

PI or PAI?

I suspect I am one of several old timer training administrators who, regrettably late in life, took or found the leisure to read extensively into the instructional systems which have been developed in the last decade--including Programmed Instruction. I note in the PI field that certain semantic problems still persist--how many m's in programming, when does one capitalize Program, the use of Programmed Instruction when Programmed Learning is meant--to name but a few.

I note also with regret that the proponents of Programmed Instruction have succumbed to the Governmental practice of alphabetizing everything. This was perhaps inevitable, but before the final shingle is nailed on the PI edifice, may I make a plea for consideration of PAI--Program Assisted Instruction.

Psychologists deserve tremendous credit for the development of PI, but the psychologist who inserted that little word assistance into CAI stole the show for the Computer Instruction people! He, or she, was a master of sound, human psychology. By adding the little word assistance CAI gained a host of friends among conventional teachers who are still doubtful as to whether PI will ultimately eliminate their jobs.

This is, of course, poppycock, but it is also understandable if you think back to some of the early and monstrous claims made for the teaching machines and PI. These claims carried the, at least, implied connotation that Machines and Programs would replace conventional courses and, ultimately, teachers.

And, don't we really mean Program Assisted Instruction? Isn't there a trend toward the use of programming in conjunction with conventionally taught courses rather than as a complete replacement?

I sense in my Johnny-come-lately role that the most demonstrably successful uses of PI are those where PI is a part of a conventionally taught course--sometimes the most difficult part


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to teach and often the most arduous. I sense also that programmed courses tend to be more successful when used by a teacher who is regularly if not constantly in attendance. And, call me Judas if you will, I sense also that some of those PI courses of the earlier years, for which the most monstrous claims were made, were those which claimed to be able to replace completely the conventional course and teacher.

It may be too late or undesirable to pull the rusted nail in the weathered PI shingle. But at least we can talk and think PAI--
Program Assisted Instruction--if we believe in it!

At the least we'd earn the gratitude of the growing body of U. S. Government instructors to whom PI has for years stood for Photographic Interpretation or Photographic Intelligence. More importantly I believe, we'd still draw into the fold a number of the uncommitted who are prepared to overfly PI to the greener but untested pastures of CAI.

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