

Miniaturized TV Sets May Improve Bush Education

OREGON COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, Monmouth— Electronic equipment developed by space age technology soon may be used to help provide better education for Alaskan children whose grandparents were reared in a stone age culture.

Dr. Paul H. Jensen, professor of education at Oregon College of Education, believes miniaturized television recorders will be the way for teachers to improve their communication with the soft-spoken children.

His belief is based on his work last spring as a consultant to the Alaska Department of Education in a pilot program among Eskimo children attending small schools along the remote Nushagak River in the southwest part of the state.

Teachers in those schools have been trained for conditions in the "lower 48" states and often are bewildered by the Alaskan children's responses in the classroom, and sometimes their frustration is compounded because no other educator is nearby to turn to for advice.

The children, Jensen says, find the teachers' mannerisms just as strange.

The use of videotape recorded on newly developed portable equipment will allow each teacher to evaluate his classroom behavior, then make the adjustments necessary to "turn on" his students to the subject being studied.

It is vital that communication in the classrooms is increased, Jensen says.

"The big advance in the 1960s in Alaska is not the discovery of gas and oil, but in native human resources," he explains. "Education is a critical part of their development."

Jensen is well-known in Alaska and teaching research circles for his anthropological studies among Alaskan Indians and Eskimos and his investigations leading to improvements in teaching methods.

The natives are eager to learn the ways of the "white" man, he says, but some of the newcomers' mannerisms are easily misunderstood. A harsh voice, which might be overlooked in other schools, might startle the Alaskans, for example.

Until the 1960s, it was difficult to attract teachers to the "bush," but now many are ap-

plying for positions. Textbooks and instructional materials for the isolated schools are being improved.

Still, the new teachers have needed to take a look at themselves, and this is what the videotapes provide.

Until recently, recording equipment was bulky, but miniaturization of electronic components has led to the development of portable gear that may be flown easily from one Alaskan point to another. One person can operate it.

Jensen and a technician, Mel Hoffman, carried out the tests of equipment supplied by four companies in the Nushagak Valley for two weeks last spring.

They conducted videotaping sessions at Koliganek, Ekwok and New Stuyahok.

The equipment performed well.

Hoffman had been a technician in a teacher self-evaluation project in Corvallis, Ore., which Jensen directed. The techniques in that project were applied in the Alaska research.

Basically, it is that teachers can learn much about their classroom behavior if they can view themselves in action, and improvements in classroom communication follow after they have seen the videotapes.

Five teachers who participated in Alaska showed great interest in the project: James Henriksen, head teacher at Koliganek; James Henry, head teacher at Ekwok, and his wife, Nancy; and James McGovern, head teacher at New Stuyahok, and his wife, Lorraine.

"They were willing and had the professional courage to take a recorded look at themselves and their teaching."

"It is to the credit of the

State Department of Education that its willingness was shown for innovations to meet the needs of natives more effectively."

Merle Armstrong, director of state-operated schools, directed the program. He was assisted by Terry Chase, area superintendent at Togiak, and John Ladakos, coordinator of federal projects for the Department of Education.

William Filter, audio-visual director of the Alaska Rural School Project of the University of Alaska, assisted as a technician.

The report on the program has been submitted to Dr. Cliff R. Hartman, commissioner of education for the State of Alaska.