material and some mediocre material. Even more than with NDEA, instructional material is beginning an even flow into the classroom for student use. Yet the cry is made for still more materials since the advent of ESEA. For generations there has been a vast resource of materials in the teachers' minds, but teachers are not given the time to capture on paper, film or tape the ideas they use daily.

These ideas must come to the front and be communicated to the producers of instructional materials so that they may be interpreted into usable forms. The Texas Transparency Project, or the library transparencies developed jointly by the Division of AV and TV Instruction and the Division of School Libraries of the Indiana Department of Public Instruction and the Indiana School Library Association would be examples of the practitioners developing materials which were later turned over to commercial publishers.

School Design

The image of the one-room schoolhouse is still vivid in our memory, and in some cases it may be observed within a short distance from home. School design has had a very slow evolutionary period. Yet in the past three years, educators have seen a vast change from the building with a roof covering 10 or 20 one-room schools to a building which will accommodate change within the curriculum program. Library and media areas are found in a greater proportion of the buildings designed now.

Media have had their effect on school design. The large-group classrooms have

been designed to allow for the utilization of media, and the regular classroom is being equipped to allow for the same. Areas for individual study and exploration with the use of newer media have been provided. The use of carrels holds little question. Now with the general acceptance of carrels, the next step may be taken. Provisions for the installation of viewers, small TV screens, computer outlets, and other devices to be used for individual instructional material, may be made.

Any program must have certain elements present before productivity is accomplished. The instructional media program is no exception. Personnel, materials, equipment and facilities mixed with a temperate portion of innovation are the major ingredients for providing a creative learning environment. Today the technology is available for yet unrealized instructional forces. To make the best of available opportunity, creative and innovative minds of the teaching staff must be relieved of the mentally anesthetizing tasks.

Newer media have had their effect on the instructional framework, but more important is media's ability to

conform and become an integral part of the instructional process. The "older media" still must be explored to find their optimum contributions to the communication capabilities of transmitting concepts and information, whether it be for large groups, small groups, or individual instruction.

The teacher must humanize instruction for the individual child. The cry for more research in the area of instructional media utilization is valid, but is it not more important to implement the already known valid methods of instruction? The full potential utilization of filmstrip, as an example, has yet to be reached in a great proportion of the nation's schools. There are outstanding programs in operation today which should be emulated in all schools. Few teachers could use two minutes from a 30-minute film without hearing the cry from the students, "We want to see the rest of the movie."

Without destroying the climate for innovation, now is the time for every administrator, supervisor and teacher to take arms and prepare to do battle for effective utilization of the already proven materials and media. 

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