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A Strategy for using Radio and Television As new Educational Media

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To-day an important question is whether Radio and Television as new educational media are worth using. A better way to pose this question, therefore, is: for what purposes, in what ways, and under what circumstances, can radio and television be used to get maximum educational results at the least cost per learner?

Any productive "system" whether industrial, agricultural or educational - has four basic features.

1. Objectives : the "work" designed to be accomplished.
2. Inputs : the resources (manpower, materials, capital, equipment, etc.) required to do this work.
3. Process : the heart of the system - the technology, methods and organizational arrangements by which the components are combined and made into a dynamic productive process.
4. Outputs : the actual results produced (which may or may not match the objectives).

This way of viewing a productive "system" can be usefully applied to a whole educational system or to any of its subsystems, such as an elementary school, or a particular grade level, or the system for teaching and learning a given subject,

Viewd in this framework, efficiency can be defined as the relationship between the system's inputs and its outputs. Thus, if ways can be found to expand the system's outputs (i.e. if the same number of students learn more in a given time, or if more students learn as much) without a proportional increase in inputs, then efficiency has been increased.

Radio and Television may be able to accomplish important educational objectives totally beyond the capabilities of the conventional system. It might for example ,bring learning opportunities to far larger numbers of people than could possibly be served in the foreseeble future by the conventional system, given the shortage of teachers and buildings, and the impossibly high costs that would be involved. Or a drastical revised old subject far more quickly and less expensively than would be possible by retraining old teachers and producing enough new ones to do the same thing.

For a variety of reasons, educational systems have not been able to adjust rapidly enough - both quantitatively and qualitatively to keep pace with the vast changes in the world around them, including changes

in the size and character of educational demands and changes in knowledge itself.

This worldwide educational gap has grown despite the unprecedented expansion of enrolments and educational expenditures that has lately occured, amonuting in many countries to a doubling in the last 10 to 15 years.

To narrow this ominous educational gap, or even to keep it from growing wider, education will have to undego its own technological ,qualitative and managerial revolution, as sweeping in its own way as the revolutions which have propelled other fields forward so rapidly in recent years, including various industries, agriculture, nuclear and space technology and transportation.

This educational revolution will require applying to the educational enterprise the modern techniques and philosophy of research and development, and of scientific analysis and management, which have undergirded all the great advances in those other fields.

The following six strategic guide lines are suggested by the practical experience gained from the 23 cases recently examined by the IIEP's researchers :

1. Begin with an important problem that needs solving, not with a piece of technology which someone thinks should be used. A good place to begin in deciding how best to use the new educational media is by asking educational authorities to identify their most important and stubborn problems of the next few years for which they lack satisfactory means and solutions, and to the solution of which the new media can help.

2. Make the new media part of a balanced, well integrated instrustional system, All parts of the system must be well integrated and functioning smoothly or, like an automobile with poor sparkplugs or broken wires, it will not work well, or at all .

3. Plan the system well and allow ample time for preparation. The preparation of such a plan provides a rare occasion for building co-operation and support for the new system.

This requires the participation of all those who must later make the plan work, from ministers to teachers, and of all those who, through lack of understanding sympathy could sabotage it.

4. Plan for a "critical mass' in the scope and intensity of the new medium's use. To get the best results at least cost, the new media must be used both extensively and intensively, they must be used seriously in concentrated fashion.

5. Have a contingency plan for success. The requirements for making a transition from successful but limited experimental project to a much wider application the increased personnel, programme material and broadcasting capacity that will be needed should be roughly gauged before the experiment is launched.

6. Provide from the outset for continuing evaluation and flexibility. With good arrangements for continuing and comprehensive system evaluation, opportinities for lowering costs and for improving quality and effectiveness can be spotted more quickly and acted upon, perhaps thereby ensuring the very survival of the enterprise.

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