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<th>Title</th>
<th>New communication technology and rural education.</th>
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<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10220/2493">http://hdl.handle.net/10220/2493</a></td>
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New Communication Technology And Rural Education

By

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New Communication Technology
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People should not refuse education because education makes people grow, develop and brings success to their lives, their families, their society and the world as a whole.

In former times, those who had opportunities to study were those who lived in town or in areas which were convenient enough to get in touch with others, while people in rural areas who were isolated missed the chance to receive an education. This might be the cause of lack of communication linkage and social relations. Most people in rural areas who live far away from each other and some remote areas cannot receive radio and television. In fact, many do not even have a telephone to contact others. Besides that, they are short of good teachers to teach in the schools. These factors steal normal educational opportunities from people in rural and remote areas. To provide education to those people is to bring the appropriate technology to suit their context and their needs.

Today, communication technology is more progressive and modern. To overcome the restraints of these obstacles, we must make use of new communication technology. Ideas incorporating its use in rural education are as follows:
1. Tele-Learning by Satellite

Many countries are attempting to adapt new communication technology in their distance education systems to achieve better results and to overcome the restraints of much of the media presently employed. The geography of the country restricts the reception of both radio and television in rural areas; therefore putting large numbers of students to a disadvantage. So, one possible means of overcoming these limitations is through satellite communication technology. With its many applications, a practical use of satellite technology can make educational communication quicker, clearer and more efficient, because satellites are capable of reaching people in all parts of the country. There are many possible ways to use satellites in rural education. One tele-learning system is Direct to Home Broadcasting or the DTH system. In this system, signals are sent from one main earth station to other receiving earth stations via satellite to people’s homes.

(diagram)
In this way, a signal sent from one main network can cover the entire country. People who have a satellite dish can receive the signals directly, providing good and clear transmission. This is very convenient for the receivers or students who can select the programs and watch anytime they wish. However, this method is very expensive because the high cost of the dish, besides, they must be produced in mass quantities.

If receivers in rural areas cannot afford the dish individually, they can be provided by having groups of receivers meet at a study center or other appropriate place in each area, each group consisting of about 30-40 people in each subject. This would allow the receivers to exchange views among each other and each subject will last about one hour. This way can be arranged by sending learning schedules to the learners. Each day learners can study each subject at study centers according to their needs.

The use of satellite receivers would enable the employees or the learners to remain at their work sites or areas near their homes without wasting time and expense in traveling to school to study as the students do in the conventional learning system. This method is possible and appropriate to the rural education in general.
2. A Computer-Assisted Instruction System

Students in rural areas who live far away from the teacher can learn individually by themselves with the assistance of communication technology equipment which is known as the computer-assisted instruction system. This system is the learning system in which the teachers or instructors create lessons and design the program-instruction and can be computerized by having the instructions appear on the screen. Each lesson contains about 30-40 pages or frames. Students are able to study the computerized lessons by following the instructions frame by frame. They can immediately evaluate their progress of the teaching points presented in each lesson. After studying the first page or first frame, they can evaluate themselves by answering questions based on the text they have just read. If their answer is correct, they can continue to the next frame. If the answer is incorrect, they must select a different answer or go back and study the text again until they understand the content and can choose the right answer, then they will go ahead until the end of the lesson. This computer-assisted instruction has a special data system called the Session File which records the study performance data of each student who uses the lessons and at the end of each lesson, the score of the self-evaluation test is given on the screen. This data may be printed and sent to the instructor who prepared the lesson for analysis of the answers given by each student or to ascertain the results of the use of each lesson. These reports may then be used as guidelines in revising the texts and presentation of the lessons.
This computer system can be placed in specific rooms which allow students to use it as much as possible or as often as they want. Students can then study alone by themselves and do not need to travel to attend class at school. Although they live far away in whatever area, they can have a chance to learn. By this new communication technology, students in rural areas will have equal opportunities to learn as well.

All technologies have their strengths and weaknesses and it is important to be aware that not all technologies will suit all situations. We must understand in what context the appropriate technology is being selected for. The concept of using satellite technology and computer-assisted instruction are ideas in which learners living in rural areas who cannot get in touch directly with teachers are brought together through communication technology, providing the precious opportunity to learn.