

A Brief Report on Attending and Participating in
The 2007 Annual Meeting and Exhibition of the
American Educational Research Association (AERA)

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By

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Introduction

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) was founded in 1916. The association is concerned with improving the educational process by encouraging scholarly inquiry related to education and evaluation, and promoting the dissemination and practical application of research results.

AERA is now the foremost prominent international professional organization. It has over 25,000 members that include educators; administrators; directors of research; persons working with testing or evaluation in federal, state and local agencies; counselors; evaluators; graduate students; and behavioral scientists.

The broad range of disciplines represented by the membership includes education, psychology, statistics, sociology, history, economics, philosophy, anthropology, and political science.

Theme of the 2007 AERA Meeting

The theme of the 2007 AERA Annual Convention was "The World of Educational Quality." The theme was interpreted in a number of ways and pointed to both an expanded range of inquiry and an intensified focus on the meaning of quality in education research and practice.

The theme highlighted the importance of attending to educational systems and education research outside the United States. The convention acknowledged the efforts around the globe, in both developed and developing nations, to reform educational systems, improve equity of access and opportunity, and strengthen student learning. The convention observed that many of the reform attempts show similarities to recent initiatives in the United States, but others are quite distinctive. Some reform accomplishments-in improving literacy and educational mobility, for example, have been dramatic. Knowledge gained in one nation or setting may have implications for policy and practice in many others, and researchers and policymakers increasingly recognize the importance of a comparative perspective on education and education research.

The term "World" was also intended to stimulate greater attention to disciplines outside education research. Numerous other disciplines have developed perspectives, methods, and empirical findings that have substantial potential for advancing research in education. The convention solicited work that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of the education field that applies novel methods to educational problems or finds useful ways to integrate the methods and perspectives of other disciplines.

The theme called for a heightened focus on the quality of the educational enterprise. It called for refocusing our attention on the diverse aspects of educational quality, and look beyond rising test scores as a measure of education quality. It solicited investigations of many other aspects of student growth and accomplishment--for example, students' ability with transfer tasks and students' acquisition of important personal dispositions. This included effort and resilience-as well as the quality of the educational endeavor itself, for example, the quality of teachers and other school personnel, school organizations, curricula, and assessment systems. Finally, the call solicited an intensified focus on the quality of education research. It invited an expanded discussion of the criteria for

evaluating the rigor and utility of research, a discussion that reflected both advances in the social sciences and the broadened perspective on practice and research that motivates the call. It requested new examples of the best we might accomplish in our efforts to contribute to improved educational policy and practice.

A Summary of the Meeting Program and its Activities

The conference program was organized to accommodate the activities of the 12 divisions and the many special interest groups of the association through the 5-day span of the meeting. A very large number of multiple parallel sessions were conducted in three different hotels' conference facilities to allow for the presentations and discussions of the very large number of research papers, panel discussions, and the many special interest group discussions that took place during the conference. For more information on the conference programs and its divisions and interest group sessions, please visit https://www.aera.net/meetings/Default.aspx?menu_id=24&id=2116

During the 5-day conference, I had the opportunity to attend and participate in many sessions closely related to my area of specialization and research interest that include the following sessions:

- Developing Baseline Instruments to Assess Growth in Teacher Knowledge in an Initial Teacher Education Program
- Elementary Preservice Teachers' Opinions about Parental Involvement in Children's Education.
- Assessment of Early Literacy Skills through Storybook Reading.
- Deconstruct Preservice Teacher's Biases and Cultural Ideologies.
- Analyzing Preservice Teacher Preparation Experiences within Constructivist Learning Environment.
- Assessment Accountability and Teacher Education.

During these sessions, I had the opportunity to listen to and be part of the rich presentations and discussions of many important and forefront areas of education research that were closely related to my field and research focus and interest. I also had the opportunity to meet with and have a one on one discussion with a number of the conference participants from different parts of the globe that shared my research interest

Recommendations

The AERA annual meeting is a colossal event that annually attracts a very large number of educators, education researcher and graduate students, administrators and decision makers and many others in the field of education and other related fields from the United States and all corners of the world. It provides a great opportunity for all to disseminate and share their research work and provide a forum for discussion and to learn from each other experiences. It is also a great avenue for professional development and training. In addition to the very large number of research presentations and panel discussions in all areas of education, many professional development and training courses are offered in various fields of education and education research. Over thirty-four different training and professional development courses were offered during this year. Thus, I would highly

recommend the participation of as many as possible of the graduate students in the field of education and other related fields who are studying in the United States to participate in this annual event and reap the wide range of benefits that are uniquely offered by such an event.