

Technology

LEWIS A. RHODES

Personal Tools for Professional Growth

When we hear and read about technological revolutions, the computer is usually the technology under discussion. Less visible, however, is the revolution in communications—the personalizing of “mass” communications. ASCD’s recent decision to make available on audiocassette selected articles from *Educational Leadership* raises questions about the implications of this revolution for organizations dedicated to the support of professional development.

To most of us, mass (nonprint) media have always had two characteristics: (1) quantity production and distribution that produced economies of scale and (2) group access. As audiocassette players became smaller and cheaper, this pattern began to change. With the proliferation of “Walkman” clones, we gained a freedom of access that allows us to listen to what we want, when and where we want—while we walk, jog, drive, and even sleep.

The second step toward more flexible personal access is now being influenced by the increasing popularity of home video cassette recorders,

Here, too, decreased size and cost are making it possible for us to have the quality and economy of mass-produced visual materials without the limitations of someone else’s schedule. Some producers, recognizing the untapped potential market for nonentertainment themes, are now developing how-to videocassettes in areas as diverse as home repairs and divorce procedures.

This personalization of communications technology has important implications for education. The most immediate and direct consequence concerns time. Lack of time for personal and professional growth is the major learning disability that plagues most adults. As school and district staffs gain out-of-school access to video- and audiocassette players, what possibilities does this open for the organization of staff development activities? Lending libraries? Development of district-specific “wrap-around” home-study materials? ASCD would like to know because, to a great extent, our staff development materials are designed for use in organized preservice and inservice programs. We already

feature audiocassettes of presentations from association meetings and, of course, have an extensive library of staff development videotapes available in VCR formats. But we do not design these materials specifically for the individual viewer or listener. The accompanying materials and suggested activities usually assume group viewing.

If you are already personalizing your staff development activities, or beginning to think about it, we’d like to hear your ideas. What types of materials are needed? In what ways are present materials inappropriate? As human beings we continually strive to increase our effectiveness. We now have an opportunity to take advantage of increasingly available *technologies* as well as *time* not currently being used for staff development. How can these best be combined to support our common personal and organizational goals?

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Mathematics

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Professional Lives of Mathematics Teachers: International Comparisons

The Fifth International Congress on Mathematics Education was held in Adelaide, Australia, last August. Several interesting facts about the professional lives of mathematics teachers came to light at the conference. Twenty of those are listed below. Numbers 1 through 16 describe circumstances in

the United States, and 17 through 20 highlight some contrasts in other nations that compete with the United States economically and in other ways. International comparisons are especially interesting at a time when our political leaders are condemning American education and prescribing low-cost nostrums for improving it.

1. In 1981, 43 of the 45 states that responded reported a shortage of sec-

ondary school mathematics teachers.¹

2. Between 1972 and 1982 there was a 77 percent decline in the number of secondary school mathematics teachers prepared. Only 55 percent of those

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