

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to determine a) the level of use (LoU) of Language Arts self-instructional materials (SIM) in Grades 4 and 5 of the Project PRIMER schools, b) the extent to which use of SIM was institutionalized a year after the project had officially ended; and to identify factors which contributed to the LoU and the extent of the institutionalization of the innovation.

The project, based on IMPACT in the Philippines, ran for three years (1980-83) and data were collected in 1984 by interviews and questionnaires, respondents being participating teachers, principals, and project staff. The writer also observed the use of SIM in the classroom, and read Project Progress Reports and short evaluation studies of various aspects of the project. The main findings were 1) Teachers generally did not display technical mastery of use of SIM and did not use SIM as intended by the developers of the project and 2) Use of SIM was therefore not institutionalized in the schools.

Some causes of this were:

- 1) The change strategies employed by PRIMER; these were based on wrong assumptions about the schools, teachers and principals involved.
- 2) Failure of the innovators throughout to recognize and address the real concerns of the users as they tried to implement the new ideas.

- 3) Lack of commitment to the project ideas by administrators, here the Ministry of Education in Jamaica, and lack of funds to carry on after the project officially ended.

These findings suggest that one must be wary of the transferability of innovative ideas from one Third World country to another. They also indicate that experiments need 'trial runs', and that teachers and principals of prospective project schools should be involved in the planning and development stages of an innovation. Finally, the importance of leadership training for change agents has been clearly shown.