

Bernard, R.M., Abrami, P.C., Lou, Y., & Borokhovski, E. (2004). A methodological morass: How can we improve the quality of quantitative research in distance education? *Distance Education, 25*(2), 176-198.

ABSTRACT

This article is about the quantitative research practices and methodologies that are used in distance education (DE). It begins with an analysis and assessment of a segment of the DE research literature, DE/classroom comparison studies, based on a recently completed meta-analysis of that literature from 1985 to 2002. Overall, the 232 studies reviewed were judged to be of poor methodological quality and severely lacking in critical information about research practices. Studies of synchronous and asynchronous DE are discussed separately and recommendations are made for improving designs and measures within these patterns. Suggestions for future quantitative research areas are provided. In discussing these findings, we recognize that high-quality research is being conducted in the field and that qualitative forms of research contribute greatly to the mosaic of evidence that is the base of available knowledge about DE. Finally, three organizations, the What Works Clearinghouse (USA), EPPI-Centre (UK), and the Campbell Collaboration (international), all devoted to improving the quality of research and research synthesis in education, are described briefly; suggestions are made as to how their philosophies and approaches for judging the worthiness of research evidence can be used to improve DE research. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]