

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

ELPA 725 Research Methods and Procedures in Educational Administration

Spring 2009 (*draft: 12-31-08*)
Wednesdays, 4:40—7:10 pm
1161 Educational Sciences

Instructor:

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Office Hours:

After class as needed and by appointment

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Required Texts:

Bernhardt, V. L. (2004). *Data analysis for continuous school improvement*. 2nd Edition
Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

McEwan, E.K. & McEwan, P.J. (2003). *Making sense of research: What's good, what's not, and how to tell the difference*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Both texts are or will be available at the bookstores.

*Additional required readings will be distributed in class or electronically.

Course Objectives:

This is an introductory course in research methods and procedures related to education. The main purposes of the class are to: (1) assist students to become better consumers of educational research, (2) prepare students to use key concepts and methods of quantitative and qualitative educational research to carry out strategic data-driven inquiry for educational organizations in which they might work, and (3) begin to prepare students to conduct research as part of their graduate studies. Using recent texts focused on using educational research and data-driven decision making in schools and colleges, web-based resources, and examples from educational research, participants will learn about different ways of measuring education processes, as well as strategies for conducting data-based inquiries within their own institutions or for their own research.

Specifically, as a result of participating in this course, students will learn how to:

- Access, understand, and evaluate educational research;
- Distinguish the characteristics and purposes of different forms of quantitative and qualitative research methods;
- Formulate a hypothesis or question and develop a plan for researching it;
- Prepare a research report;
- Use inquiry and research to inform professional decision making and practice.

Students will develop these skills through reading assignments, lectures, class discussions, in-class activities, and assigned projects.

Course Requirements:

1. *Class Participation.* Attendance and active participation in class are very important and will be part of your grade. To the greatest extent possible, please participate in all class activities, complete all assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them in class. By 8:00 am on Wednesdays, students will post 1-2 reflection or clarification questions gleaned from the readings on the Learn@UW website. Class time will be an opportunity to build a learning community focused on the goals and topics of this course.
2. *Critical Analysis of Educational Research.* Students will review and critique three educational research articles. The critiques should be no longer than four double-spaced, typewritten pages and should include the complete bibliographic citation of the study (APA format) and any other references you use in the critique. Approximately half of each written critique should be devoted to summarizing: (1) the problem being researched; (2) the hypotheses or research questions; (3) the characteristics of the sample or population; (4) the research design used in the study; (5) the procedure for collecting and analyzing the data; and (6) findings and implications.

The latter half of the critique should evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, limitations, and missing elements of items 3-6 (the research design) in addressing items 1-2 (the research problem). The three articles selected for this assignment should be published studies from peer-reviewed journals. Each study should relate directly or indirectly to the topic or methods of your research project design assignment (#3).

3. *Research Project Design Paper.* Each student will complete *a detailed plan to conduct an original educational research project*. The plan will include: (1) the problem being researched; (2) the hypothesis or research question(s); (3) the characteristics of the sample; (4) the research design used in the study; (5) the procedure for collecting and analyzing the data; (6) potential implications of the study for practice. Items 1 and 2 should be supported by a literature review that includes articles used in your written critiques and other relevant readings. We will discuss this project regularly in class, and students will present and give feedback on their projects during the last class session (May 6). The final written report in APA format of approximately 10-12 double-spaced, typewritten pages is due on or before May 12.

Evaluating Student Work:

Each student's final grade for the course will be based on the instructor's evaluation of the following:

1. Class participation, 20 points (10 points for posting reflective questions for 10 sessions, 10 for attendance and contribution)
2. Critical analysis of research studies (3 papers each worth 10 points), 30 points
3. Research or evaluation design proposal, 50 points

General criteria for evaluating student's work are:

1. Construction of Knowledge: Students successfully interpret, analyze, evaluate, or synthesize information.
2. Depth of Understanding: Student understanding of course content is relatively complex and deep, and they demonstrate that understanding through elaborated communication.
3. Connection to Practice and Policy: Students successfully connect course content to educational practice and/or policy. They explore implications that create value and significance for knowledge.

Full Inclusion:

I wish to fully include persons with special challenges in this course. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments to enable you to fully participate in this course. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the information you share with me. If you have questions about campus policies and services, you may also contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 263-2741, <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>. Questions or concerns about disability accommodations can be brought to the attention of Associate Dean Mariamne Whatley (262-2463) or with Sally Lemon (262-3107), the administrator in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis.

Course Schedule:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics and Text Readings. Please note, additional readings and/or assignments will be distributed in class or electronically.</i>
1/21	Introduction Sharing of backgrounds and interests Overview of the course Using the Learn@UW site Links to educational research resources Introductory data analysis exercise.

Date	<i>Topics and Text Readings. Please note, additional readings and/or assignments will be distributed in class or electronically.</i>
1/28	<p>Overview of Educational Research; Writing a Critique of Educational Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The five essential questions for education research and improvement - The purposes of research and evidence-driven leadership practice - Education research stakeholders and perspectives - Current priorities for education research: K-12, HPCE, PA - Educational research critiques: the key features <p>Reading: McEwan, Chapters 1 & 2</p>
2/4	<p>Show Me the Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Types of educational data: demographic, process, context, learning, outcomes - Sources of data—national, state, school, IHE - Features of scales - Data dictionaries - The challenges in accessing data <p>Reading: Bernhardt, Chapters 1 & 2</p>
2/11	<p>The Context of Educational Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data Privacy Issues and the IRB - Use-inspired educational research - Conceptual and theoretical frameworks - Logic maps/theory of action - Demographic data: importance, elements, analyses <p>Reading: Bernhardt, Chapters 3 & 4</p> <p><i>Due: Critical Analysis of Educational Research #1</i></p>
2/18	<p>Studying and Measuring Student Learning and Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testing and assessment metrics - Student engagement measures - Longitudinal data and data systems <p>Reading: Bernhardt, Chapters 5 & 6</p>
2/25	<p>Quantitative Measures in Educational Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The causal question (Does it work?) - The related causal question (When or how well does it work?) - Using mixed methods approaches to educational questions <p>Reading: McEwan, Chapters 3 & 4</p>
3/ 4	<p>Qualitative Measures in Educational Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter 5: The process question – How does it work? - Qualitative methods - Qualities of qualitative inquiry - Using qualitative methods to examine educational processes <p>Reading: McEwan, Chapter 5; Bernhardt, Chapters 7</p> <p><i>Due: Critical Analysis of Educational Research #2</i></p>

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics and Text Readings. Please note, additional readings and/or assignments will be distributed in class or electronically.</i>
3/11	Defining a Problem and Developing a Research Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem-solving cycle and related cause analysis tools - Theory of action, revisited - Examining intersections and interactions Reading: Bernhardt, Chapter 8
3/18	Spring Break Enjoy!!!
3/25	Evaluation Practices in Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter 8: Is it working for me? - Program, student, and accountability standards - Accreditation-based standards and evaluation processes—K-12 and postsecondary institutions Reading: McEwan, Chapter 8
4/1	School District and IHE Capacity for Evaluation and Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School district data warehouses - IHE institutional research functions - Typical educational improvement processes - Data-based accountability systems Reading: Bernhardt, Chapter 10 <i>Due: Critical Analysis of Educational Research #3</i>
4/8	Cost-Benefit Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter 6: Is it worthwhile? - Estimating costs - Estimating benefits - Cost feasibility, cost-effectiveness Reading: McEwan, Chapter 6
4/15	In-class Project Work 4/13-17: Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association http://aera.net/
4/22	Writing and Communicating Effectively about Educational Research and Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examining stakeholder perspectives - Multiple modes of communication Reading: Bernhardt, Chapter 9
4/29	Research Project Design Paper presentations, Session I
5/6	Research Project Design Paper presentations, Session II Course wrap-up End of course evaluation
5/12	Research Project Design Papers due