"Content" In Utilization Of ETV

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There is perhaps no group, by training or strategic location in American society, that is likely to have more potential use of educational television than the members of the American Society of Training Directors. Whether training is broadly or narrowly conceived, ETV is a potent resource, a powerful medium that can bear on the solution of training problems.

Educational television has both exceeded the expectations of the skeptics, and fallen short of the expectations of its most sanguine supporters. Where ETV has fallen short, the reasons for poor enrollments, high per student costs, ineffective or unstimulating teaching, rigidity of format, or lack of personal warmth in the teaching-learning situation, have often been blamed on the production end of ETV. Faults in production are easy to spot, and easy to blame. Less often observed, however, are the faults that occur in the *utilization* of ETV. Faulty utilization, though unsuspected and unblamed, may be in fact a chief cause of ineffective or disappointing ETV. The comments which follow are intended to suggest a more effective way of utilizing ETV by building utilization into the total "content" of whatever is prepared for presentation by television.

What is utilization? It is the *use* to which ETV is put: the formal, informal; simple, grandiose; planned, unplanned;

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This article based on remarks delivered at NET Utilization Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

yearned-for, realized; expected, unexpected: what people—learners and potential learners—*do* with ETV.

Where does utilization begin? It begins with the first creative idea for a course, broadcast or series in ETV. It is a part of every step through development and production. It is present when the program is aired. It is an ingredient when the first viewer . . . or the last . . . tunes in.

Utilization is born with the content of the course. It is a part of the "content" of the course. To be sure, content or subject matter has a validity of its own; that is, it has a value for its own sake. Just as "virtue is its own reward," so content of and by itself—even when never communicated to others—has its own value for those who possess it.

But as *educators* (as distinct from creators and hoarders of content for its own sake) we are concerned with communicating content to others. This is a dynamic function that requires content and use of content to become one.

The organization of our schools and educative processes demonstrates our belief in, and society's acceptance of, the unity of content and utilization. Even so, with many teachers the alliance of content and utilization is uneasy. The teacher tends to see content value of and for its own self; the communicator-specialists in education thus must wage a continuing campaign among content persons to vitalize the communication - and use - of content. In formal teaching-learning situations direct, personal and continuing feedback from the learner is a potent energizer of improvement of communications and utilization. Hence, when television became a tool in the teaching process, it was natural that *instructional* TV developed utilization aspects very early.

Broad ETV for adult viewers has had less purposive utilization built into its content. It has had less feedback from the consumer. We have known considerably less about our non-captive learners "way out there" than we know about our captive learners in formal learning situations. We have thought carefully about public needs and problems, and have worked out good content for many adult ETV Courses; but we have not always rifled our shots at specific audiences and needs, provided learning activities that are appropriate, or built in feedback or evaluation devices. In the split-level house of ETV, we have not always effectively linked up the content specialist, the producer, the broadcaster, the coordinator and the learner.

Living separately at different levels, immersed in a sea of broadcast signals, we have learned that the broadcast signals which engulf us all, will not electronically unite us.

If we agree that utilization is born with content, it is essential for us as educators to consider the way in which people learn, for this, too, is a part of our total content. Utilization, in fact, must take its form and substance from our knowledge of how learning takes place.

We believe that the learner goes through a series of activities in learning. The adult learner (with whom we are chiefly concerned here) whether in a purposeful, systematic, formal learning situation, or whether learning informally but purposefully (as in ETV) probably goes through the same activities, though the steps in informal learning may be truncated. Suppose we look at purpose-

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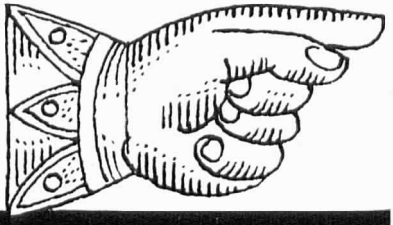

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ful learning activities, and relate these to utilization:

1. *The learner becomes motivated and sets a goal.* This is the beginning of purposeful learning; and this is where both *content* and *utilization* start. Utilization must motivate, help adults set goals. This has implications for *all* the materials and processes of utilization. (This first learning step sets definite tasks for those who design ETV courses, produce them, and coordinate their utilization.)
2. *The learner appraises the situation; checks out the means at his disposal for reaching his goal.* In a strict sense, content people must design these means; utilization people must make them available. The means must, then, be appropriate to the content, the aims and purposes, the student, and the learning situation. The *utilizer* must be ready—after he has motivated the student—to supply the means by which the learner can achieve his goals. (The second step in learning also sets important tasks for the coordinator of utilization.)
3. *The learner makes some preliminary trials.* He tunes in the program, looks over the study guide or other materials. *He continues the trials,* particularly if he is remotivated, if he senses progress towards his goals. He dips into the readings, he discusses what he is learning with others, or (if groups have been set up earlier, he begins to participate with the group). He begins to relate his previous understandings, knowledge, skills, experience to his new experiences. He "sticks to" his course. (The third step in learning points up some frequently ignored responsibilities in program utilization. Whose responsibility is it to guide the student in making his preliminary trials, a critical point in learning?)
4. *If the student's learning experience is successful,* (i.e. if he senses definite movement towards goal) he is remotivated, and his responses are reinforced. He abandons inappropriate responses. He proceeds towards goal. *If his learning experience is unsuccessful,* he waivers, he shows the classic signs of disinterest, he drops the course; or, if he is persistent, he modifies his goal and his responses and tries again. (The fourth step in learning poses additional

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tasks and responsibilities for all those who are concerned with learning by ETV. Broadly speaking, learning and utilization are here synonymous. Whose responsibility is it to set up and carry out the kinds of utilization activities that relate to this step?)

It is my view that the content *and* utilization people have a particularly important role in these last two activities. Here is where feedback from the student is important, and feedback from the teacher to the student is vital. The coordinator, also, should be alert to these critical stages in learning, and ready to counsel, advise, remotivate as appropriate, using all of the tools and techniques available to him.

What is content? It is, then, the whole package that is offered to the learner via ETV. Content is subject matter the integrity of which is unassailable, whose validity for the aims and purposes of the entire learning experience is established; content is also the design and appropriateness of the learning activities built into the course, and the devices that are used by all persons concerned with the offering to supply students with information, materials, to motivate and remotivate, to guide students through the activities of learning—which is the ultimate in utilization.

How is content selected? Ideally, all those with responsibility in the creation of the total package should share in varying degrees of responsibility for content. Content is related to aims and objectives, to the student, to the methodology, to the helping agencies, to the coordinators. All the specialists who work together to produce the program or course have special concerns related to content.

What I am suggesting is that ETV courses should be developed *organically*. The total package, then, has a content including:

- aims and purposes
- subject matter
- knowledge of characteristics and needs of learners
- sensitivity to how learning will take place
- learning activities and materials
  - study guides
  - feedback devices
  - instruction
  - counselling
  - testing, surveying
- promotion
- record keeping
- certification

The organic approach to ETV program development and utilization requires a team of specialists, working together to create the total package. Personnel specifically responsible for utilization are part of this team and should be involved at each step in the development of the course. Creative feedback from utilizers to subject matter people, to program producers, to broadcasters is essential if the total package is to accomplish what it was created to do. Utilizers should also relate the specific offering to the total educational environment, otherwise the ETV course will appear to exist in a vacuum, and will lose much of its potency. Utilizers must feel free to make adjustments and adaptations as conditions may require; in short, in the content of utilization, the utilizer or coordinator must also be a creative person, playing a most creative role.