Questions for Readings

Wandt (1965)

An Evaluation of Educational Research Published in Journals.


Questions to answer and points to keep in mind as you read this article:

1. Describe the method Wandt et al. used to investigate the quality of educational research.
2. What was the “criterion of research” used by the committee.
3. What method of sampling was used and what are the advantages of this particular method? Describe the population.
4. Wandt et al. state “... one cannot assume that publication in any journal represents a guarantee of quality” (p. 3). What is the basis for this assertion? What is the “median of the means” and what does this tell us?
5. “The only sound basis for determining the correctness of the conclusions lies in careful evaluation of the articles” (Wandt et al., 1965, p. 6). The primary goal of this course is for students to learn how to evaluate research articles thoroughly. The characteristics in Table 2 may be useful as a guideline for evaluating the articles you critique for this class.
6. Table 3 lists frequently observed weaknesses in this sample. The most frequent weakness was “Results of analysis not clearly presented.” The results of statistical tests may be interpreted incorrectly or the meaning of the test for the specific context may be lacking. Some texts that focus specifically on reporting of statistical analysis are Huck, Cormier, & Bounds (1974) and Shott (1990).
7. What two questions should be answered when one is interested in applying the results of research to improve educational practices?
8. Describe the two categories of educational research studies. What is the primary difference between these categories? Why are cause-and-effect relationships important? Can cause-and-effect relationships be justified by descriptive studies?
9. Notice the questions posed in paragraphs 34 and 36. These questions, too, will be useful in guiding your critique of research articles for this class.
10. “While it is desirable that the sections dealing with the statement of the problem and the conclusions be reported fully and clearly, it is possible to make sense out of a study which is deficient in either or both of these respects” (Wandt, 1965, p.8). As this statement suggests, the quality of a research report depends heavily on the Methods/Procedures and Results sections. While we will discuss the problem statement, most of our attention will be directed to these two sections. According to Wandt et al., why are these two sections so important?
11. What constitutes adequate justification for a cause-and-effect relationship? Why is such justification so difficult? Note carefully Scriven’s admonition: “One cannot apply anything one
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learns from descriptive research to the construction of theories or the improvement of education without having some causal data with which to implement it.”

12. What is a variable? How does it differ from a value?

13. Why should variables other than the hypothesized causal variables be randomized or controlled?

14. Why is random assignment of students to treatment and control groups important? What does random assignment enable us to demonstrate?

15. Why is it unlikely that direct solutions to local problems will be found in published educational research?