

**Research Reading Guide of the Month**  
**DECEMBER 2003**

Locke, L.F. (2003).

**The Results Are Not the Only Valuable Product of Research.**

The formal account of "results" produced by a study may turn out to be the least valuable item in a study. This may be particularly true for graduate students or physical education practitioners for whom other elements in the report may hold greater interest. In any case, while research is designed to find the answer to a question, that singular purpose is only rarely achieved in an absolute sense. As with other areas of life, it is the journey, rather than the destination, that may have the greater value.

For example, studies that are less than perfect as research or that fail in some respect to completely match your initial expectations might, nonetheless, contain all manner of valuable materials. As you read your way toward investigators' findings and conclusions, pay attention to everything else you encounter. You can come out the richer for it, even if the unfortunate researchers lose their struggle to find a completely satisfactory answer to their question.

Sometimes, of course, the results from a study truly are useful, provocative, or even exciting. When reading, however, resist the temptation to skip ahead to the "Results" (or, "Findings") heading in the report – and then quitting. If you skim or even ignore the main body of the report you may miss some or all of what would have been useful or the most interesting to you. Among the things you might fail to discover and retrieve are:

- Provocative questions you had not previously identified,
- alternative explanations for problems you have encountered in professional practice,
- leads to other studies that might be of particular value to you,
- better ways to describe a teaching or learning objective,
- tools for evaluating teaching or learning in the gym,
- tools for observing and recording information about what is going on in your own classes,
- implications of the study in the form of recommendations for improved practice,
- description of study interventions that might have utility in your own work,
- new terminology that provides succinct labels for things you want to think or talk about,
- useful resources, including people with specialized knowledge, websites, reference books, or institutions.

All of those valuables might be scattered throughout a study report and yet not be mentioned at all in the concluding section that deals with the findings. When you read about an investigation in physical education (in any of its many contexts), if you want to make efficient use of the time invested you have to keep both your eyes and your mind open – and have a notepad handy. For your purposes, the results may not be the only useful product of the research process.