

Position paper on Assignment #7: A Reader's Guide to Scientifically Based Research

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EDU 5650: School Based Data Analysis

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A Reader's Guide to Scientifically Based Research

Slavin opens his article with the statement that “far more testing goes into our students’ hair gel and acne cream than into most of the curriculums or instructional methods teachers use.” How true....how sad.

His article is interesting as it sorts out the differences in control groups and randomized and matched experiments. Slavin talks about potential problems with matched studies and the fact that they’re more common than randomized ones. I agree that matched studies can be valid if the experimental and control groups are similar. However, I don’t think you will ever have perfect results as we are not dealing with test tubes or science experiments; we are dealing with human beings. Emotions, personalities, physical handicaps and the like often can skew results. True that these issues can occur in both groups but I think that immeasurable changes will never be accurate.

Randomized studies certainly can rule out selection bias but I agree that these studies can be very costly. Additionally adding to expense is the statistical and educational significance with sample size. To avoid any of the above mentioned situations adversely affecting the results on an individual school’s level, it is imperative to include 20-25 schools in each condition as Slavin mentions. I don’t think we should view studies for just a single school or class unless that same study is done by many researchers as the author suggests.

I agree that “cherry picking” is a danger. There will always be individual schools that make large gains in a given year and this holds no validity. Also, adopting a specific program for a single subject or school can have a profound impact on a school for a long time and I don’t believe we should risk putting a child’s education in jeopardy for the sake of inconclusive research.

How great would a study of the educational practices in various states if we compared a standardized test such as the SAT across the country? It would show us the differences in the states’ educational policies and would be a fair assessment.

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Reference

Slavin, Robert E. (2003, February). A Reader's Guide to Scientifically Based Research. *Educational Leadership*, pp 12-16.

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