

Slavin R. E., (2003). A Research Guide To Scientifically Based Reform. *Association For Supervision And Curriculum Development*, (12-16).

Education reform has always been conducted on minimal research. Thus implementation of new methods usually produced unsatisfactory results and ultimately ended in failure. Slavin's article focuses on educational reform which is scientifically based. It is his notion that if reform is utilized the appropriate way education can reach tremendous levels of achievement. However, it is the way we approach reform and the way we analyze our finding will decide its' validity.

The educational research for reform should consist of control groups or randomized experimentation. Both of these research methods have variables that can affect the study negatively. Outside factors can also influence the study and produce inaccurate data. The control groups must be divided according to demographics, poverty levels and prior achievement levels. However, even with these controls there is a problem of selective bias which could culminate with an advantage for the control school.

A random selection is viewed as a more valuable standard for research because it reduces the chance of selective bias. Since educators may be unwilling to participate incentives must be given for participation. The researchers should also confirm that the various programs to be observed are closely matched and monitored. In order to prevent one school or program from being singled out as non-productive the statistical information should be based on several years. The researcher would then have enough data to track any deficiencies or improvements in the educational program that is being reviewed. This study should include a large sample size. This would produce more reliable data to interpret and lead to a valid conclusion.

The most inaccurate method for comparison of schools districts is based on standardized tests results even though this information is the most frequently used method to gather information. Rapid gains by some schools could be achieved during the first year that new standardized tests are introduced. The decisions to choose one method for educational reform can result in faulty test scores and misinterpretation of data or complete failure. No Child Left Behind guidelines though based on scientific background could produce erroneous information because it does not include the variables of teacher's knowledge or delivery of the lesson in the typical classroom. Thus it is imperative that published reports be evaluated with caution. A program that might appear very effective in one school district could be a failure in another.

The dilemma with these evidence based reforms is that schools are required to conform to certain guidelines by the federal or state government. Outside variables always exist that could alter the results from one school or school district to another. The educational background of the teachers or their teaching experience is not considered on these tests results. The problem of using incentives to encourage school to participate could have a negative influence on the data that is collected. Some private schools may not care to divulge their students' information. Federal programs could withhold funding if schools do not participate.

The most unreliable research though is based on standardized tests grades. Psychological influences are not included in the variables. It would be interesting to see the test results after catastrophic events such as September 11th terror attacks or Hurricane, Katrina which devastated the city of New Orleans. All these reforms and data seem reasonable on paper but are not effective without including outside variables that may influence the final statistical data.