Packaging The Learning Situation

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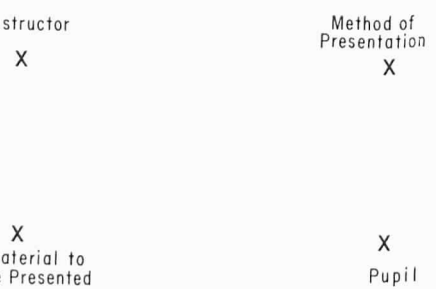
Training men who are responsible for conducting instructor courses, teaching conferences methods or who have to explain the learning situation to an on-the-job instructor, always seem to be asked one or more of the following questions:

1. What method of instruction is best for me?
2. Can I use the conference method in a basic course?
3. Are my students ready for role playing?
4. I am most comfortable lecturing — why should I switch methods?
5. How can I possibly adapt my materials to any method other than lecture?

It is obvious we cannot answer each question to the satisfaction of everyone. These are really loaded questions! Ifs — ands — buts — prevail. We have found however that the following explanation of the learning situation makes a good "frame of reference" with the questioner and lets him answer his own inquiry.

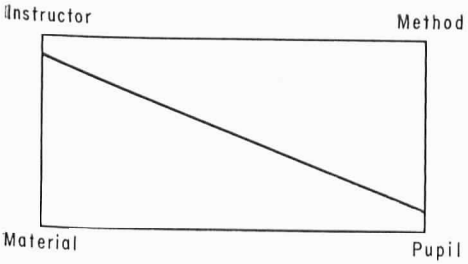
The two basic parts of any learning situation are the "sender" and the "receiver." May we label them like this:

If learning is to take place, if the sender and the receiver receives, then, there exists the other two necessary ingredients of the learning situation: Let's add them like this:

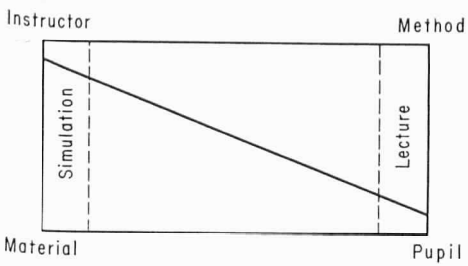


We have only to connect the "4 corners" of the learning situation and we have a two dimensional "box" that denotes the learning situation. To present the flow of information from the instructor to a pupil, we can draw a line that is almost a diagonal within our box. Almost? Well, the instructor will very likely never be able to impart the full amount of his knowledge and the pupil will, in

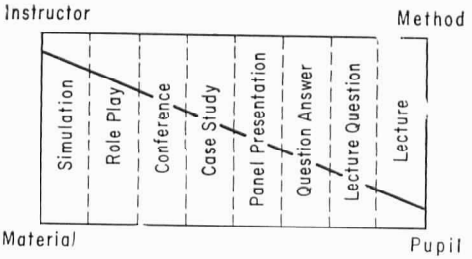
all likelihood, never receive one-hundred percent of what is sent. Drawing the "almost" diagonal below makes our box look like this:



Now comes an additional bonus to "boxing" the learning situation. The methods of instruction lend themselves to locations within the box. For example, the lecture method may be presented at the far right of the box by showing a dotted line within the box. If the amount of instructor participation in the learning situation is shown by the triangle instructor-method-pupil, and the student's participation is shown by the bottom triangle, then the locations of the lecture method become apparent. By contrast, if we follow this same reasoning, we see that the opposite end of the box in which the students do most of the participation we can show another method. Perhaps the most logical method to put there would be simulation training in which inductive – deductive reasoning processes are used by the pupils with only limited structure given by the instructor. Illustrated below are these opposites in presentation.



Other Methods may be shown as falling somewhat between these two extremes. The following finished sketch of this presentation shows the ranking used by the authors:



This presentation of course does not mean that the above methods are shown as percentages, as rules, as absolutes. A method can vary with instructors. However, studies have shown that the more involvement by the participant the greater the chances are that real learning takes place; that this learning is maintained; that a change in behavior will more likely occur as a result of the learning situation.

Then, in climax the diagonal becomes representative of the amount of overt participation on the part of the learner and the four corners are the four corner stones of the learning situation. With this box as a "frame of reference" the instructor-trainer can more easily help the learner understand that his questions concerning "what method of instruction should he use" can only be answered in terms of his objectives and the amount of time he can devote to the subject.

NOTE: This type of presentation lends itself easily to projection. The authors use an overhead projector with transparency overlays to explain the learning situation.