

# Using Media in Teaching

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**Saide**   
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# Using Media in Teaching

## Learning Guide

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# SECTION ONE

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# What are the aims of this module?

## 1.1

### What key learning problem does this module address?

The important question we address in this module is:

*How can teachers use popular media, textbooks, and computer technologies to create a learning environment that equips learners with the knowledge and skills to live and work thoughtfully in a changing South Africa?*

Before we answer this question, let's step back and find out what kinds of learning we need to develop in our classrooms.

Both *Curriculum 2005* and *outcomes-based education* suggest that we should cut back on content-heavy, teacher-centred methodologies and begin teaching in ways that:

- actively involve learners in their own learning;
- link school learning with the learners' lives and experiences;
- develop learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

In other words, we need to develop learners who can *use the knowledge* they have learnt in order to *do things in society*, rather than just remember the content they have learnt. But we have an additional challenge. We have to develop learners who are thoughtful and adaptable. They should be able to use their knowledge to solve the problems they face in society rather than simply being defeated by them.

In addition, though, our increasingly *information-saturated* world demands that we develop learners with good reading and information-processing skills and high levels of media literacy. The use of media resources in learner-centred methodologies provides rich opportunities to develop these language skills.

But, as our experience with textbooks demonstrates, media on their own will not create a learning process that is active and focused on developing useful outcomes. In order to do this, we need to understand how media resources can be used by *teachers* within learner-centred and activity-based methodologies, such as *resource-based learning* and *experiential learning*. **Section Two** illustrates how you can begin implementing these kinds of methodologies in your classroom.

### The structure and content of the module

We have defined 'media resources' widely. It includes all resources that deliberately try to convey a message: the forms of communication that people use to exchange information. These would include newspapers, magazines, radio, novels, television, textbooks, photographs, cartoons, films, advertising leaflets, billboards, songs, the Internet, and so on.

Many South African educators have been conservative in the range of media resources they have used. We have tended to stick with textbooks. A few of us have asked learners to use dictionaries and encyclopaedias. If we teach English (and languages more generally), we'd also use media such as novels (as our 'setworks') or poetry anthologies, and sometimes popular media, such as advertisements or newspapers or magazines.



Read through Section One quickly; it needn't be studied! Return to it regularly to check that you are learning in an appropriate manner. Spend no more than one hour reading this section.

### Using popular media

The authors of this module persuade educators to be more adventurous. They demonstrate how teachers can use a much wider range of media – particularly *popular* media (media not designed primarily for education) – to enrich their teaching. **Section Three** focuses on how *popular* print media – mainly newspapers and magazines – can be used to support teaching in many different learning areas. Particular attention is paid to ways in which popular print media can be used to improve language skills, such as reading and writing. Section Four explores the educational potential of popular electronic media, such as television and radio. Writers demonstrate how these media can be used to supplement subject teaching while improving learners' listening and speaking abilities.

Throughout Sections Two, Three and Four, reference is made to *media literacy*. In **Section Five** we develop a more systematic understanding of the nature of popular media, in particular its ideological positions and the ways in which teachers can develop learners' abilities to 'read' popular media more critically. This module does not provide a comprehensive education in media literacy, but it does attempt to develop learner understanding of the nature of the different kinds of media studied.

### Using new and old forms of educational media

**Section Six** develops teachers' skills in selecting textbooks appropriately, and using textbooks (whether good or bad) more critically. While we acknowledge that South African textbooks have a problematic political history – as tools for apartheid propaganda – and have often been poorly designed, we suggest nevertheless that they are *fundamental* to good learning. Support materials – including *well-designed* worksheets based on popular media resources – have a vital role to play in linking learning to everyday life, updating textbook information, and making learning a great deal more exciting. But they cannot replace the higher-level, conceptual learning which *good* textbooks can develop. In other words, we distinguish between:

- textbooks as the *educational* medium essential for the construction of a *systematic learning framework*; and
- learning *support* materials, such as teacher-designed worksheets using *popular* media, as media that are used in *support* of the systematic learning framework.

**Section Seven** explores the educational potential of computer technologies. Computer technologies provide both popular media – the Internet has on-line newspapers and magazines, music, and large amounts of information about every subject – and media designed specifically for educational use. Both the Internet and CD-Roms provide teachers with structured learning resources that they could use in classrooms and which learners could use for independent study.

The module concludes with an annotated list of useful resources that learners can use to deepen their understanding of media, and the ways in which media can be used to teach.



This distinction is used in Taylor, N. and Vinjevd. P. 1999. *Getting Learning Right*. This is an analytical summary of 35 South African research studies into classroom teaching and learning. It is published by the Joint Education Trust and can be ordered from them at PO Box 178. Wits. 2050. or by e-maiting info@jet.co.za.

## Why do we focus on media resources?

### South African education policy

South Africa's new educational policy emphasises that educators and learners need to be media literate if they are to operate effectively in the new millennium. Two of the seven critical cross-field outcomes challenge educators to enable their learners to:

- *collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate information*;
- *communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes*.



## Global changes

This emphasis on developing a better understanding of *media* and *information* is echoed internationally. As societies become 'knowledge' or 'information' societies, so our ability to understand, select and manipulate information – our ability to read critically and be media literate – becomes vital to our productivity and power in society. Worldwide, then, schooling is moving away from the dissemination of information towards teaching methods that develop learner skills in accessing, selecting and understanding information. Invariably, this requires a move away from didactic forms of teaching towards learner-centred teaching and towards analysing the media messages that dominate our lives. This skill- *media literacy* – is developed throughout the module.

## Improving South Africa's reading skills

If one of our primary educational challenges in the next millennium is the ability to understand, select, and manipulate information, then *reading* efficiently and critically, and *writing* persuasively, become extremely important skills that we need to develop in learners and in ourselves.

Yet South African research indicates that these are precisely the areas where our education is very weak. A recent study has shown that, at most, four minutes in a 30-minute lesson were devoted to reading – and this in an English class where one of the most important outcomes is the ability to read! In many other classes, such as Science and Geography, learners did no reading. Even where textbooks were available, teachers did not plan lessons in which their learners had time to read.

The current South African neglect of reading causes learners to be unable to read and understand questions in assignments, tests and examinations, and thus leads to their failure. But it also impacts on learners' future life chances: many school-leavers are not employed because they cannot write a simple application fluently, or read simple documents. This module will demonstrate how educators can use different media resources to enrich their teaching and to build a culture of reading in our schools.



See Taylor & Vinjevold. 1999.  
*Getting Learning Right*. Joint  
Education Trust, Johannesburg.

## What are the module's desired learning outcomes?

Here are some key outcomes for this module. In each section we provide more detailed outcomes. When you assess your competence, use both these outcomes and those that appear in the different sections. When you have finished working through this module, you should be able to:

- Explain how to implement 'resource-based' and experiential learning in your classroom.
- Turn non-educational *media* resources into good *educational* resources.
- Explain the relative educational strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of popular, educational, and computer media resources.
- Implement good resource-based and experiential learning, using the appropriate media to achieve your desired outcomes in different learning areas and at different grade levels.
- Understand the power that media resources have in developing reading and media literacy skills.
- Implement learning activities in all subjects and learning areas that develop reading and media literacy skills, and convey the required content knowledge.
- Explain what it means to be media literate.
- Use popular media in your teaching in a manner that develops the learners' media literacy.

# 1.2

## How should you study this module?

### Tips on using the module's different components

#### **Using the Learning Guide**

As you will have noticed, most of the outcomes listed are about *doing* things better. This module is a practical guide to better teaching. It doesn't contain academic readings. Instead it is filled with activities that allow you to practise designing and using different kinds of media as learning resources.



You will recognize these activities by this kind of icon in the margin next to them. The recommended time you should spend on each activity is also included.

#### **Activities designed for use with learners**

The module contains a large number of examples of classroom-based activities developed by teachers. These provide models of the good use of media in education. If you are studying this module through a teacher education institution, your lecturer or tutor may prescribe certain activities as compulsory. If this is not the case, we recommend that you attempt as many of the activities as possible. And don't just read them, do them – with fellow learners or, if you are actually teaching, with your own learners.

Because we have provided activities for a broad range of grades and learning areas, some of the activities may not be suitable for your field. However, if you recognize the learning principles that underlie these activities, you will be able to adapt many of them for your own use. You can use more up-to-date or appropriate newspaper clippings or radio broadcasts and, in many cases, it is possible to adapt the described approach to another learning area. You can also increase the complexity of a module activity designed for the Intermediate Phase so that it can be used in the Senior Phase, or reduce the complexity so that it is suitable for the Foundation Phase.



You will recognise these activities by this kind of icon in the margin next to them. The recommended time you should spend on each activity is also included.

#### **Activities designed to improve teacher planning and reflection**

We have also included a number of 'checklists' and suggested activities that educators can use to develop and evaluate their practice. These may assist you in evaluating your own teaching, or function as a guide when you have to select good textbooks, or decide when to use computer technology, and soon.

#### **Developing a teaching resources file**

We suggest you do these activities in a systematic way. To make this possible, you should buy a file that you should divide into three sections:

- a section where you file your responses to the activities you are asked to do in the Learning Guide;
- a section where you file the worksheets and learning programmes you develop as you work through this module - these will become an invaluable part of your teaching resources;
- a section where you file media resources that look interesting for future use, but which have not yet been turned into educational resources.

You may want to store your resources in plastic folders which can be filed. You could label each plastic folder with the topic of the articles, or according to how you could use them in class. Since newsprint yellows over time, you should make photocopies of articles you want to keep. Remember to reference these with the newspaper's name and date!

You could work with other teachers in your school who teach the same learning

area or the same grade as you do. If all of you collected useful articles, you would soon have a wide variety to choose from.

### Using the video

This is a mixed media module: it includes print, audio and video components. But it is this Learning Guide that will give you *guidance* as to when and how you should use the video and audiotape.

The videotape focuses on the use of *popular media*: it doesn't refer at all to the use of traditional media or computer technologies. It aims to give you an overview of the main issues covered in Sections Three, Four and Five. It also aims to *illustrate* how these media can be used in teaching, and how you can teach media literacy. It does this by:

- filming teachers in South African classrooms as they implement lessons using popular media; and
- visiting a film crew shooting an advertisement.

We suggest that you watch the video before you start working through the Learning Guide. Make brief notes as you watch – of issues that interest you and of queries you may have. Use these queries to guide you as you search for answers in the Learning Guide. Later, as you work through the Learning Guide, you will be directed back to specific video clips as we deal with a particular issue in more depth.

### Using the audiotape

The audiotape includes interviews with teachers and researchers about the use of media in teaching, as well as examples of media resources taped from radio or off a CD. It covers the entire module and is structured in the same way as the Learning Guide. The excerpts are linked directly to activities or readings in the Guide, and aim either to *deepen* your understanding – by interviewing experts in the field - or to *illustrate* how to teach better by providing audio resources and talking to teachers about how they use these in teaching. The Learning Guide will explain when to listen to the audiotape.

### The CD-Rom

In the 2001 edition of this module a CD-Rom was included and referenced in Section Seven. However, because it is dated and also not essential for understanding the module, we have not uploaded the material onto OERAfrica.

## How much time do you need to complete the module?

The module is designed to be completed in 120 hours of student work. Because of its flexible design, it can be used as:

- a module that stretches over a full year (40 weeks, at a rate of three hours of work per week); or
- a semester-long module (20 weeks, at six hours of work per week); or
- a short, intensive, full-time, three-week course (three weeks at 40 hours of work per week).

Of course, different learners work at different speeds. Some learners will choose to focus only on some aspects of the module. But, as a guide, we provide 'calendars' which will assist you in completing the module within 20 weeks.



An icon like this will appear in the margin when you need to watch the video.



An icon like this will appear in the margin when you need to listen to the audiotape.





An icon like this will appear when we refer you to further reading. It gives you a reference to a book that the writers found useful.

## Reading further

This module is designed as a flexible learning resource. In other words, it is written to be accessible to first-year trainee teachers, but also to be useful to teachers who are already working but are interested in developing their knowledge of these issues further.

We have made many references in the margins to other texts that may contain either useful practical examples of media-based teaching, or reading around related issues (such as the design of learning materials), or interesting research linked to the issue being discussed. Many of these references are to other modules in this series. Learners who want to deepen their knowledge are encouraged to follow up on these references. The CD-Rom will assist senior teachers and planners in thinking through the appropriate selection of learning technologies. We also refer in the margins to useful learning websites.

Finally, the 'Selected reading' section at the end of the module provides an annotated list of a select number of recommended texts that can be used to deepen your understanding of the various issues covered in this module, and of good media-based resources you can use in your teaching.

## Assessing your progress

The key question you should use to judge your progress is:

*'Can I **teach** what I have just learnt? Can I, for instance, record a news broadcast, design a sensible worksheet around this, and use these to develop a lesson that is both stimulating and develops the knowledge and learning competencies associated with the particular learning areas and learning phase?'*

This can really only be assessed by doing. You need to actually collect the information, design the worksheet, and teach the lesson. You can assess your success by, for instance, asking a fellow student to assess your lesson against some of the key outcomes in this Learning Guide. You can also assess your learners to see whether your lesson enabled them to understand key concepts. It is no use at all to memorise the points made in this Learning Guide and to regurgitate them in an essay or exam!

The Guide is written in a style that asks you to interact with the authors, to think about the questions posed and to bring your own experience to your learning. The Guide has many activities that use media as a resource. The idea is that you do these activities yourself and then adapt them, if necessary, to use in your own classroom teaching.

You will usually do the activities on your own, but you may sometimes be asked to compare notes with a colleague. It will be helpful if you do have someone else who is doing the course with whom you can share ideas. If you are studying in a teacher education institution, then find some study partners with whom you can form a study group.

Teacher educators who are responsible for supervising this module should take note – setting such an exam would achieve very little.