



## The Educational Philosophy of Herbet Marshall McLuhan: Relevance of Technology in Education

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ABSTRACT

Herbert Marshall McLuhan is treated as the first father and leading prognosticator of the electronic age. The ideas of Marshall McLuhan have had a great impact on contemporary thinking. Whether one assays McLuhan as charlatan or prophet, it is irrefutable that he has influenced such diverse fields as art, architecture, advertising, communications, literature, sociology, and education. McLuhan is best known for his profound insight into the knowledge of the process of communication. He described how a transformation in the medium of the delivery of information, has a transformative effect on its society. In McLuhan's time, TV was changing the transference on information and the western world. McLuhan rightly predicted the way that TV and video encased our western society, but it did not extensively change the way that education was done. TV and video and other audio-visual media were definitely incorporated into educational practice, but they didn't radically revolutionize it.

**KEYWORDS**

Electronic, Media, Technology, Education, Internet

**MARSHALL McLUHAN (July 21, 1911 – December 31, 1980)**

A contemporary thinker and a prolific writer, he was Canadian professor, philosopher of communication theory and public intellectual. He is well known for coining the expressions like 'global village' and 'the medium is the message' Marshall McLuhan has made a study of the psychic and social consequences of technologies and media. McLuhan has devoted his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*; to an elaborate exploration of print culture and literacy in the western world, and the consequences of these on man's sensory life. He is an outspoken critic of literacy and mechanical industrialization. He is also known as first father and leading prophet of the electronic age. Modern man according to Marshall appears to have become merely for the production and consumption of goods.

**EDUCATION ACCORDING TO MARSHALL McLUHAN:**

**(A)** His diagnosis of the present malaise in education is related to the general chaos and confusion experienced in modern life, which is clearly stated below:

1. Our educational system is outmoded. It is geared to vanishing values and old print technologies. It represents the mechanical age which gave us the mass education. Education, therefore, became part of producing people who could meet the needs of an industrial society.
2. Most classroom teachings in schools are based on the printed book culture. Teaching is visual and fragmentary, it does not attract and interest the young, and they do not react to it, since they belong to the electric era which has left the age of print literacy behind.
3. Set patterns of educational requirements are imposed on the young. Those that learn facts faster and better are considered superior. Competition still remains the main factor in mass education.
4. The young minds today feel bored in the schools, they are used to an environment in which there is an involvement, depth, action and sensory stimulation, and hence the classroom where the lecture method interspersed with slight audio visual aids fails to attract their attention.
5. Children gain information and learn much more outside

than inside the classroom.

6. The child, who enters, the elementary school on the first step of the ladder of educational system is no longer a child, he has outgrown his childhood.
7. There is an absurd proliferation subjects in schools and colleges. Knowledge has been compartmentalized and sheer specialism results in instruction by "specialists" who have little or nothing to do with knowledge in its broad sense, since they are only concerned with their limited subject areas.
8. Just as teaching of reading is standardized in schools, whatever the student reads is also standardized.

**(B) EDUCATIONAL GOALS:**

1. Liberal Education is the utmost necessity. Electronic media of programmed learning, teaching machines, films and tapes is advocated by Marshall. This sort of education enables the youth to participate in society in an imaginative way. According to McLuhan, "The electronic age...angelizes man, disembodies him turns him into software."
2. Rhetoric and eloquence of speech should be preserved in education. An orchestration or harmony of touch, taste, sight, and sound can be achieved through emphasizing words and oral learning.
3. Education should develop critical awareness in growing minds and curbs placid and passive acceptance of factual data whose sources we adopt without criticism.
4. Education should provide a protection against "media fallout", which implies the ill-effects of inhibited utilization and other modern media. It should help them to become masters rather than slaves of the media.
5. Education should help us to understand the new environment. Marshall believes that unlike previous environmental changes, the electric media constitute a total and near instantaneous transformation of culture, values and attitudes. The teachers should attempt to learn media themselves, only then the pupils can realize the power of such media and may contribute to devour our precious heritage of culture and values.

6. Teachers should learn about media themselves.
7. Education should help us to shape not only production and marketing procedures but all other areas of life.
8. Education should help the students meet their expectations in best way.

### (C) METHODS OF CURRICULUM:

According to McLuhan, the following methods must be inculcated within a curriculum:

1. Instead of teaching many different subjects, a structural study of learning and of knowledge itself, knowledge of the world and a little itself should be introduced in schools and colleges, in a unified form. There should be expansion of learning in depth.
2. In order to cope up with the tremendous amount of knowledge available in the world today, the schools should enable the young to have free access to it and to utilize it. The only successful method of teaching ,when the amount of knowledge to be acquired is so vast, would be that of pattern-recognition, through the Gestalt approach, in which a person interacts within a field of psychological forces wherein memories, anticipations and purposes are included.
3. If we wish to change the methods of teaching from the older techniques, we should make the use of television. Merely putting television in the classroom is of no value, what is needed is the conscious planning of elaborate educational programs for the different levels of requirements in each broad area of study. The close inter-relationship between geographical facts, sociological ideas, anthropological studies and historical evidence should be brought out through all sensory modes in television programs.
4. Learning is geared up through the use of newer media. The subject areas must be learnt at a very early age by young children through sensory approach which comes through television, video tapes, recordings and other such similar medias.
5. By creating a favorable environment in learning, education need not become the painful experience for the young. New horizons should be created and the pressure and failure of present day educational methods be avoided, involving the emotions of the learners in teaching learning process.
6. Grasp and apprehension by students, in the process of learning may be stimulated by a unified sensory experience of what is being taught. All the senses will be involved in this experience and can be translated into any other form of experience. Such a technique involves the use of rationality. Real understanding of what is taught can be best brought through the electronic media which have the power of bringing about interplay of such senses.
7. A great amount of revolution in education methods can be brought about by a very wide use of telstar teaching machines, programmed instruction and television on a massive scale.
8. A rich and auditory heritage of music, drama, poetry, classical literature from cultures all over the world is made accessible to us through the channel of tapes, recordings; films and movies .These are invaluable assets for use in education. They can be used in conjunction with printed books, paintings, sculptures and other visual means. A combination of these forms of learning can bring a new hybrid in learning in the classroom.
9. There needs to be training in perception given in schools, a power-up enabling one to see the appearance of things. Education should develop in the old and the young a resistance to the pressure that the advertising media on television, or radio, or newspaper or journal exerts on individual's thought pro-

cess. Marshall McLuhan recommends that training also be imparted in the perception of the graphic and the photographic. Along with this, the power to discriminate between good music and the alluring sounds of the singing commercial with its glamorous action appeal, are also needed in education today.

10. The new technology, according to Marshall, requires a new kind of education to enable us to use it. It also creates and provides the teacher and pupils with the means of obtaining this new kind of education. The new educational media require the teacher and pupils to master their new languages, these languages are rich and meaningful and have to be used in the process of education.

11. For real learning to take place, Marshall McLuhan says that environment should be free, the pupils should be able to move around freely from one room to another, and from one building to another, to learn what they please, and when and how they please. Learning thus becomes exploration and a discovery, a process of play and of pleasure.

12. Art should be taught to all pupils at all levels, but not as a separate subject. To classify art as a subject, according to Marshall McLuhan, is to separate it from the other activities of mankind, because art has taken on a new meaning in this space age of information.

### (D) THE TEACHER:

Teachers, scholars, intellectuals should come out of the ivory towers of isolation and exploit the new electronic resources. The teachers should be dedicated and devoted persons. A good teacher is one who encourages others to think actively. A distinguished teacher can make the thinking pleasant for the students and a superb teacher can make it delightful even when it is disturbing. The teacher should suggest and evaluate student's projects. By adopting digital media and all other exciting functionalities, the teacher can engage the students in learning process. The teacher should enlarge his role and attempt to reach out and exert his influence far beyond the walls of the classroom and the school. The power of human navigation should be in their hands and they should be able to steer the path towards the survival of the human race.

### (E) DROP-OUTS:

According to Marshall, dropouts are young people who try to find out their identity. To keep the drop outs within the schools ,means to involve his whole being, to give him interplay, to make him an explorer and to let him hunt through the new world of electronic environment provided in the school. Let him work alone or in groups seeking solutions to his living problems. The student who gets flunking grades frequently becomes drop-outs. He is out of touch, he cannot fall in line with other students, in which he has no individual identity and this creates a sense of loneliness within him. In such a case, the educator should set about the exciting work of creating a new kind of learning environment by no means where any drop -out exists. To facilitate better and significant education to the young and prevent them from being drop-outs, the impersonal and dehumanizing atmosphere of educational institutions should be abolished. An educational system in which there is an in depth approach to learning, a revolution in attitudes between the teacher and the taught, a recognition of the sensibilities is what is urgently needed. A student learns more outside the classroom.

**"We become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us"**

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