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Radio and Television in Education

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RADIO has been a part of our lives for many years. Yet many of us can remember its early days, with the limited number of stations and considerable static. Television is a relatively newcomer to the home. While some areas have had television for some time, others have just begun to experience the enjoyment of this means of communication. It has been largely since World War II that the television aerials have become a common sight on so many roof tops.

Studies have been made recently which substantiate the claims that boys and girls are spending considerable time in viewing television programs. Earlier studies were made with regard to listening time for radio programs. At the present time the emphasis seems to be on television and its effects upon youth. Dr. Philip Lewis and Dr. Paul Witty have made several studies of listening time and program preference. Many others have made similar investigations. This writer conducted a study involving listening time, program preference, and a comparison of achievement in a knowledge of current affairs of television and non-television groups. In this study it was found that students with TV sets in their homes spend 3.4 hours per day on the average viewing television, while students without sets in their homes averaged 15 minutes of TV viewing in someone else's home. Other studies substantiate these data.

Many think of radio and television as strictly a means of recreation, and no one would deny that such is often the case. However, both have possibilities for being an effective educational force, either directly or indirectly. Life Enrichment may be thought of as being educational as well as recreational when considered in connection with these two media of communication.

At the present time, schools vary greatly in their use of the radio and television. Many schools have radios in various rooms and some have facilities, such as an intercommunication system, which make it possible to broadcast programs to the various rooms. This has been used extensively with special programs of outstanding events of current interest. In some schools this even goes so far as to include listening to the World Series. The use of television in schools is very limited for the country as a whole. Philadelphia,

however, is reported as having 3,000 television screens in classrooms. Because of the cost as well as other factors the set is often located in the auditorium or possibly in some recreation room. This makes it possible to view some special program but often does not encourage viewing on a regular basis by any one group. In some cases TV sets are set up in the school by TV dealers partially as a public service and possibly as a means of advertising.

Some writers predict that in the near future it is probable that a large television screen may replace part of the blackboard and that one lesson a week in each subject may come by way of the screen. Superior teachers and experts in many different fields might be available in this way to a large number of classrooms. Of course, on-the-spot telecasting as well as films could be used.

Another means of using television is to take the students to the home of a student who has a set in order that they may see some special program. The Inauguration was viewed in many homes in this manner. This writer has taken his classes in Problems of American Democracy to various homes to see such programs since facilities were not available in that school. Such a procedure has many advantages but also has some very serious disadvantages.

A third use of radio and television employed by many teachers is one in which they call attention to various programs of special interest to their students. A knowledge of radio and TV programs can be helpful in planning for desired listening on the part of the students. Discussion of such programs during the following class period can do much to increase their educational value.

From these observations of the extent of radio and television listening and viewing, it may be desirable to make some recommendations for their use. Some of these practices are in extensive use at the present time, while others may be developed more fully.

Teachers, by calling attention to various programs, can do much to increase interest in the study of current affairs. One of the advantages of radio and television is that they can bring happenings in various places into the homes or schools where they may be heard or seen by boys and girls. Schools may have a radio or a television set for use by such groups. If such is the case it should be used as wisely as possible, not just limited to a few assembly programs. The problem of the time of the broadcast may make it desirable to use a tape or wire recorder for some programs. Television stations often use films which show events soon after they happen.

Worthy use of leisure time is an objective which has been recognized for some time. Radio and television can be very valuable in achieving this objective. The fact that they are often regarded in this light should not minimize their importance. But here again occurs the need for selection of programs. Criticism of both radio and television has often been centered on the unwise selection of programs or the extremely lengthy viewing sessions.

Of course, there are those emergency conditions when radio and television may be used to carry instruction to boys and girls during such times as extreme winter conditions, strikes, etc. The regular viewing of a program instead of attending school is still largely limited to courses on the college and adult level, such as those conducted at Western Reserve University.

The teachers have certain responsibilities if such facilities are adequately used. In the first place they must appreciate the importance of using such media as further means of improving the learning situation through helpful experiences. Wise use of leisure time should be supplemented by other educational objectives.

The teachers should study the radio and television programs in order to know when a desirable program for use with their classes is scheduled to occur. Adequate planning can do much to make such participation more meaningful. This should be followed by discussion of the program in order that the learning situation may be more complete. One criticism of the use of these aids is that there isn't the opportunity for reteaching when material is missed, as this is difficult to do unless a tape or wire recording is used. This limitation can be overcome somewhat by adequate planning in advance.

Proper guidance in the selection of programs and the time and amount of listening or viewing should be part of the service rendered to our boys and girls. The use of listening and viewing records can be of special help in connection with the development of desirable listening habits. This is just another feature of the adjustment of the individual to his present problems.

It is considered desirable to utilize programs in the classroom. Since this is not always possible, however, it may be necessary to schedule the use of a certain room, as some schools schedule the use of a projection room for other visual aids. The important factor here is the need for considering the activity as a part of the class activity, not just as entertainment. Of course, there may be times

when the objective is strictly entertainment. In that case different objectives are involved.

Proper public relations should be developed on a continuous basis in order that students, parents, and teachers may all work together in using these facilities to the greatest possible extent. Thorough interpretation of school problems and methods can do much to insure complete understanding of what the school is attempting to do.

The possibilities of the use of television in education are increasing with the construction of educational television stations. These stations are designed to help meet the educational needs of adults as well as boys and girls. WUNC-TV of the Consolidated University of North Carolina is expected to be on the air in September, 1954. This station will have studios in Chapel Hill, Raleigh, and Greensboro and will feature programs from all three branches of the University. These educational television stations together with the commercial stations can furnish a variety of educational experience for school youth. Teachers should analyze these programs carefully and plan for their proper utilization.

Television and radio are becoming increasingly a vital part of our life's activities. If these are to be of maximum value to us, there is a definite need for their proper utilization. When students spend on an average of three or four hours in an activity, there is need for consideration of means of making this activity of maximum value. These facilities should be used both for recreation and for instructional purposes. They may furnish a general type of education and they may furnish a specialized type of training. There is a need for discrimination in selection of programs, especially with many areas having good reception of more than one television station as well as several radio stations. There is the need to make these media of communication serve desirable ends.

We should recognize radio and television as another area of the many sources in the educational process. All should be used in order that students may receive the best possible educational opportunities. Only in this way may our boys and girls develop to the best of their abilities.