

**Editorial: *Research in the Schools*: The Flagship Journal
of the Mid-South Educational Research Association**

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*In this editorial, we build on our last editorial documenting the history of *Research in the Schools (RITS)* and providing an extensive analysis of manuscripts submitted to *RITS* over the last several years. We document the authorships, genres, and demography of articles that have been published in *RITS*, from its inception through the 15th year of publication through an exploratory analysis based on the titles of every article published ($N = 253$), beginning in 1994 (Volume 1, Issue 1) to 2009 (Volume 16, Issue 2).*

In 1994, the Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA) had the vision to create a journal that would be methodologically, conceptually, and philosophically appealing for an audience interested in research pertaining to school settings. As a result, *Research in the Schools (RITS)* was born! With an editorial board of national, international, and graduate student members (McLean & Kaufman, 2003), *RITS* has been a nationally and internationally refereed journal co-sponsored by MSERA and three different universities: The University of Alabama, The University of South Florida, and its present day co-sponsor, Sam Houston State University. As the assistant/production editor and editors of the journal, we build on Frels, Onwuegbuzie, and Slate's (2009) analysis of articles submitted to *RITS* and document the authorships, genres, and demography of articles that have been published in *RITS*, from its inception through the 15th year of publication.

Articles Submitted to *RITS*

Frels et al. (2009) documented the historical and demographic account of 15 years of *RITS*. In this editorial, they described the expanded author log wherein every methodological, grammatical, APA, and reference list error of commission and omission

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was recorded. Further, they analyzed these data with respect to genre, number of authors per manuscript, gender of primary author, and geographical location of primary author affiliation (e.g., states of residence and university affiliations) for articles submitted for review. More than one half of the manuscripts represented quantitative empirical research studies; pages of manuscripts reviewed ranged from 9 to 48 pages (Frels et al., 2009). In the cases of authorship, 64% of the manuscripts submitted to *RITS* over the last 6 years have been led by a female author. Further, authors affiliated with universities in Alabama *submitted* the greatest proportion of manuscripts (14%), closely followed by Texas, Arkansas, and Florida, representing 12%, 9%, and 8%, respectively (Frels et al., 2009). Further, since 2004, the acceptance rate for *RITS* ranged from 12.5% to 36.4%, with a mean acceptance rate of 26.6% (Frels et al., 2009, p.iii).

Articles Published in *RITS*

In addition to recording details of submitted manuscripts via the expanded author log, the daily maintenance of *RITS* includes the expanded publication log, whereby records confirming every published manuscript—noting authors, affiliations, titles, the Carnegie Classification (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.), gender of primary author, and geographical location of primary author affiliation. Recently, and in celebration of MSERA's 40th year, we investigated the genre of articles through an exploratory analysis based on the titles of every article published

beginning in 1994 (Volume 1, Issue 1) to 2009 (Volume 16, Issue 2). Further, we utilized the qualitative software QDA Miner (Provalis Research, 2009) and WordStat (Provalis Research, 2009) to perform a content analysis and word count to determine the number of publications associated with every author (primary and secondary) publishing in *RITS* over the last 15 years and 253 articles. Table 1 depicts authors publishing three or more articles, and the years of publication associated with each author. Interestingly, as seen in Table 1, Asghar Iran-Nejad was published in the inaugural issue (Volume 1, Issue 1, 1994) and in the last issue (Volume 16, Issue 2, 2009), illustrating the commitment and respective compatibility that many authors experience with the vision of *RITS*. Interestingly, he is featured in this issue (Volume 17, Issue 1) and thus has the distinction of having articles published in *RITS* over the longest period of time.

Over the 15-year span of 1994 through 2009, the expanded author publication log included a total of 240 publications printed in the 32 issues; these publications were submitted by authors affiliated with various school districts, the private sector, branches of the U.S. Government, and public and private universities in the United States, France, Turkey, China, Guam, Israel, and Turkey. Figure 1 (National Weather Service, 1999) presents the total number of publications based on primary authors' affiliations. As displayed in Figure 1, authors affiliated with universities in Texas *published* the greatest proportion of manuscripts (13%), followed by Alabama (12%), Tennessee (10%), and Georgia (8%).

With respect to the length of articles published in *RITS* over the span of 15 years, the number of pages have ranged from 2 to 20 ($M = 9.87$, $SD = 3.45$). Further, primary authors of the articles published in *RITS* were affiliated with institutions as follows: institutions with very high research (30.3%), institutions with high research (27.5%), institutions with doctoral-level research (17.4%), and institutions wherein research is not classified (24.7%). These institutions have ranged in size from 949 to 50,995 students ($M = 19,100$, $SD = 11,603.65$). The number of authors per articles published in *RITS* have ranged from 1 to 9 ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.23$). Interestingly, a statistically significant and small-to-moderate relationship emerged between the number of authors and the size of the institution of the lead author, with lead authors who came from institutions with larger enrollments having fewer co-authors than did authors residing in smaller institutions, $r = .19$, $p = .009$. However, no statistically significant relationship emerged between the number of authors and the number of pages per article $r = -.02$, $p > .05$, or between the number of pages and the size of the

institution of the lead author, $r = -.02$, $p > .05$. Further, no statistically significant difference prevailed ($t = -0.54$, $p > .05$) in the number of authors between articles whose lead author was female ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.24$) and articles whose lead author was male ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 1.16$); no statistically significant difference existed ($t = 0.74$, $p > .05$) in the number of pages between articles whose lead author is female ($M = 10.07$, $SD = 3.41$) and articles whose lead author is male ($M = 9.74$, $SD = 3.49$); and no statistically significant difference prevailed ($t = -1.13$, $p > .05$) in the size of the institution of lead authors who are female ($M = 18,000.00$, $SD = 11,046.01$) and lead authors who are male ($M = 19,900.00$, $SD = 12,001.31$). Also, the relationship between the gender of the lead author and the Carnegie classification of the institution was not statistically significant ($\chi^2[3] = 1.30$, $p > .05$). Comparing the inferential findings pertaining to the manuscripts submitted to *RITS* (Frels et al., 2009) to the articles published in *RITS* over the last 15 years revealed some similarities and differences. In particular, the statistically non-significant relationships between gender of the lead author and length of the manuscript occurred for both manuscripts submitted (Frels et al., 2009) and published articles. However, whereas no statistically significant gender difference in the number of authors and the enrollment size of the institution of the lead author emerged for articles published in *RITS*, these gender differences were apparent for manuscripts submitted to *RITS*. Another distinct set of findings surround the gender of the lead author. Interestingly, although 64% of the manuscripts submitted to *RITS* over the last 6 years have had a female lead author (Frels et al., 2009), across the 15 years, only 43.1% of lead authors have been female. To the extent that more female lead authors have been submitting manuscripts over the last 15 years than have male lead authors, this finding suggests that female lead authors are more likely to have their manuscripts rejected than are male lead authors. However, over the last 6 years, this situation has not been the case. In any case, we will continue to compare the demographics associated with each manuscript submitted and articles published in the future.

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Table 1

Number of Publications, Authors, and Year of Publications in RITS from Inception to 2009

No.	Author	Year of Publications
19	Onwuegbuzie, A. J.	2006, 2005, 2005, 2004, 2004, 2003, 2003, 2003, 2002, 2002, 2002, 2001, 2001, 2001, 2001, 2001, 2000, 1998, 1997
9	Slate, J. R.	2003, 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1998, 1996, 1995, 1994
7	Barnett, J. J.	2001, 1999, 1998, 1998, 1997, 1996, 1995
7	McLean, J. E.	1998, 1998, 1996, 1995, 1994, 1994, 1994
6	Daniel, L. G.	2004, 2002, 2001, 1999, 1998, 1998
6	Robinson, D. H.	2009, 2008, 2004, 2004, 2003, 2000
5	Jones, C. H.	2008, 1998, 1996, 1995, 1994
5	Thompson, B.	2008, 2000, 1998, 1995, 1994
4	Kaufman, A. S.	1996, 1995, 1994, 1994
4	Johnson, A. M.	2005, 1997, 1994, 1994
4	Achilles, C. M.	2009, 1995, 1995, 1994
4	Gipe, J. P.	2000, 1996, 1995, 1994
4	Kher/ Kher-Durlabhji, N.	2004, 2000, 1996, 1995
4	Richards, J. C.	2000, 1996, 1995, 1994
4	Weems/Hughes, G. D.	2009, 2008, 2004, 2004
3	Bramlett, R. K.	2000, 2000, 1999
3	Fasko, D.	2006, 2002, 1997
3	Iran-Nejad, A.	2009, 2008, 1994
3	Lacina-Gifford	2004, 1996, 1995
3	Miller-Whitehead	2003, 2003, 2001

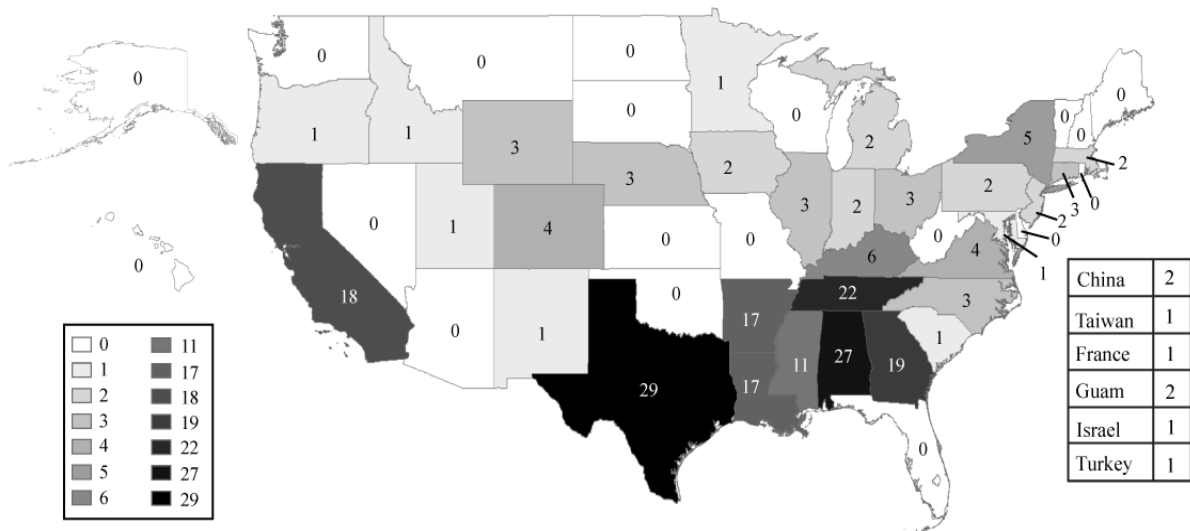


Figure 1. Total number of publications based upon primary authors' affiliations by state and country.

Content of Articles

Using the qualitative software NVivo 8 (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2008), we conducted a constant comparison analysis on the title of every manuscript ($N = 253$). First, we utilized open coding, wherein we chunked the data into smaller segments and attached a descriptor (i.e., a code) for each segment, utilizing a single descriptor for each article title. Second, axial coding was performed and groups were formed into similar categories. Finally, we categorized the descriptive data through clusters, to categories, and into metathemes. This analysis led to the extraction of the following 14 themes: editorials, educational leadership, general student success, special populations, regional studies, methodological and conceptual articles, research methods, preschool studies, elementary school studies, secondary school studies, higher education studies, professional development, program development, and teaching strategies. Figure 2 illustrates the metathemes, themes, and subthemes of articles published in *RITS* from 1994 to 2009. In addition, Table 2 presents the single-coded results and a thematic summary and percentages of occurrence associated with the 240 articles. As seen in Table 2, the majority of articles published in *RITS* have represented predominantly methodological and conceptual articles, general student success, and professional development for teachers.

In addition, to consider the content of published articles for bridging theory-to-practice (i.e., translating research into practical applications), a

second analysis was performed on 240 article titles (not including editorials) to highlight content areas for researchers/practitioners in the areas of academic subjects (e.g., math, reading, science). In this case, titles of articles were single-coded or double-coded to illustrate specific subject content areas. Table 3 displays the major content according to academic subject area that was published over the span of 15 years. As seen in Table 3, although it is possible that a few additional articles were present in this area that the titles mask, it appears that a relatively small proportion of *RITS* authors are publishing research related specifically to academic subject areas. In fact, only 58 articles of the 240 articles published contributions in the areas of: (a) research in practice (empirical studies focusing on results of applied educational research); (b) topical articles (scholarly reviews of research, perspectives on the use of research findings, theoretical articles, and related articles); (c) methods and techniques (descriptions of technology applications in the classroom, descriptions of innovative teaching strategies in research/measurement/statistics, evaluations of teaching methods, and articles of interest to instructors); (d) assessment (empirical studies of norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, and informal tests in the areas of cognitive ability, academic achievement, personality, vocational interests); and (e) other topics of interest to educational researchers. specified a subject area in the title. Thus, we encourage more authors who conduct research on specific academic areas to submit manuscripts to *RITS*.

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Finally, we performed a confirmatory analysis to consider the goals of *RITS* as explained in the statement of purpose to publish original contributions in the areas of: (a) research in practice (empirical studies focusing on results of applied educational research); (b) topical articles (scholarly reviews of research, perspectives on the use of research findings, theoretical articles, and related articles); (c) methods and techniques (descriptions of technology applications in the classroom, descriptions of innovative teaching strategies in research/measurement/statistics, evaluations of teaching methods, and articles of interest to instructors); (d) assessment (empirical studies of

norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, and informal tests in the areas of cognitive ability, academic achievement, personality, vocational interests); and (e) other topics of interest to educational researchers. Titles of articles ($N = 253$, including editorials) were distinguished according to the purpose statement of *RITS* and are presented in Table 4. It can be seen that, as was the case in Table 2, articles representing methods and techniques have been the most prevalent articles published in *RITS*, with slightly more than one in four of these articles falling into this category. This genre is followed closely by topical studies (25.7%).

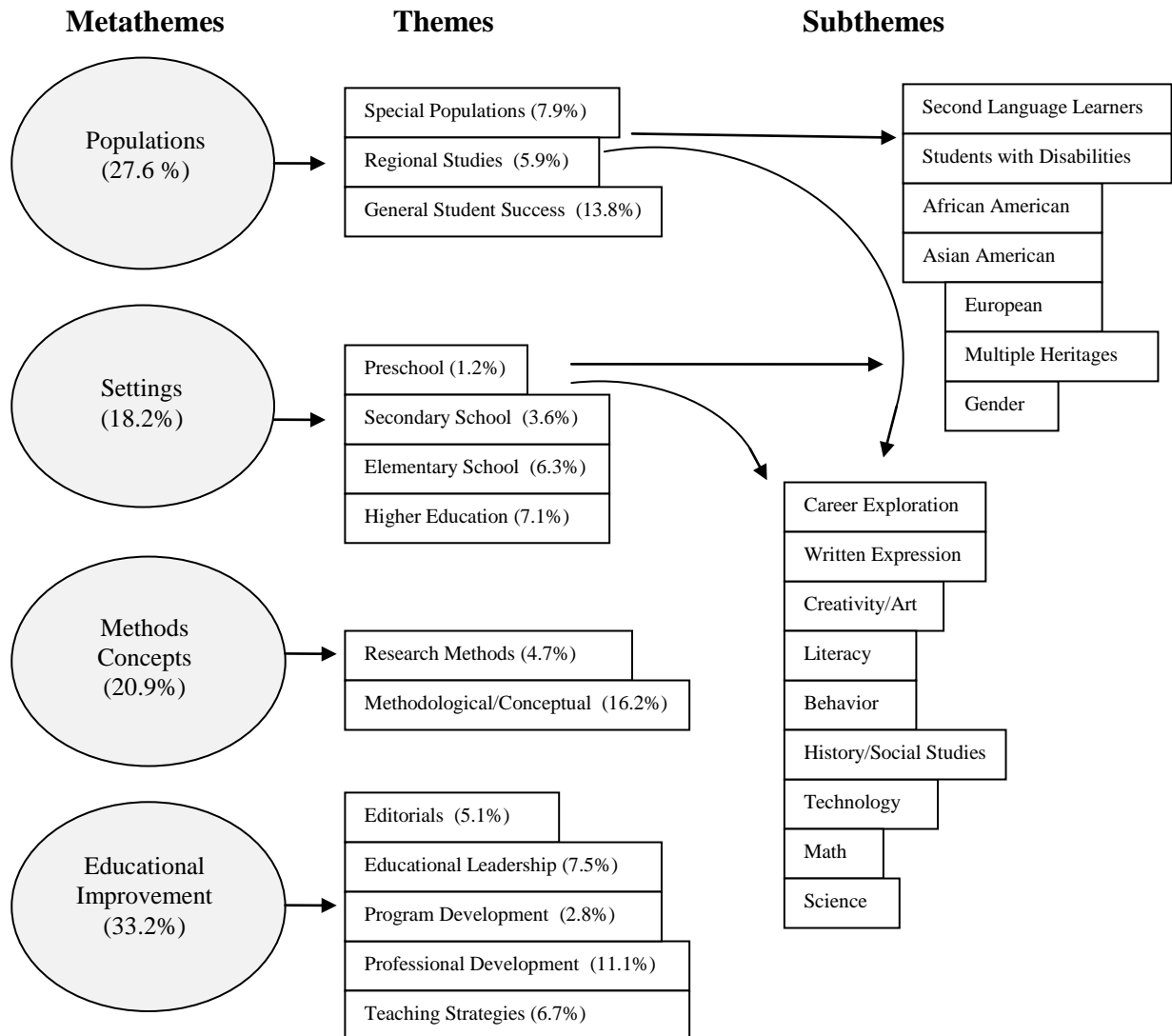


Figure 2. Metathemes, themes, and subthemes of the content of *RITS* from 1994 to 2009.

Table 2

Themes of Articles Published, Number of Articles, and Percentages of Overall Content of 15 Years and RITS

Rank	Type of article	No. of articles	Percentage of articles
1	Methodological and conceptual	41	16.2%
2	General student success	35	13.8%
3	Professional development for teachers	28	11.1%
4	Special populations	20	7.9%
5	Educational leadership	19	7.5%
6	Higher education	18	7.1%
7	Teaching strategies	17	6.7%
8	Elementary school studies	16	6.3%
9	Regional studies	15	5.9%
10	Editorials	13	5.1%
11	Research methods	12	4.7%
12	Secondary schools	9	3.6%
13	Program development	7	2.8%
14	Preschool learning	3	1.2%
	Total articles	253	

Table 3

Number of Articles According to the Academic Subject Noted in the Title

Rank	Type of article	No. of articles	Percentage of articles
1	Career exploration	4	4.6%
2	Creativity/arts	11	4.4%
3	Literacy	7	2.9%
4	Behavior	6	2.5%
5	Math	6	2.5%
6	Technology	6	2.5%
7	Written expression	5	2.1%
8	Science	4	1.6%
9	Social studies	4	1.6%
19	History	3	1.3%
11	Multiple heritage	2	0.8%
	Total articles noting academic subject in the title (N= 240)	54	26%

Table 4

*Themes of Articles According to the Purpose
Statement of RITS and Percentages*

Rank	Type of article	No. of articles	Percentage of articles
1	Methods and techniques	67	26.5%
2	Topical studies	65	25.7%
3	Educational reform/ accountability	48	19.0%
4	Research in practice	39	15.4%
5	Assessment	24	9.5%
6	Other	10	3.9%
	Total articles	253	

Conclusion

In closing, *RITS* has impacted the research and practice communities fervently and is currently in its 16th year. Co-editors Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and John R. Slate, editorial assistant Rebecca Frels, the editorial board, and contributing authors from a vast demography continue to uphold the founding vision of MSERA. The journey of manuscripts from author conception to journal production should be encouraging for future researchers, authors, and the MSERA community. Indeed, the content of the articles of *RITS* appears to corroborate the goals of *RITS* toward innovation, ingenuity, and cutting-edge methodology as the crux of quality research in the schools.

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