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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

FOLLOWING on the tradition started some years ago, this edition of *Symposium* contains two kinds of articles: those which have been specially commissioned for publication, and texts or reports of papers given at conferences held in various parts of the Republic. All these articles are devoted to some aspect or other of the new educational technology. No apology is offered for either of these procedures. The editorial board felt that those articles that are texts of lectures or papers presented originally in oral form deserve a much wider audience than was possible in their original form. However important the personality of a particular speaker may be, it is much easier and more convenient to preserve his thoughts in printed form rather than on tape or in the fallible depths of one's memory. That the articles specially commissioned are the work of cognoscenti in the newer fields of educational thought and practice also needs no defence. It is the avowed intention of *Symposium* to try to keep in perspective the expanding horizons of education, not only in the Republic, but elsewhere. *Symposium* is a journal of education for Southern Africa and the reports to be found elsewhere in this edition of work in progress in Basutoland, the Congo and Zambia are important contributions in this respect.

Whatever may be the position in respect of the actual application of new ideas in South African classrooms and lecture rooms (and there is evidence of much activity), it cannot be denied that there is a great deal of earnest thinking and discussing going on at divers levels and amongst various members of the teaching profession, both individually and collectively. The number of conferences, refresher courses and other meetings (not to mention the ordinary work of the teachers' organisations) that have recently been held in the Republic suggest that many teachers are taking note, or being compelled to take note, of new pedagogic advances.

The Provincial Departments of Education are also doing their part in all this. The fact that they are organising refresher courses and in-service training courses (and in some instances allowing teachers to attend these during term time) shows that the authorities are aware of expansion and developments in education and are anxious to apply these in Provincial systems of education.

Out of this welter of change (and many teachers are feeling out of breath at the speed and extent of the change) several facts are emerging. One is that the application of educational technology can make good teaching more widely available. A dearth of teachers, especially of good teachers, seems to be a world-wide problem.

Let us stick our editorial necks out and suggest one definition of a good teacher: one who is master of his subject and who can, in whatever way, cause permanent and fruitful learning to take place. The use of programmed learning, educational television, language laboratories and other techniques means that good teaching (or, if you like, successful learning) can be ensured over a wider area and amongst a larger school population than would otherwise be possible. The article by Mr. Ferrer suggests some interesting situations in which it is humanly impossible for the teacher to present in the ordinary classroom situation the same view-point and the same experience as can be presented by closed-circuit television. The seduction of successful teachers by commerce and industry can be counteracted only by a spreading of successful teaching such as can be achieved by the use of educational technology.

Another aspect of educational technology is that a carefully validated and successful teaching machine programme, or an imaginatively produced televised lesson or a well-conceived language laboratory lesson sequence constitute a subtle challenge to the teacher to improve his own teaching, however good it may be, and an indirect means of refreshing or re-training the teacher in either content or method, or both. One Scottish education authority in fact openly avers that its ETV programmes on the new mathematics teach teachers just as successfully as they teach children.

It is very rare, under ordinary school conditions, that a teacher has the chance of observing his colleagues at work. A visit by an inspector or a principal or a training college lecturer's visit to his students are possibly the few occasions when one's teaching is observed by another adult, and these kinds of occasions are not those of equals discussing their work. Nor is it often that teachers discuss amicably and in a detached manner in the staff room the methods, techniques and procedures that they employ in the classroom. Team teaching, for example, is therefore a kind of group therapy, and

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the kind of occasion when the teacher is on his mettle simply because other adults are present and are observing him displaying his art. The use of educational technology may mean a cutting down to size of some classroom dictators, and a more democratic approach to the teaching-learning situation.

The final point that we would metion is our belief that, although new pedagogic techniques, from i.t.a. to closed-circuit television, have proved their efficacy as techniques, we still have a long way to go in trying to decide, either empirically or by careful experiment and research, their function and position within the overall educational strategy. Mr. Sealey's article on programmed learning hints at some of the difficulties in trying to assign a particular position to a particular technique within the general fabric of what we call education. The design and equipping of schools of the future, the financing of education, even the very function of the teacher himself have to be considered against this background. *Symposium* would welcome, for publication in the next issue, opinions or experimental findings which would help teachers to try to decide how best to integrate into the overall educational strategy those techniques and procedures that have been occupying our energy and attention over the past few years.

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