

EDITORIAL

The New Technologies and the Changing Role of the Administrator

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Research into the impact of technology on education at all levels is now a serious sub-component of educational research. Such research is now well beyond the original "I taught a course on-line and another face-to-face and tried to figure out which was best" kind of research and reporting. Research into administration and the new requirements of the educational administrator of our time is also a serious sub-component of educational research, though here the work is often still prescriptive or suggestive, not comparative or cognitive or literate or experimental.

In this issue of the *Journal of Educational Thought*, though it is primarily a volume devoted to a variety of technology related educational issues, we juxtapose these two interests with a view to suggesting that those who are interested in the one ought to be interested in the other and vice versa.

What is there about the issues relating to modern integrating technologies that ought to interest an educational administrator? And what are the administrative issues that ought to interest a serious student of educational technology?

There are at least three issues that any contemporary educational administrator ought to be concerned about. The first is whether there are any special claims that can be truly made for the superiority of education that heavily relies on computer-based or internet-based technology. The second is whether or not such superiorities, should they exist, are affordable or even less expensive than traditional educational approaches. And the third is whether or not there is a cultural cost to moving to new technologies, either by way of replacing traditional methods or as an integrated adjunct to such methods. We do not know the answer to any of these questions, though there are those willing to die for certain kinds of speculative answers to such questions, as there are for most causes.

There is a certain class of writing in our time that takes it for granted that computer-based or internet-based educational technology is the answer to all, or nearly all, pedagogical problems. Such writing primarily takes the form of advocacy for the use of technology, where possible, to replace the live teacher. Sometimes it takes the form of advocating that the teacher on-line is intrinsically better than the teacher face-to-face. Or perhaps it takes the form of recommending a particular technological medium, say WebCT, as the best form of running an educational program or course of studies on-line. A salutary propaedeutic to such lines of thought is the subtle approach to the relation of technology to pedagogy taken by, for example, the Galileo Network – www.galileo.org – a group working out of the University of Calgary with numerous school-based partners. The Galileo group emphasizes the background role of technology, with the primary emphasis on student learning, not on the technology. Another salutary propaedeutic is the variety and subtlety of papers in this issue exploring the relationships between education and modern multi-media technology.

Are the uses of modern technologies for education really more cost effective ways to deliver genuine education than the traditional face-to-face ways? Perhaps once posed in such a way the question can be seen to be misleading. For example, we can ask to what degree information on the internet potentially replaces, rather than merely augments, a traditional library.

This issue of JET not only shows a variety of sophisticated approaches to thinking about the educational problems which the new technologies pose for the educator, they also show what the administrator responsible for the implementation of such technologies has to begin to think about.

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