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ABSTRACT

After listing criticisms of previous rankings of doctoral programs in reading, a new ranking is suggested, based on results of the International Reading Association's Outstanding Dissertation Award. This ranking shows little correlation with previous studies using other methods. The University of Alberta has produced the largest number of award recipients, followed by the University of Chicago. (AA)

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READING RESEARCHERS: Where are they being trained? Or how  
does your program rate?

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It seems that several times a year questionnaires appear asking for ratings of doctoral programs in reading on some criteria. The ultimate goal of each seems to be an evaluative ranking of institutions offering doctoral preparation in reading (Palmatier, 1974). Others (Palmatier & Rood, 1975; Palmatier & Austin, 1975) have compiled rankings based upon number of doctorates awarded in reading, or by tallying (Newton, 1974) the number of doctoral students listed as enrolled in the program in the International Reading Association publication Graduate Programs and Faculty in Reading (Wanat, 1971). However, each of the above methods of ranking programs has obvious limitations. For example, the survey method suffers from the lack of objective criteria upon which the qualitative judgements would be made. The tallying, or quantity methods obviously indicate the programs with the largest enrollments but their data do not necessarily imply any qualitative characteristics of the program. Thus, while the profession has a general awareness of who are preparing how many, little has been written about comparative and qualitative aspects of the various doctoral preparation programs in reading education.

SOME DATA.

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One integral aspect of doctoral education is research, particularly the nearly universally required dissertation. For approximately a decade the International Reading Association has been annually recognizing excellence in dissertation research through its Outstanding Dissertation Award. Each year a standing committee composed of faculty from universities around the world evaluate abstracted versions of dissertations submitted. These are then rank ordered by each committee member with approximately the fifteen highest ranked dissertations entering the final round. At this point copies of the complete dissertation are reviewed by each committee member and again ranked. Award recipients (which can number as many as six per year) are selected by the committee based on these final rankings.

Since the above procedure seems undoubtedly of a more qualitative emphasis than the tallying procedure and hopefully less subjective than the survey methods, the data concerning recipients of the International Reading Association Outstanding Dissertation Award were requested from and supplied by the Executive Director of that organization.

As indicated in Table I several institutions have produced more than one recipient of the award and the total number of universities graduating a recipient is really quite small(13). The University of Alberta is easily the leader in producing exemplary research at the dissertation level with the University of Chicago assuming leadership for American universities. The midwest seems the most productive region with 12 of the 28 recipients graduated from institutions in that region. New York state has three universities which have graduated recipients.

Interestingly, however, there seems to be little correlation between number of program graduates and dissertation excellence. Table 2 presents the 10 most productive programs, in terms of doctoral level graduates in reading, as defined by the presented in Palmatier and Austin (1975) and Palmatier and Rood (1975). These data reflect the number of earned doctorates for the years 1972-73 and 1973-74. No graduate of the five most productive institutions has received the Outstanding Dissertation Citation, in fact only the eighth and ninth ranked universities (Hofstra and Wisconsin) have ever had graduates so honored.

A similar situation exists with professors who direct dissertation research. The data, again from Palmatier and Austin (1975) and Palmatier and Rood(1975), indicates that of the 15 professors directing the largest numbers of dissertations, only three have had students receive the award.

A similar lack of congruence is exhibited between the "Top Ranked" doctoral programs from Palmatier (1974) and those programs ranked by number of Outstanding Dissertation Awards received. Of the six universities having had more than one recipient, only two (Chicago and Minnesota) were among those ranked in the top 14 programs in the Palmatier survey. Similarly only four of the 14 universities having had a graduate receive the award are listed among the "Top" 14 programs, in the Palmatier's survey(1974).

There is more correlation between number of doctorates awarded in reading and ranking on the Palmatier survey(1974). Ten of the 14 "Top" programs ranked there, appear also on the

list of the 14 programs with the largest number of graduates as reported by Palmatier and Austin(1975) and Palmatier and Rood(1975). This lack of congruence between quantity and quality would seem to suggest that sheer numbers of graduates is more likely than quality of preparation to get a program ranked as a "Top Doctoral Training Program".

Regardless of what the reader feels are implications of this paper (if any), surveys will probably continue to be circulated and individuals will continue to devise other methods of assessing various aspects of program quality(Allington 1974) Personally, I have been thinking of rating doctoral programs on the physical attributes of graduates, (e.g. height, thigh girth, voice, general appearance, etc.) Perhaps we could rank each program on the mean MAT or GRE score of applicants (some programs may be better for the slower student). Or possibly a ranking on average length of dissertation (for those who don't like to write ). Or number of statistic courses required (for those who failed Freshman Algebra). Or a ranking based on. least coursework, shortest residence requirement, and easiest orals (for those who want the degree but are not interested in learning). Or a ranking of . . . . .



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Table 1: Universities graduating recipients of the IRA Outstanding Dissertation Award.

University of Alberta	8 recipients
*University of Chicago	4 recipients
State University of New York at Albany	2 recipients
*University of Minnesota	2 recipients
Ohio State University	2 recipients
Hofstra University	2 recipients
Michigan State University	1 recipient
Cornell University	1 recipient
University of Washington	1 recipient
University of California	1 recipient
*University of Wisconsin	1 recipient
University of Toronto	1 recipient
University of Missouri	1 recipient
*Indiana University	1 recipient

\* Ranking in Top Doctoral Training Programs (Palmatier, 1974)

Table 2: Universities ranked by number of doctoral dissertations completed during 1972-73 in reading and 1973-74 in reading (from Palmatier and Austin, 1975 and Palmatier and Rood, 1975)

1.	University of Pittsburg	24 dissertations completed
2.	University of Georgia	20 dissertations completed
3.	Syracuse University	18 dissertations completed
4.	Florida State University	16 dissertations completed
5.	University of Southern California	15 dissertations completed
6.	Boston University	15 dissertations completed
7.	University of Northern Colorado	14 dissertations completed
8.	*Hofstra University	14 dissertations completed
9.	*University of Wisconsin	12 dissertations completed
10.	Temple University	10 dissertations completed

\* have had graduates awarded IRA Outstanding Dissertation Award.