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Productivity of educational psychologists in educational psychology journals, 1997–2001

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Abstract

What are the most productive institutions and who are the most prolific individual scholars conducting educational psychology research? What are the topics of primary interest to educational psychologists? These were the questions that guided this study, which was a follow-up to our previous investigation of faculty productivity for the period from 1991–1996. Publications in five educational psychology journals were examined. The University of Maryland retained its top ranking for productivity in educational psychology. Richard Mayer of the University of California-Santa Barbara was the most-published educational psychologist for the most recent period, as well as for the entire period (1991–2001). Reading research remains the most popular focus for educational psychology research followed by motivation.

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1. Introduction

What are the most productive institutions that are conducting research in educational psychology? Who are the most prolific educational psychologists? What are the primary topics of interest about which educational psychologists publish? These questions guided the study reported in this article. The study is a follow-up

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to a previous investigation of productivity in educational psychology that examined institutional and individual productivity for the period from 1991 through 1996 (Smith et al., 1998). That investigation determined the University of Maryland to be the top-ranked producer of educational psychology research, Herbert W. Marsh to be the most productive individual scholar, and reading the area of greatest interest to researchers in the field.

Productivity studies are controversial because questions about program quality are implicit in the ranking of institutions. In part, perceived prestige of institutions and faculty may be based on the results of such studies. Productivity studies are sometimes criticized as little more than academic horse races. Such studies are useful, however, because they are indicative of the extent to which programs (and, in particular, the individual faculty members who make up these programs) are contributing to the advancement of knowledge within a given discipline. Productivity studies provide tangible proof of institutional and individual performance and are benchmarks that can be used by departments to demonstrate their worth, and individuals their contributions, to their respective fields. It is not uncommon to find programs and institutions touting their high rankings in recent productivity studies on their websites and in news releases and other promotional literature.

The present investigation examined productivity in educational psychology for the period from 1997 through 2001 and focused on published articles in five of the major journals in the field. Both the top-producing educational psychology programs (by institution) and individuals were identified. Generally, productivity studies focus on scholarly research at the institutional level. Studies that identify highly productive individual scholars within a discipline are less common but have been conducted in fields such as library and information science (Budd, 2000), marketing (Bakir, Vitell, & Rose, 2000), and regional science or geography (Rey & Anselin, 2000).

2. Method

Consistent with our previous investigation, we examined five educational psychology journals. These journals were the *Journal of Educational Psychology* (JEP), *Cognition & Instruction* (CI), *Educational Psychologist* (EP), *Contemporary Educational Psychology* (CEP), and *Educational Psychology Review* (EPR). JEP is a flagship periodical in the field and has been published since 1908. EPR is the newcomer among this group, having been launched in 1989. All of the journals are considered to be highly rigorous and publish only papers that have been subjected to peer review.

Each of the journals is published quarterly. Our analysis included every issue of all five journals published during the examined time period. Rather than randomly selecting articles to form a representative sample of publications, we examined the population of published articles across these five journals. That is, every article published in each journal was included, with the exception of

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