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Thomas Andre
Iowa State University

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Fulfilling Its Promise, a Content Analysis of 20 Years of Research at MWERA

Thomas Andre
Iowa State University

Abstract

Twenty years ago, an ethnographic research study of MWERA was initiated. A team of ethnographers, posing as educational researchers, began attending MWERA and engaging in participant - observation research. Artifacts, in the form of papers, and field notes on the interactions and activities of members were collected. The present paper represents an attempt to summarize the twelve major research conclusions that have emerged from that study.

Introduction and Method

This study reports a long term study of MWERA that I have been conducting. Starting at the first convention, I arranged to have ethnographic colleagues attend MWERA and pose as educational researchers. Over the past twenty years, this team has randomly and representatively sampled sessions from 95% of the meetings. Artifacts, in the form of papers, and field notes on the interactions and activities of members were collected. This study focuses on the relationship between presentations and the educational ideas they promote. It also represents a content analysis of the major conclusions of presentation given over that interval. The present paper shares the 12 most important results of this study with you.

Results

Listed below are 12 major conclusions from 20 years of research at MWERA.

Across the sample of papers obtained and examined:

1. 100% of presenters concluded that further research was needed.
2. 99.34% of MWERA research presenters failed to take advantage of successful instructional procedures they investigated or any successful instructional interventions to enhance the participatory experience of the audience in their session.
3. 88.34% of presenters that reported a non-significant finding that was in the direction of their hypothesis interpreted and discussed that finding as if it supported their hypothesis.
4. Only 14.72% of the researchers in the point above cautioned that the result was non-significant.
5. 86.95% of presentations that contain overheads had an overhead typed in elite or 10 point font that was impossible to read at a distance of more than 20 inches from the screen.

6. 82.2% of the presentations were self-described as reporting preliminary findings, apparently in support of conclusion 1.
7. 71.35% of presentations that contained no statistically significant findings orally reported significance statistics to 4 decimal places.
8. 70.70% of presenters brought fewer copies of their paper than recommended by MWERA. The number of papers brought was inversely related to the likely popularity of the topic.
9. In 68.34% of oral research presentation sessions, a researcher was in the middle of his/her method or results section and stated words to the effect: "One minute left?! But I am only in the method/results section!"
10. 58.23% of qualitative researchers said in their talk that qualitative research is about the specific cases it studies and is not intended to be generalized.
11. 88.3% of the researchers in the item above then discussed the transferability of their findings.
12. 34% of MWERA presenters did not look at their audience more than three times during their presentation.

Discussion

In honor of the twentieth meeting of MWERA, it seems appropriate that we consider the humorous aspects of our own behavior. While the serious nature of the research reported at MWERA is well documented, it is clear that occasionally laughing at ourselves clears our collective heads and provides a proper perspective in which to further pursue the goals of life, liberty, statistical significance, construct validity, or triangulation. With this I mind, the author wishes: Happy data to all and to all a good night!

¹This paper is a pack of nonsense and lies that should only be used in the humorous manner it was intended. Any use of the present report in situations other than those intended by the author represents a serious ethical violation that may be investigated by the Guardians of Endore or the Fellowship of the Ring.