



**Research Reading Guide of the Month**  
**JANUARY 2004**

Locke, L.F. (2004).

**Expect to Find Valuables, Not Easy Answers.**

The notion that you can just read about a study and then immediately apply the results in a professional setting (class, program, team) is a naïve expectation. At the worst, a quest that is limited to prescriptions for good practice puts blinders on your eyes. As the reading guide for last month (December) suggested, a great deal of valuable content in a research report may have nothing to do with the findings, or, as I am suggesting here, with any stipulation for application that is based on the findings. One reason for that caution lies in the fact that some studies can't easily be translated into a recipe for instant action; they have to "ripen" for a while in the back of your mind before their significance for practice can be understood.

A more important reason for not expecting to march directly from journal to gym, however, is that in 99 out of 100 instances you will have to "adapt" (Notice please, that word is not "adopt.") anything you find in a study (facts, findings, conclusions, recommendations, ideas, whatever) to the particular circumstances of your workplace – to your gym, your students, your program, and, most importantly, to your present professional skill set and personal style. In most instances some degree of transformation will be required.

You can expect that the adaptation process will involve some thought, planning, creative effort, and experimentation on your part, and very likely also -- some risk of failure. If a report does offer a tempting clue for better practice, however, by all means do run with it. Just be sure to take enough time to have some fun while doing so. Even if the clue proves to be a false lead (for your circumstances), a careful attempt to implement a new idea is always more valuable than no attempt at all.

We all want to find things that make our programs better or our teaching more effective. Most researchers sincerely want to answer questions that might help us accomplish exactly those objectives. It would be useful, however, if everybody could manage to hold reasonable expectations for what can be accomplished with a single study. Not all perfectly sound investigations can generate explicit or instantly recognizable instructions for improving physical education. Of course, when reading research you always should be on the lookout for new things to consider. Extracting the perfect prescription to promptly remedy a professional headache, however, will be a rare and improbable find. Reading research almost certainly will make you smarter about matters of professional practice, but a pharmacopoeia – it isn't.

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