

# Who's Writing About What in Education's Major Journals?

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*The article you may have read in one of the 1972-73 issues of the five major educational journals studied likely was written by a male from an Eastern or Midwestern institution of higher education, writing about an administrative or instructional idea not necessarily supported by research. You would even more likely have not read one penned by a female working in an elementary or secondary school in the South, written about supervision or curriculum with a research basis.*

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**P**ROFESSIONAL journals in education are intended to serve important functions: to stimulate, provoke, and inform their readers in order that they may become more competent professional educators. Articles are intended to affect attitudes, skills, and knowledge of readers searching for contributions in their area(s) of interest and need. The assumption made by persons involved is that the journals are good means for fostering educational change and, therefore, are worth the large amount of time and money being expended by both writers and readers. Increasing demands for time and money require journals to publish those manuscripts which are of great value to edu-

cators and which address issues most critical to contemporary schooling.

Five journals were recently judged by educators as being ones that every secondary school teacher should read.<sup>1</sup> In response to that judgment, the authors conducted a content analysis study of those journals.

In brief, the major questions asked were: Who's writing? And about what are they writing? More specifically, the content analysis was aimed at determining writers' sex, roles, geographical location, type of article, and substance or object of content.

The purposes of this article are to report the major findings from the study, to deal more specifically with those that concern supervision and curriculum development, and to suggest implications and questions which seem to logically evolve from the findings.

<sup>1</sup>Theodore W. Hipple, Thomas R. Giblin, and Jack Megenity. "Have Your Students Read. . . ?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 53 (7): 441-42; March 1972. The five included *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Today's Education*, *Educational Leadership*, *NASSP Bulletin*, and *Harvard Educational Review*.

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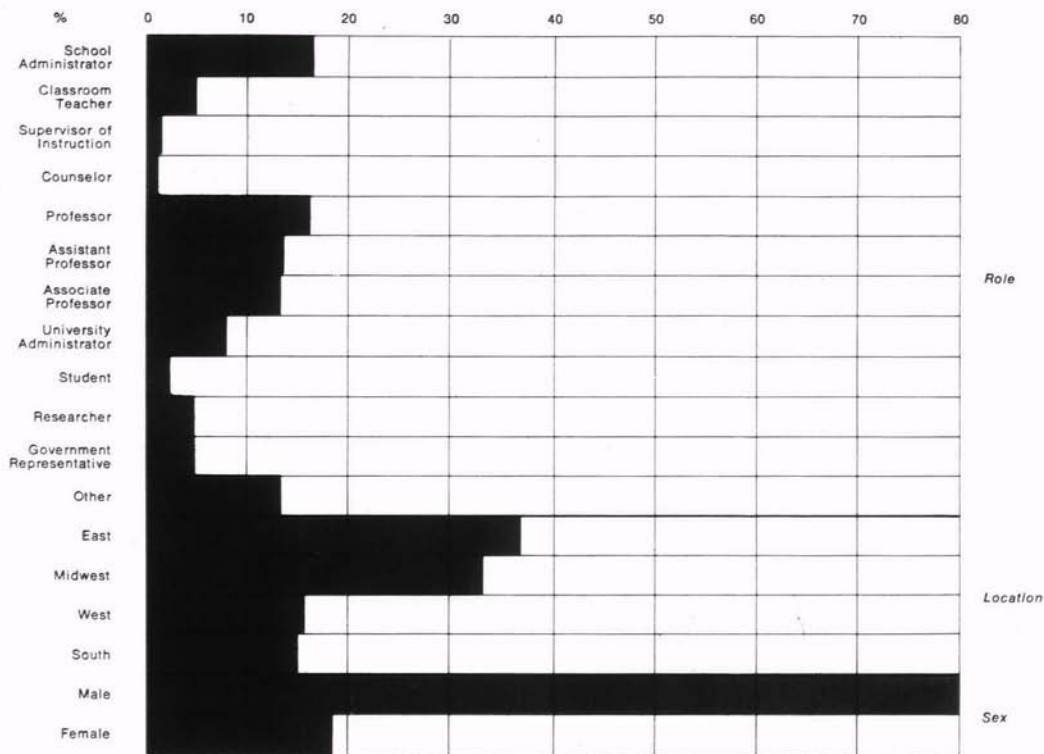


Figure 1. Who's Writing?

## Methods and Definitions

Two of the authors independently read and coded the 652 articles contained in the issues for the 1972-73 publishing year for four of the journals. Since *Harvard Educational Review* is quarterly, the 1971-73 publishing years were analyzed. The researchers categorized each article according to a number of factors. In the case of differences of response, a discussion and subsequent agreement were established.

The factors which were categorized included aspects directly related to the *writers*:

- Sex of the senior author
- Location of the senior author: West, South, Midwest, and East
- Role of the senior author: classroom teacher, school counselor, school administra-

tor, supervisor of instructional personnel, professor, associate professor, assistant professor, university administrator, student, researcher, and political or bureaucratic representative of national, state, or local governments.

In addition, a categorization was made relative to *type of article* and major topic. The five types included:

- Idea. A statement of a point of view supported or unsupported by other general references
- Reporting of basic research studies and findings including empirical studies or those which involved the testing of hypotheses through statistical treatment
- Translation of basic research findings



into specific implications for educational practice

- Action research. On-the-spot research aimed at the solution of immediate problems that arise as part of the operation of the school. This frequently was characterized by a willingness to forego scientific rigor for an answer to a particular problem

- Reports or observations of educational practices in particular settings.

The category, *major topic*, was concerned with the major substantive thrust of the article. In other words, what was the article about?

- Research. The attitudes, skills, techniques, or processes that relate to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of research

- Foundations. The analysis of educationally related phenomena from historical, philosophical, sociological, anthropological, or comparative educational perspectives

- Human development and learning. The knowledge and implications of knowledge about learning; and the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of human beings

- Curriculum. Curriculum development projects, processes, procedures, and products; and the role of curriculum in schooling

- Instruction. Instructional projects, products, processes, or procedures; and the role and preparation of teachers

- Supervision. Techniques or processes of supervision and the role and preparation of supervisors

- Administration—management—organization. Processes or techniques of man-

aging schools, the problems that face schools as units, and the problems and decisions that relate to the organization of the school for instruction

- Counseling and guidance. The techniques and processes of psychological and vocational counseling and the role and preparation of school counselors

- Community and education. The role and influence of communities and community groups on schools and the role of government agencies in schooling.

## Who's Writing?<sup>2</sup>

University personnel accounted for over 50 percent (51.9%) of the articles.

Less than one-fourth (24.2%) of the articles were from elementary and secondary school personnel. Less than six percent were from classroom teachers.

Eleven percent were from government representatives (5.5%) and researchers (5.5%).

The role of 85 (13%) authors could not be identified.

Most (81%) articles were written by males.

Most (70.3%) of the authors came from either the East (37%) or the Midwest (33.3%).



## What Are They Writing?

Over half (54.5%) of the articles were "idea" articles.

Only one-fifth (22%) of the articles had anything at all to do with research. Twelve

<sup>2</sup> Although differences among journals were noted, for the purposes of this article data for the individual journals were not analyzed separately.



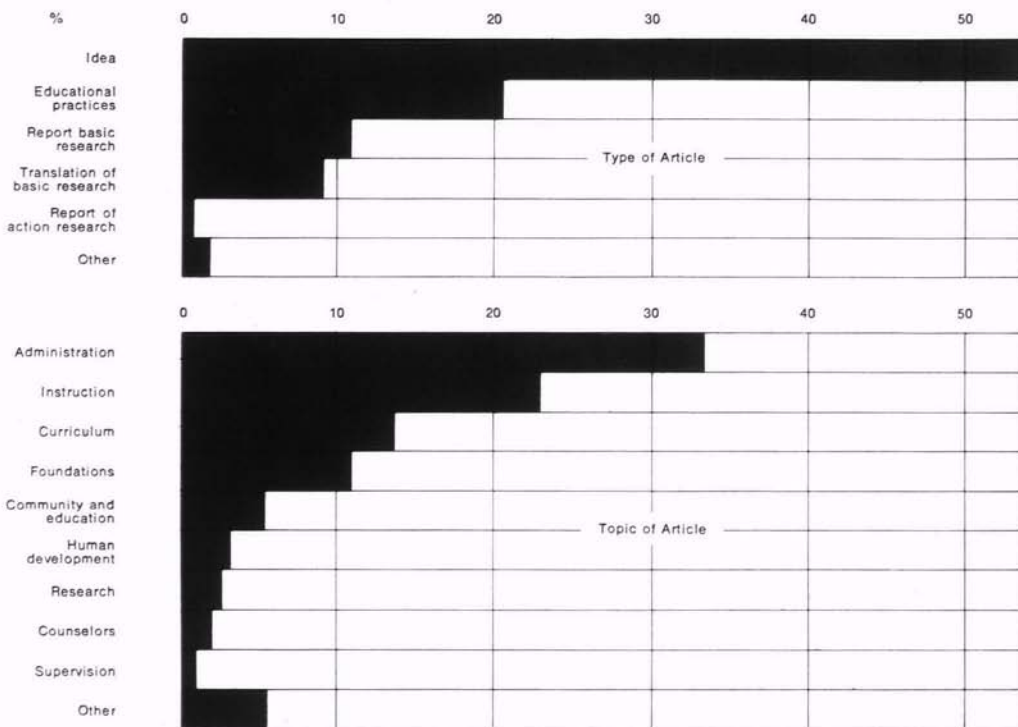


Figure 2. What Are They Writing?



percent reported empirical studies, nine percent interpreted basic research findings for practice, and one percent reported action research.

Only one-fifth (21%) of the articles reported educational practices.

Most (81%) of the articles were written about administration (33%), instruction (23%), curriculum (14%), or foundations (11%).

Less than one-fifth (19%) of the articles were about supervision, community and education, human development, research, or counseling.

### So What Does This Mean?

Very simply, the article you read in one of the 1972-73 issues of the journals studied likely was written by a male from an Eastern or Midwestern institution of higher education, writing about an administrative or instructional idea not necessarily supported by research. You would even more likely have *not* read one penned by a female working in an elementary or secondary school in the South, written about supervision or curriculum with a research basis.

Should it matter to educators that few articles in these journals are written by

supervisors, classroom teachers, or counselors? Does it make a difference that almost all of the articles are written by administrators or by faculty in institutions of higher education? What kind of impact can these journals have on educators if few of the articles are related to educational practices or to curriculum, and that almost none of them deal with supervision, human development, or learning? Is it important to teachers that a small percentage of these articles provide any empirical base to support their contentions?

If professional journals are supposed to serve the functions mentioned in the beginning of this article, are the five journals studied the ones most worthwhile for secondary teachers to read? Whatever the responses to these questions, the data obtained from the content analysis can be useful to interested choice-makers. That is, besides readers of the articles, editors and potential authors have to make intelligent choices about what to publish and write. For the

reader the choice is chiefly whether or not to continue his/her subscription to a journal, even though it may be only a part of the benefits of dues to an organization.

The editorial staff and potential writer have other important choices to make, however. Some are ethical in nature, while others are more pragmatic. For example, what *is* being printed and what *ought* to be printed are obviously not necessarily the same. The *ought* decisions are always difficult for publishers and authors to determine. Furthermore, the beginning writer must publish or perish if employed in higher education, whereas the rewards for publication in other professional roles are less. An editor faces the constant challenge of creatively seeking out and helping the pros and novices write on topics of importance, so that the writer is not faced with making a "fit" between the patterns of a journal and the potential topic s/he pursues. Pluralism of substance and writers in journals, finally, will continue to be of importance to these leader-journals. □

### **Educational Leadership Announces Themes for 1974-75**

Manuscripts relevant to the proposed themes for the 1974-75 issues of *Educational Leadership* are now being solicited. Topics and deadlines for the receipt of manuscripts for examination are the following:

**October:** "Human Relations Curriculum—Teaching Students To Care and Feel and Relate" (June 1, 1974)

**November:** "Optional Educational Programs—Promise or Problems?" (June 1)

**December:** "Toward Cultural Pluralism" (July 1)

**January:** "Alternatives to Grading" (August 1)

**February:** "School-University Partnership for Teacher Growth" (September 1)

**March:** "Instruction: Practice, Process, or Panacea?" (October 1)

**April:** "What Education Can and Cannot Learn from Business and Industry" (November 1)

**May:** "Learning Disability: Role of the School" (December 1)

Length of manuscripts should be approximately 1400 words (about five pages), typed double-spaced. General style should conform to that of the journal. Photographs and other illustrative materials are requested.

Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate and must be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope for return of unused manuscripts. Decisions on materials will be made as promptly as possible.

Materials should be addressed to: Robert R. Leeper, Editor, *Educational Leadership*, 1701 K Street, N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006.

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