

A REVIEW OF BARNES' RESEARCH
FOR THE PRACTITIONER IN EDUCATION

Edward Caldwell¹
California Test Bureau

Research for the Practitioner in Education by Fred P. Barnes.
Washington: Department of Elementary Principals, NEA, 1964.
(Paperback \$4.00; Hardback \$5.50)

There seems to be an endless series of publications with the objective of creating simple, easy-to-learn prescriptions for statistical research in education. The increasing complexity of research designs, however, presents a formidable roadblock for both writers and consumers. This volume maneuvers around the roadblock by introducing what some might call "field testing procedures" in schools. There is, without question, room for a second-order type of research in our schools to provide a means for engineering and testing theories and hypotheses that have been developed in the university research centers.

Professor Barnes prepared this book specifically for teachers and school administrators with an admonition directed toward those who complain about the lack of research in schools but who do little to provide aids for the willing. He succeeds, admirably, in decoding some of the statistical language and research methodologies. Furthermore, he makes his presentation in such a way that he cannot be accused of adopting cook-book methods, which has been the complaint against many of the books in this area.

The task was accomplished by, what appears to be, three variations from the usual text. First, words, rather than symbols, are used as much as possible to describe operations. This will be gratifying to teachers, especially. Secondly, he concerns the reader only with experimental studies. Historical, longitudinal, and other forms of investigation are completely absent. Finally, the complex designs that call for computer analysis and expert interpretation are avoided. Five simple designs are presented with titles such as "Before-After Study with Control Groups," the same without control groups, and "Ex-Post-Facto Studies."

¹Now at the University of South Florida.

For statistical tools Barnes relies heavily on the non-parametric methods such as Chi-Square and Median Tests. The reason appears to be, primarily, simplicity rather than suitability to the experiment, although he does not neglect advice on the latter subject.

The information in this volume could be very helpful in many ways to research workers in schools. However, one should not assume that it includes all the answers to problems to be confronted in the conduct of an experiment. There are many pitfalls to be encountered in selecting and maintaining population samples for treatment over long periods. There are, also, innumerable conditions arising constantly in experimental studies. A novice without knowledge of basic research principles and theory would do well to secure expert advisement along with cautious application of material from handbooks, such as this one, before proceeding with investigations that may affect school programs.

In summary, the book is well written, interpretable, and contributes to a group in special need. It provides some useful aids but should not be accepted as a substitute for training.