George H. Millis discusses limitations of television as a teaching aid

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A member of the Montana State University education faculty calls attention to some limitations of television as a teaching aid in the October issue of The Clearing House, a national education journal.

Dr. George H. Millis, on leave last year from his assignment at MSU, took a four-month position as a seventh-grade mathematics teacher at Twin Lakes School in Tampa, Fla. In his article describing his experiences with classroom TV, he charges that television reduces the classroom teacher "more and more to the status of a nut tightener on the educational assembly line."

The teacher can gear other audio-visual aids to his own lesson plans, but the televised lesson reverses the traditional order, according to Dr. Millis. The televised lesson sets the pattern and the teacher becomes supplemental to the teaching aid, he contends.

Another major limitation of classroom TV is its failure to allow for individual differences among students, Dr. Millis said. No matter how well versed the television teacher is in his subject, he must present his material on one level of difficulty. He can not make provision for the varying levels of ability in his viewing audience.

Dr. Millis also sees the lack of personal contact between teacher and pupil as a drawback of televised lessons. The teacher who teaches without benefit of TV can pace his presentation to suit his class and can mix lecture, demonstration, discussion and project work as the classroom situation dictates, he points out.

The MSU educator concludes that "television is undoubtedly an excellent medium with many possibilities for the classroom but, as yet, it has not been able to offer much help to teachers in overcoming the problem of providing for individual differences among their pupils."

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