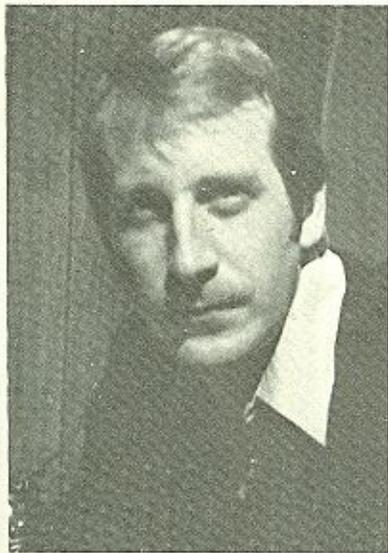


The use of instructional technology means the media director must serve as an agent of change in an already complex educational environment. It's not an easy task to make technology everyman's tool rather than every man's master.

the media director and administrative competence

by Bruce Petty



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"Many people react negatively toward change. A few, the emotionally disturbed, defend themselves against it through the psychological process of denial. Others, in the same category, who are more normal but no less negative, view it as an unhappy departure from the "good old days," and go through life trying to turn back the clock. Many in a second category are more fatalistic than negative toward change. Their position is: "Since you cannot avoid it, go along with it." A third category includes individuals who see change as not only inevitable but basically positive. Their position is: "Because it is basically good, incorporate it into your pattern of life."

This last position . . . (is) a teleological (one) that presumes man to be intrinsically positive and the universe to be basically orderly. Not blind to such negative forces as pain, hunger, bigotry, disease, and physical holocausts, it conceives them more as issues that challenge the best in man than as forces of evil over which he has no control. The position commits man to pursue his destiny in a world that refuses to stand still."

This statement by Gail M. Inlow at the outset of his text, *Education: Mirror and Agent of Change* (1970) reflects upon the nature of man and his reaction to the phenomenon of change in society. No greater change has affected man and society than the development and application of technology to everyday life. It has altered lifestyles and created new and uncharted directions for institutions. It has caused social and political upheavals and changed the face of civilization.

Nothing has escaped the technological revolution, including the process by which man transmits culture and tradition from generation to generation. The changes that technological advances have initiated in education are enormous. They have affected the body of knowledge to be taught, methodologies of teaching, and the very theoretical bases upon which society's educative processes are founded. Nowhere is the phenomenon more evident than in the application of instructional media to education. That application has experienced such a tremendous growth over the past two decades as to create the need for an addition to the hierarchy of educational administration—that of an administrator of instructional media and technology.

The question arises, then, of the function of the program director. What is his role within the structure of the organization? And what kind of person does he need to be in order for him to be effective in that role?

The nature of the administrative process is basically concerned with two functions, namely, leadership and management. Leadership is that creative activity concerned with helping an organization or an institution discover, identify, and define new directions and purposes, or to alter and re-define old ones. Management is the act of implementing pre-determined plans and procedures. The establishment or modification of policy is a leadership action, whereas the execution of policy can be more properly defined as management.

Burton and Brueckner (1955) define the administrative act as "... an expert technical service primarily aimed at studying and improving cooperatively all factors which affect child growth and development ...". Wiles (1967) states that it "... consists of all the activities leading to the improvement of instruction, activities related to morale, improving human relations, in-service education, and curriculum development."

Obviously administrators of an educational media program must be highly competent in technological matters. To the problems of prescribing and advising individuals, groups, and institutions in the application of media and technology to instruction, they must bring a broad range of knowledge and experience. They must have a working knowledge of audio and video systems design and effective utilization. Their interests and skills must range from photography to electronics to compatibility standards. Even though they must often delegate responsibility, they still must be skilled media designers and producers of media software. They must have an artist's eye—including knowledge of color, form, and composition.

But it is not enough for media administrators to be technological experts. They must also be educators with a firm foundation in curriculum and curriculum change—cognizant of the forces affecting change, and fully capable of making sound judgments concerning the many and varied aspects of the teaching-learning process. They must be skilled in the development of educational objectives and in the attainment of those objectives systematically and humanistically. They must bring to the position a desire for innovation in educational method and, hopefully, a philosophical insight into cultural values. Although the working day may seem to consist primarily of innumerable forms and reports, budget shuffling, and political maneuvering, the program director cannot lose sight of the role as an educator and the ultimate aim which is the improvement of instruction.

In order to successfully fulfill that obligation, media program directors must possess a finely tuned set of interpersonal skills. They are, or should be, in continual contact with a wide variety of people within the organization with whom they must work toward desired ends. These colleagues, and their institution, will greatly benefit from the director

who brings to the office a sense of respect and regard for others, a sense of critical reason, an ability to focus energies toward democratic decisions and well-planned objectives, and a passion for the logic and ethics upon which shared value depends.

In the final analysis technology is, in effect, applied science. It tends to embrace machines and automated devices—tape recorders, television, electronic programming, data manipulation, microfilm, computers, and digital read-outs. Its hardware is dramatic and the plethora of its product is staggering. Fundamentally the world of technology is a world of things, and as such holds within itself the possibility of posing serious threat to intellectual and personal growth. Program directors must guard against becoming so entranced with the wondrous gadgets that they forget the people they are serving. Paul R. Mort (1946) provides an incisive reminder:

"Attitudes toward educational policy are influenced by considerations that are a heritage of the culture. . . . Some of these considerations are humanitarian. The public are concerned not only with ends to be achieved, but with democratic, just egalitarian treatment of persons affected by the process of achieving them . . . Other considerations are prudential: The public are concerned that the ends to be achieved are met without outraging the sense of the practical that they have built up in their business relationships, at work, or in the operation of their homes. They are concerned with economy: they believe that the really important things are simple; they are suspicious of cleverness; they want schools to achieve their ends in ways that appeal to their sense of the practical, of the common sense . . ."

The supreme value of life is man's individuality and his right to strive to be an uncommon man. Technology in education will be a positive force only to the extent that it enhances the basic dignity of each student, teacher, and parent. I believe that administrators of instructional media and technology programs will find this to be their ultimate challenge, and the measure by which the application of technology to education will finally be judged.

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