

A Step, But in What Direction?

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WHAT curriculum workers need is an approach to the production, identification, and integration of media into the total school program which relates to the learning requirements of stated objectives. At a time when the honesty of the entire profession is being tested, we do not need a pseudo-sophisticated, and even irrelevant, process for selecting "aids."

An educational system is no better than its curriculum, which, in turn, is a product of the curriculum-building process. The better the process, the better the product. Improvement of the process necessarily entails an improvement of the subsystems that form the total system. In this context, Richard I. Miller in the recent ASCD publication entitled *Selecting New Aids to Teaching*¹ has provided us with a new process for media selection. Although the selection system is going to keep a lot of people busy doing lots of things which seem to be related to media selection, I sincerely question whether all of this will make much difference.

¹Richard I. Miller. *Selecting New Aids to Teaching*. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1971.

The size of the "units" ("aids") discussed connotes an attitude toward media not too compatible with current thinking in the field. Has Miller resigned himself to the apparent fact that commercial houses are for the most part determining the curriculum for schools? If this is the case, I am afraid that teachers are becoming the "aids." In practice, this publication will likely support the setting up of another committee, compounding the red tape involved with ordering materials, passing decision making on to others, asking people to do the impossible, and creating the impression that we know what we are doing when we do not.

The product-consumer orientation is implied by the very first question proposed by the Miller booklet (1.1). One interpretation is that the curriculum worker enters a kind of supermarket of instructional materials and leaves with a basket full of commodities which make up the curriculum. The process of curriculum building must be more than a shopping spree and more than drawing people together to vote on what they think. Committees have traditionally produced curriculum guides which are too fre-

quently an expansion of the textbook's table of contents plus selected "aids." We must stop operating systems of curriculum development which pass judgment via committee rather than providing the specific expertise needed to materialize each aspect of an educational program. In other words, *Selecting New Aids to Teaching* seems to be increasing the jobs for a group which, in my opinion, should be obsolete.

The involvement of classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, professors, administrators, citizens, students, and consultants in goal formation is most appropriate. However, unless school systems can begin to assemble people competent in developing instructional programs from identified goals, the communities will look to organizations that can. Industry is preparing to offer this alternative. Perhaps industry is already producing the substantive portion of the school's curriculum. After all, if you buy 40 hours of multi-media programming, you have, in effect, allowed industry to build this portion of your

Curriculum Materials 1972

Materials are now being compiled for inclusion in the Curriculum Materials exhibit at the ASCD annual conference, March 5-8, 1972, in Philadelphia.

The Committee on Exhibit of Curriculum Bulletins and Instructional Materials requests that relevant materials be submitted before October 15, 1971, to: ASCD Curriculum Materials, Room 301, Ritter Hall, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa. 19122, Attention: Miss Frances Smith.

Appropriate materials include curriculum guides, courses of study, bulletins, audio-visual materials, etc., prepared by public school systems, state education departments, colleges, universities, and campus schools. Materials must be currently in use and must not have been displayed previously. Price, availability, and complete mailing address should be indicated.

Participants at the annual conference may view the exhibit to assess the materials as to relevance and worth in their individual situations. A bibliography, *Curriculum Materials 1972*, will be published by ASCD.

curriculum. Nevertheless, I would maintain that good as it is to buy a program à la Westinghouse, it is still better to build one of your own.

Selecting New Aids to Teaching is full of irrelevancies. The assumption seems to be that if you consider all of the factors you can think of, your chances for selecting more appropriate "aids" are enhanced. I don't believe many will go through this long song and dance; consciously or subconsciously, most will suspect or know that all of this does not really matter.

For example, what is the reason for classifying media or media-mixes according to the taxonomies? If a school district has formulated the objectives it wants and needs for its program, the classification of these objectives and the classification of the means-to-the-end are irrelevant. The taxonomies provide a way of looking at objectives which is not directly related to the task at hand. The whole system seems to ask impossible questions of people who traditionally do the selecting. But what is worse is that the important questions are not even considered. Unless the learning requirements of an educational program can be ascertained, few relevant operational guides for the selection or production of media or media-mixes can be developed.

Although *Selecting New Aids to Teaching* might be considered a step in the traditional sense, it is also a kind of smoke screen which the profession has too long employed. There is no way to select appropriate media until a system can identify its objectives. Given an operational objective, the learning requirements of the objective must determine the selection of media. Considering a multitude of factors that relate to media does not constitute an appropriate system for intelligent decision making. As a result, media selected in this way will continue to operate as an independent system apart from the "real" educational program. We do not need "aids" to teaching; we need ways to learn!

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