

# The Package and the Supervisor



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**M**ANY school systems have been propelled from the scant "bare necessity" of minimum texts into a new world containing a wealth of many kinds of materials. Media centers, learning centers, resource centers have suddenly appeared in school systems. Educational packages of every size and shape, ranging in cost from a few dollars to thousands of dollars, are now available. Truly, education is "where the action is" and educators find themselves confronted with technology in the form of teaching machines, programmed materials, audio-visual media of every kind, and even "systems" approaches.

A new language is being used and both the language and the implications of the new media are accepted or rejected with varying degrees of optimism and some confusion! While the U.S. Commissioner of Education, James E. Allen, Jr., says, "Thanks be" for the many new resources of educational technology available to us,<sup>1</sup> some of us are agreeing with six-year-old Mike Mashon, who, exposed to "new math," communicated rather forcefully (in original spelling!) when he wrote:

You are drowning me in digets  
You are giving me the fidgets  
Dizzy numbers fog my slumbes  
And to sum it up real quick  
ARITHMATIC  
You make me sick!

Whatever our attitude, we are obliged to open the package, and to examine the contents carefully.

1. Does it fit desired educational objectives?
2. Will staff and administration support this change?
3. Which students will it serve?
4. Is it flexible?
5. Does it call for supportive changes?
6. Does it require special teacher training?
7. Is professional consultant service part of the "package"?
8. Does it require special or additional housing? Installations? Maintenance?
9. Are funds available?

With Dr. Allen, we hope that we have achieved "a certain maturity of attitude."

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<sup>1</sup> James E. Allen, Jr. "Technology in Education—Thanks Be for It!" *Educational Media* 1 (8): 12, December 1969-January 1970.

. . . Discarded for most part now are the fallacies that saw technology on the one extreme as the solution of all of education's problems and on the other as a mere excess of gadgetry that could only add to these problems. Accepted also is the obligation to be as assiduous in discovering the pitfalls in the use of educational technology as we are in seeking out its potentialities.<sup>2</sup>

### **Dare we open the package?**

We must! Though we continue to question.

What does it contain?  
Is there a need for this?  
Will it effect change?  
Is this change desirable?  
Will we be able to evaluate?

### **What does it contain?**

The package contains almost every kind of material the educator has ever dreamed of, from paperback programmed books to electronic systems of learning. There are programmed texts of various complexity, at all levels, in many fields. There are machines of every type. "Multimedia" may designate a

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.



Photos courtesy of the author

A child learns math through games.



Young children enjoy operating the machines.

systems approach to beginning reading, such as the Listen-Look-Learn program developed by Educational Developmental Laboratories in cooperation with Singer/Random House as described by Charlotte Reynolds.<sup>3</sup> "Multimedia," on the other hand, may be adapted by the same company to teach near illiterates to read and write through the use of a "Multimedia, Multimodal, Multilevel Communication Skills System."<sup>4</sup>

Individualized instruction comes in packages as small as a programmed paperback text, or as large as an electronic device, complete with computer, which teaches mathematics to future electronic engineers! While we are far from a "personal track" for each pupil in most of our school systems, Harold Howe II has challenged educators with the statement that "The computer and other technological media offer this opportunity."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Reynolds. "Using Multimedia: A Systems Approach." In: Elaine Vilscels, editor. *A Decade of Innovations: Approaches to Beginning Reading*. International Reading Association, Conference Proceedings 12: 246-60; 1968. Part 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Educational Media* 1 (8): 14-15; December 1969-January 1970.

<sup>5</sup> Harold Howe II. *Education . . . Everybody's Business*. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967. p. 18.

Machines are in the packages not only as parts of "systems" but as complete learning devices of various kinds. Language masters, typewriters, reading machines, projectors, pacers, tachistoscopes are commonplace in almost every school. In media centers and classrooms, students are operating and using machines and the subsequent "packaged program" with ease and with eagerness.

### Is there a danger?

A danger lies in what might be written into the programmed text or into the system of learning. Is it sound? Does it meet agreed-upon educational values and objectives? *Know* the material! A second danger (and possibly one into which we might slip more easily) is that through the use of machines we may forget that *people* are the learners. *Work with the learners!*

Howe has recognized this when he stated:

... Coupled with the new role of the teacher as an educational diagnostician—as a teacher of thinking and living, not just a transmitter of data—the new approach to learning should keep us from developing a mechanized classroom. . . .<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.



Children learn to use an electric typewriter.



Books can be entertaining as well as informative.

While focusing on the individual and his needs, we must be sure that we are not caught up in the novelty of machines and programs. Nor should we be deceived into thinking that *isolated learning* guarantees *individual learning*. We must keep the channels of communication between child-and-child, child-and-teacher, and teacher-and-child open and flowing.

We must make sure that the aspect of human relationship is very much in focus or we may produce an individualized individual incapable of being an understanding human being in his world of fellow humans!

In this aspect of human relationship, we must not forget the teacher—the most significant variable in the educational process. Indrisano, in her reaction to using multimedia techniques, has pointed out:

... it is the teacher who must make the choice.

... It is necessary ... for the teacher to provide the opportunity and create the atmosphere. . . .

... It is the teacher who is responsible for the quality of instruction. The depth of her perception of the learner is the significant factor. . . .<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Roselmina Indrisano. "Reaction to Using Multimedia Techniques in Beginning Reading." In: Elaine Vilscels, editor. *A Decade of Innovations: Approaches to Beginning Reading*, op. cit., pp. 261-66. Reprinted by permission of the International Reading Association.

Know the teacher! Help the teacher to know the package and its contents! The package changes and improves. We, too, must change and improve. Decision making with the student, for the student—or diagnosis and prescription, if you will—as to the next “step,” the next “cycle,” the next “level,” or the next “program” is the function of the teacher.

We must provide opportunities for the teacher to see and to believe in this role in the new world of mass media.

Vernon Anderson has warned us of our responsibilities as well as our “golden opportunities” as supervisors in this age of packaged programs.

... Teachers will have different relationships with pupils from what they have today, in different types of settings. They will need different skills. The ironic fact is that machines give teachers the golden opportunity to “speak for man,” to stress the human and the humane in the education of the child or adult.

... The golden opportunity for supervisors and teacher educators is to help the teacher with the aid of instructional technology in becoming a director of learning, a developer of human beings, a manager of an open system of inquiry. ... Moreover, teachers’ and pupils’ roles cannot be conceived of as distinct. Both will function as inquirers, questioners, arrangers, and interpreters.

... supervisors need to help teachers become more expert in evaluating materials against desired objectives and in selecting among the various packages available. One of the most significant modifications of our function will be the leadership we can give to experimentation, research, and evaluation. “Packages” need to be



A teacher aide helps the student.

experimented with and evaluated in the classroom or in the learning center.<sup>8</sup>

### **Evaluate the package.**

Evaluate the package in terms of concepts and in terms of desired objectives!

While some of us may hesitate to adopt the ideas of the Kennedy School in Santa Fe, 2001 A.D., as conjured up by George B. Leonard, we do agree with him that:

Every child, every person can delight in learning. A new education is already here, thrusting up in spite of every barrier we have been able to build. Why not help it happen? <sup>9</sup>

Open the package!

<sup>8</sup> Vernon E. Anderson. *Curriculum Guidelines in an Era of Change*. New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1969. pp. 34-38.

<sup>9</sup> George B. Leonard. *Education and Ecstasy*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1968. p. 239.

## **The Supervisor's Role in Negotiation**

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For the ASCD Commission on Problems of Supervisors and Curriculum Workers  
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and William F. Young

\$.75

NEA Stock Number: 611-17798

32 pp.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, NEA  
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

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