

Reference: Miech, E.J., Nave, B. & Mosteller, F. (2005). The 20,000 article problem: How a structured abstract can help practitioners sort out educational research. Phi Delta Kappan, 86 (5), pp. 396-400.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Background: Over 1100 education journals collectively publish more than 20,000 articles in the English language each year. At present, no systematic way is in place to get the research findings from these tens of thousands of articles to the millions of education practitioners in the United States who might use them.

Purpose: To help practitioners sort out findings from education research, we propose that education journals consider adopting a *structured abstract*, a structural innovation that focuses on the format of the article itself. The structured abstract would replace the paragraph-style narrative summary now present at the beginning of many articles.

Intervention: A structured abstract is a formal and compact summary of an article's main features and findings. Like a table or figure, it has a predictable structure that compresses information into a small space and can be read independent of the main body of the article. The structured abstract is longer and more detailed than the standard paragraph-style narrative summary. On the printed page, the structured abstract appears between the title and the main body of the article. It includes basic elements that apply to all articles (i.e., background, purpose, research design, and conclusions) and several additional elements that apply to some articles but not to others (i.e., setting, population, intervention, data collection and analysis, and findings).

Research Design: Analytic Essay

Conclusions: The structured abstract offers a robust vehicle to help practitioners systematically access, assess, and communicate education studies and research findings.

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