ERIC: EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER

by
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ERIC as an invaluable source of educational information has yet to be made known to the academic community. This national information database was designed to collect and disseminate documental information on education to teachers, administrators, students, researchers and other interested persons in the field. Educational Resources Information Center, or ERIC, as it is popularly known, is the world's largest and most sophisticated education information system, inaugurated as far back as the mid-sixties. In 1981, the University of Malaya Library agreed with the Faculty of Education to purchase the ERIC collection including ERIC reference tools and some ERIC documents in hardcopy.

The purpose of this paper is twofold:
(i) to announce ERIC resources in the University of Malaya Library, which now include the recently acquired ERIC documents on microfiche; and
(ii) how to use it so that its usage will be actively encouraged by library staff.

ERIC as a national information system was developed by the United States Office of Education and is now supported and operated by the National Institute of Education. As an organisation, it consists of a Central ERIC office in Washington D.C. and 16 decentralised information centres called Clearinghouses scattered throughout universities and headquarters of professional organisations in the United States. Central ERIC is run by a body of coordinating staff responsible for developing, managing and coordinating the activities of the Clearinghouses, each of which is concerned with a specific area of education. It collects, processes and disseminates information in its specific field. The 16 areas of education covered by the Clearinghouses are as follows:
1. Adult, Career and Vocational Education.
2. Counseling and Personnel Services.
3. Educational Management.
4. Elementary and Early Childhood Education.
5. Handicapped and Gifted Children.
6. Higher Education.
7. Information Resources.
8. Junior Colleges.
9. Languages and Linguistics.
10. Reading and Communication Skills.
11. Rural Education and Small Schools.
13. Social Studies/Social Science Education.
14. Teacher Education.
16. Urban Education.

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issues of *RIE* for a particular year. Unlike the monthly *RIE*, this essentially subject-author index provides additional subject headings called Minor Descriptors. The monthly *RIE* carries only Major Descriptors. For conducting an exhaustive search or asking a highly specific question, it is necessary that this index be used. As the index gives the complete title for each ED number, the title alone serves to clarify the content of an article beyond the context of the descriptor. A complete title and ED number is also given with each listing under a descriptor in the subject index. However, if one wants a further clarification or more details of a document title before deciding on the pertinence of a document, one may do so by referring to the Report Resumes of the documents that appear in the monthly issues of *RIE* and in the cumulated volumes called *ERIC Educational Documents Abstracts* in which not only do citations appear but abstracts running to no more than 200 words are included. The resumes are arranged by ED numbers. This index makes it unnecessary to refer to the monthly issues of *RIE*. The Library holds issues from 1969 onwards.

The ED numbers are keys to the microfiche collection. Having noted the numbers, one is able to retrieve the full-text documents from the microfiche collection.

So far, the various ERIC reference tools to the ERIC document literature that the Library holds in microfiche has been discussed. ERIC publishes another principal monthly indexing journal called *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)* that provides bibliographic access to periodical literature covered by over 700 education and education-related journals of which the library has a good collection. The Library subscribes to the monthly issues of *CIJE*. Each issue contains a subject index, an author index, a journal contents index and a source journal index to the main entry section that arranges citations to articles by EJ accession numbers. The citations are classified into 52 descriptor groups taken from the *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors*. Therefore, as in the case of an ERIC document literature search, the use of a thesaurus is necessary for an effective periodical literature search using *CIJE*. The articles cited are provided with full bibliographic information including annotations of interpretive summaries (and not abstracts as in the case of ERIC documents). In addition to a broad coverage, a unique characteristics of *CIJE* is its overall timeliness; quick announcement of the journal literature is a firm policy of *CIJE*. Unlike it's sister publication, *RIE*, journal articles in *CIJE* are not reproduced in hardcopy or in microfiche for reasons of copyright; in any case being commercially published the various journals are easily accessible. Like *RIE*, the subject and author indexes are cumulated annually and semi-annually. The main entry section in the monthly *CIJE* is also cumulated annually and semi-annually.

**The ERIC Documents-on-Microfiche Collection in the University of Malaya Library**
The Library has recently acquired this most invaluable collection. The documents cited in various ERIC indexes are reproduced in full-text on microfiche which are 4 inch by 6 inch sheets with the pages of the documents photographed and highly reduced in size. Each microfiche carries up to 98 pages of document. The Library has received documents from January 1979 to September 1981 and is awaiting consignments for the years 1976, 1977 and 1978. These would amount to an estimated 90,000 documents titles. The documents are arranged by ED numbers which means simply that they are not in a subject or author sequence. Subject and author access to the collection are provided through the various ERIC indexes.

The database is ready for use by conducting a manual search that the Library staff is trained to assist and instruct users. The microfiche collection is housed in a special carel, carel No. 8 in the Library, in which all the ERIC tools including the thesaurus will be kept handy for use. Hardware in the form of a microfiche reader is placed permanently in the carel for convenient reading. The machine enlarges the image printed on the fiche and projects it onto a screen permitting the document to be read page by page. The monthly *CIJE* indexes and its cumulated issues are also kept in the carel thus completing the ERIC database.

**HOW TO CONDUCT A MANUAL SEARCH OF PRINTED ERIC INDEXES AND LOCATE RESOURCES IN THE ERIC COLLECTION**
First, phrase your question as precisely as possible in words and phrases. Then consult the *Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors* that enables you to determine what subject terms are used to index your topic in *RIE*. If you do not find your subject listed in the thesaurus, try looking under synonymous terms. It should be kept in mind that there are many concepts for which there is no single adequate descriptor. A person wanting material on higher education in the developing countries will have to consult terms relating to both "Higher Education" and "Developing Nations".

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ERIC DATABASE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA LIBRARY

The ERIC Database in the Library consists of the documents on microfiche, the various indexes and abstracts, issues of CIJE and a handful of ERIC documents in hardcopy. For a manual search of the database various ERIC reference tools are used:

The Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors is the first tool to refer to in an ERIC search. Its usage in phrasing a reference query, before using the indexes is pertinent to searching the ERIC files. The thesaurus is a controlled vocabulary of alphabetically arranged educational terms called descriptors that are used to index and enter documents into the ERIC system as well as to assist users in searching the system. It is an authority list of the descriptor terms used in RIE and CIJE. The indexing follows the rule of a controlled vocabulary, that is, only the selected and established terms are accepted for use. New editions of the thesaurus are issued every several years, and new descriptors are listed in the back of each issue of RIE and CIJE. The thesaurus consists of a main body of descriptors with a related series of indexes (to the main body) comprising of Rotated Descriptor Display (essentially a Keyword-in-Context index); a synopsis of the Descriptor Groups; and a Descriptor Display showing every term appearing in each of the Descriptor Group.

Resources in Education (RIE). The Library holds in its collection issues from 1969 onwards of this principal monthly abstracting journal. The twelve issues of a year are bound annually in one volume by the Library. Each issue of RIE carries a main entry index (i.e. the report resumes/abstracts) arranged by ED number, a subject index, an author index and an institution index. These indexes are cumulated annually and semi-annually and published as companion volumes to the individual issues of RIE. They are called ERIC Educational Documents Index. The Library holds some earlier issues and has subscribed for follow-up issues. What this index does is, essentially, cumulate the titles and ED numbers to the documents that are announced in the monthly
issues of RIE for a particular year. Unlike the monthly RIE, this essentially subject-author index provides additional subject headings called Minor Descriptors. The monthly RIE carries only Major Descriptors. For conducting an exhaustive search or asking a highly specific question, it is necessary that this index be used. As the index gives the complete title for each ED number, the title alone serves to clarify the content of an article beyond the context of the descriptor. A complete title and ED number is also given with each listing under a descriptor in the subject index. However, if one wants a further clarification or more details of a document title before deciding on the pertinence of a document, one may do so by referring to the Report Resumes of the documents that appear in the monthly issues of RIE and in the cumulated volumes called ERIC Educational Documents Abstracts in which not only do citations appear but abstracts running to no more than 200 words are included. The resumes are arranged by ED numbers. This index makes it unnecessary to refer to the monthly issues of RIE. The Library holds issues from 1969 onwards.

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Having identified a descriptor in the thesaurus, e.g. 'Curriculum Evaluation,' you will find that it is cross-refered to other descriptors, classified as narrower terms (NT), broader terms (BT), and related terms (RT) which are worth referring to:

**CURRICULUM EVALUATION 180**

**BT** Evaluation

**RT** Course Evaluation
  - Curriculum
  - Faculty Evaluation
  - Program Evaluation
  - Summative Evaluation

If you want to be very thorough, you should check all key words relating to your topic in the 'Rotated Descriptor Display' and you should scan the terms in the 'Descriptor Group Display' category under which your topic falls.

**ROTATED DESCRIPTOR DISPLAY**

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CURiosity
CURRENT EVENTS
CURRICULUM
ARITHMETIC CURRICULUM
COLLEGE CURRICULUM
CORE CURRICULUM
CURRICULUM DESIGN
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM
ENGLISH CURRICULUM
CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT
CURRICULUM EVALUATION
EXPERIMENTAL CURRICULUM
FUSED CURRICULUM
CURRICULUM GUIDES
STATE CURRICULUM GUIDES
HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM
HONORS CURRICULUM
INDIVIDUALIZED CURRICULUM
INTEGRATED CURRICULUM
MATHEMATICS CURRICULUM
MODERN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM
PHYSICS CURRICULUM
CURRICULUM PLANNING
PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM
CURRICULUM PROBLEMS
CURRICULUM RESEARCH
SCIENCE CURRICULUM
SHOP CURRICULUM
SPEECH CURRICULUM
SPIRAL CURRICULUM
STUDENT CENTERED CURRICULUM
CURRICULUM STUDY CENTERS
TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM
TELEVISION CURRICULUM
UNGRADED CURRICULUM
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The 'Rotated Descriptor Display' arranges the ERIC descriptors so that each word of each term is entered separately in alphabetical order.
Next, refer to the subject indexes (monthly, semi-annual and annual) in RIE and ERIC Educational Documents Index and read the titles listed under the descriptor terms you have chosen. Note the titles and ED numbers of those documents that seem appropriate. Abstracts for the titles on your list may be found in several sources and you may wish to review them before actually looking up the reports themselves. They can be found in the monthly issues of RIE where the documents were first listed and in the cumulated volumes, i.e. ERIC Educational Documents Abstracts.

Sample (with explanation) of an entry from the Subject Indexes of RIE:

ED 163 042

Curriculum Evaluation
Validation of the Instructional Strategy

The 'Descriptor Group Display' divides terms into 52 general categories, listing the specific descriptors which apply to each.
Sample (with explanation) of a citation with an abstract from ERIC Educational Document Abstracts/RRI:

- **ED 163 042**
- **Merrill, M. David**
- **Wood, Norman D.**
- **Navy Personnel Research and Development Center, San Diego, Calif.**
- **Report No.—NPRDC-TR-77-25**
- **Pub Date—Apr 77**
- **Contract—NO0123-76-C-0458**
- **Note—65p.**

**Descriptive note**

**Descriptors**—subject terms which characterize substantive content. Only the major terms, preceded by an asterisk, are printed in the subject index.

**Informative Abstract**

The Instructional Strategy Diagnostic Profile (ISDP) was designed to enable instructional developers and evaluators to predict the effectiveness of, and prescribe improvements for existing instructional materials. Experimental studies were conducted in introductory college statistics and physics classes to validate the ISDP and its accompanying design prescriptions. Two methodologies were used: (1) existing instructional materials were modified, based on a selected prescription resulting from ISDP analysis of those materials, and two or more versions of the materials were compared; and (2) a weak unit of an existing course was identified and modified via several prescriptions resulting from an ISDP analysis. Test performance, affect, confidence, and time were compared for students using the revised materials and students using the original materials. When used to revise existing materials, the ISDP prescriptions produced significant differences only in the second study. Failure to obtain predicted results may have been due to confounding factors in the experimental situations. Other studies have demonstrated that existing materials revised according to ISDP prescriptions can significantly improve student performance, especially if the interaction with the materials can be controlled and the tests can be revised to more adequately measure concept classification and rule-using behavior. (Author: JAC)

**Abstractor's initials.**
Select the articles which apply to your search, recording all the information needed for locating and citing the articles. If you desire more information about an article before actually locating it, look it up in the main entry section as it provides complete bibliographic information, a list of subjects and annotations. Trace the main entry through the EJ numbers. Once articles have been selected and complete bibliographic information noted, consult the periodical records of the library to determine if the desired items are available. Note: articles indexed in CIJE are not included in the ERIC microfiche database.

Searching by author or journal in CIJE for periodical literature
You also may search CIJE by author or by journal title. If you want to see what a particular author has written, or if you wish to see what articles a certain journal has printed, simply consult the appropriate index in the back of each monthly CIJE.

Sample of an article cited in CIJE:

EJ Accession No.  ➔  EJ 249 327
Title of Article ➔  Society, Ideology and the Reform of Special Education: A Study in the Limits of Educational Change.
Author ➔  Shapiro, H. Svi
Volume, Issue, Pages ➔  Educational Theory, v30 n3 p211-23
SP 510 981 t
Clearinghouse No.
Descriptors: Adoption (Ideas); Educational Assessment; *Educational Change; Equal Education; Federal Aid; Mainstreaming; Majority Attitudes; *National Programs; *Public Opinion; *Social Attitudes; *Special Education
Journal Title ➔  Education
Publication date ➔  Federal Aid; Majority and Minor Attitudes; National Programs; Opinions, Social
Availability ➔  Children Act
Annotator's initials
Annotation ➔  The success or failure of educational reform is discussed using Public Law 94-142 as a case study. Constraints on reform arise from the dominant ideology. Education is fundamentally a dependent institution, and efforts to reform it become an attempt to resolve issues in the broader social domain. (FG)

With computerisation the library may in future be able to subscribe to ERICTAPES so that on-line retrieval of the ERIC database may be possible.

Bibliography
5. Marron, Harvey. 'ERIC, a national network to disseminate educational information', Special Libraries, 59: 775–782, December 1968.