

PROGRAMED INSTRUCTION

in

THE PRIMARY GRADES

AN ABSTRACT OF

A THESIS

**PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGE**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE**

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February 1968**

The purpose behind the writing of this thesis was to examine one of the most recently developed methods of learning--programed instruction. Experimental educational practices have become increasingly involved with programing techniques. Consequently, educational literature as well as popular periodicals have focused attention on this growing field. After looking at the general area of programed instruction it was the purpose of the writer to see how it would apply to primary grade instruction.

In order to understand the general field of programed instruction it was necessary to read extensively in the available literature pertaining to the subject. Following this, requests for information were sent to schools reported to be using programed instruction on the primary level. Personal observations were made in a school using programed instruction and interviews were held with the teachers and administrators involved.

As a result it was found that programed instruction is being used on a limited basis in schools today. Programing itself, is an outgrowth of a considerable amount of psychological research into the area of learning. It is based on the premise that students can learn independently and they learn best when (1) the material to be learned is broken down into small parts, (2) the student, after reading each part, is required to make a response to show that

he has learned it, and (3) the student is given immediate confirmation as to the correctness of his response. Programs are constructed so that a student can go through this process independently and at his own speed.

Much care and time is required in writing programs; consequently most programs are commercially produced and their quality varies greatly. It appears to be very important that teachers be trained in the proper selection of programs as well as in their best usage. The lack of enough good programs is one of the major deterrents to its widespread usage.

Programed instruction is most widely used in large school systems where it has first been tried out with small groups. The preponderance of programs available is on the junior and senior high school levels, but many aspects of programed instruction seem to be applicable to the primary grade level and the quantity of programs available on this lower level is increasing.

If programed instruction is to play a major role in the curriculum it will most likely be in schools that are adopting varied and flexible methods of instruction. Schools that are incorporating multi-media into their curricula, changing self-contained classrooms into small and large group instructional areas, and utilizing various methods for individualizing instruction are the schools that are providing the environment in which programed instruction can be most effective.