

Current Emphases and Issues in Planned Programming for Children

Barbara Fowles

"If educational television is to be viable in the classroom or outside of it, it must compete successfully in the eyes of children with The Flintstones and Happy Days. Today's children develop their expectations of what television should be from watching programs of this type, and they will no longer settle for the 'home made' atmosphere of a series like the once-popular Mr. Wizard."

"'The CTW Model' (Palmer, 1978). This is essentially a blueprint for collaboration among a professional television production team of producers, directors, choreographers, and so forth, a research team of psychologists and education specialists, and an advisory team of experts in various aspects of the program's proposed subject matters (Palmer, 1974)."

"Formal educational programming -referred to as instructional television (ITV)- has typically been in the hands of educators who were untrained in television production and limited by chronically tight institutional budgets. Long accustomed to the polished appearance of high-budget entertainment programs, children are no longer so attracted by such programming."

successful programming efforts need to involve subject experts "at various levels of theory and application." "For example, a recent mathematics series, The Infinity Factory, used as consultants both theoretical mathematicians from MIT and elementary and secondary level classroom teachers. Although such consultant involvement is expensive and time consuming, it pays off in establishing a sound theoretical structure and in assuring that the programs will be useful to classroom teachers and children."

"According to the CTW model, the needs and abilities of the target audience are assessed before program planning gets underway."

"The CTW model suggest that the items in the curriculum be stated in terms of behavioral goals. Briefly, a behavioral goal is expressed in terms of what the child who views the program should be able to do after viewing."

"Behavioural goals have several advantages. They force the persons who write the goals to be concrete and specific, they translate directly into test items (eg. 'Tell me six reasons why somebody should not smoke cigarettes'), and they suggest how the goal should be presented in the program. For this particular goal the requirement that the child be able to list the outcomes suggests

program content stressing enumeration of them. A different goal, such as: "The child can discuss the negative effects of smoking cigarettes," might suggest a presentation with more depth and less repetition."

formative research - "It has the exclusive aim of providing information which will help improve the quality and effectiveness of the program and is a part of the actual process of creating a program....It must be planned and carried out quickly and therefore generally must be relatively simple: It must involve minimal preparation of special materials such as tests and be relatively small-scale. The point of a formative research effort is to gather sufficient information from careful testing and cautious interpretation to allow for practical decision-making."

"...but evidence in related areas suggests that television can, in fact, initiate active behavior when the appropriate devices are used (see demonstrations in the area of visual search (O'Bryan and Silverman, 1972, 1973; Salomon, 1972), verbal participation, and classifying activity (Dennis, 1977))."

"With its colorful, dynamic visuals for which print is no match, The Electric Company may be teaching basic reading skills but eroding children's motivation to become truly literate."

Elements of Successful Programs (see above)

- Involvement of (subject) Experts
- A Targeted Viewer
- An Interpretable Curriculum
- Research