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## Trends of Research in Education: Relevance and Significance

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### Abstract

A longitudinal research study has been conducted to identify the trends in the field of Education. The trends have been studied with the help of the PhD theses submitted during the years 2011-2021 of three universities of India which have made noteworthy contributions to the development of the subject. A total of 202 PhD theses has been studied to identify the patterns of research in the field of Education. The objectives of the research include identifying areas of education or sections and premises in the subject area which have been given more importance, the research design, methods of research, stages of education that have been actively studied by researchers. It also identifies the geographical expanse of a research study and the social background of the researchers carrying out the study. It also studies the future suggestions made by the researchers. This will indicate the future direction of a particular study. The study is not just relevant to the field of Education but also to other disciplines of Social Sciences as the research designs and methods opted by researchers in a particular discipline have seen overlap in other similar disciplines. The social representations in research cut across disciplines and become relevant in any field except some gendered professions and areas of study. There is an overall lack of representation from the reserved communities in any discipline as the hospitals, educational institutions, and government institutions fail to fill reserved seats at the higher levels of an organization. The study tries to correlate the trends of research and the problem of accurate representation where no or less representation leads to false narratives in research and improper solutions. It is to highlight that the people suffering from the problem could be trend setters in research and themselves move towards probable solutions.

**Keywords:** Education, Trends, Representation, Research

### Identifying a research gap

The review of related literature focuses on key areas affecting the study. It includes other trend studies carried out in the field of social sciences in the Indian context. It also studies social representation and participation from different reserved and unreserved categories. The review underlines the need for research in educational research and focuses on the trends affecting the research practices in this field. The study highlights that there is a major gap with research studies being focused on quantitative outcomes rather than qualitative, or implementation and use of simple statistical tools that provide a bird eye's view of the problem at hand. Based on the review of related literature, it was concluded that the last nation-wide trend study in Education was conducted in 1988 as the Fourth Survey of Research in Education through the years 1983-1988. There have also been no studies in India focusing on the area of education studied, nature of research, design of research undertaken, methodology of research, stages of education covered along with the geographical expanse it covers.

The study was descriptive in nature and longitudinal as it analyses the Ph.D. theses of three selected universities over a period of ten years (2011-2021). It extracted and recorded the information pertaining to the key variables from the theses and further analysed the collected data to draw inferences and conclusions for a trend study. The collected data was tabulated and analysed using simple statistical tools like Frequency distribution and Mode. This helped identify the units that were repeated the maximum number of times as well as the units that were not very popular among researchers. It thus gives us a picture of the trends in research in Education.

The following objectives of the study were to be analysed using the procured data.

**Objective 1** is to conduct a trend analysis of Ph.D. research in Education between 2011 and 2021 across three universities. This includes identifying the key areas most favoured by scholars, examining the nature of studies and research designs with emphasis on both predominant and underutilized approaches, and analyzing the methodologies adopted—quantitative, qualitative, or mixed—along with sampling techniques. It further aims to determine the stages of education studied, ranging from pre-primary to higher education, and to map the geographical scope of research, covering institutional, block, district, state, and national levels.

**Objective 2** focuses on analyzing the social representation of Ph.D. scholars by gender and category in the three universities. It seeks to correlate these factors with the area, nature, methodology, stage, and geographical scope of research to understand patterns of participation and representation.

**Objective 3** is to highlight the significance of research in Education by examining its area, design, methodology, stage, and geographical expanse. This will be explored through the perspectives of scholars' suggestions and policy priorities at both the state and central levels.

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- Highlighting the various aspects of the trend study
- Objective of the study related to establishing the trend
- Combining the trends and the futuristic needs of research along with use of AI

A trend study has been carried out for three selected State universities, each situated in a different state but shares common ground in running a full-scale Education Department with students from graduation to Ph.D. in the core subject of Education as well as B.Ed. The three selected universities are University of Calcutta in Kolkata, Ravenshaw University in Cuttack, and Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in Vadodara are all state universities. They host students from across their state, country and as well as some international students. More than 200 PhD theses have been studied as part of the trend analysis. The study is to analyse the research trend and allocate resources in areas required.

There has been only one such study at the Ahilyabai University of Indore where the research studies at the Department of Education were studied. The earlier trend studies were conducted by the NCERT until 2012 and thereafter, no trend studies have been brought out for Education. This study tries to address the gap by providing an insight into the decade of research in Education from 2011 to 2021.

To conduct the trend study, some related areas were identified and variables affecting the trends of the research in Education were studied. The collected data includes area of research, the research design, the sampling technique, methodology used to analyse data, stage of education studied, the geographical expanse, and the suggestions for future research. The selected variables were also studied in correlation with the social representation of the person conducting the research. To identify the social representation of the researcher, their gender and enrolment category (General, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes) were also collected.

With the constant improvement in technologies like Artificial Intelligence, conducting original research becomes more challenging. Therefore, it becomes more important to focus on the quality of research that can contribute to the field rather than produce a large number of research studies that do not add value to the field of Education. Identifying the areas of research that add value will help allocate resources in the right direction for the future.

### **Relevance of the Trend Study in Education**

Over the last decade, the landscape of education has undergone significant transformation, influenced by rapid technological advancement, shifting socio-economic realities, and major policy reforms. In such a dynamic environment, a systematic analysis of research trends becomes essential for understanding how the scholarly community has responded to these evolving needs. A ten-year trend study provides a structured lens to examine whether research outputs have adapted to contemporary challenges or remained rooted in conventional approaches. This is especially relevant today, as the proliferation of digital platforms and artificial intelligence has fundamentally altered how research is conducted. While these technologies enhance access to information, facilitate data analysis, and widen the scope for interdisciplinary inquiry, they also increase the risk of research becoming derivative

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or overly dependent on AI-generated content. Investigating patterns across a decade offers a way to assess how these tools have shaped research behaviour and whether they have strengthened or weakened the originality, depth, and relevance of educational scholarship.

One of the emerging concerns in the field is the predominance of research that remains text-centric, heavily literature-based, and primarily descriptive in nature. Although secondary data analysis and review-driven studies offer valuable syntheses of existing knowledge, their overuse restricts the development of grounded, context-specific insights. Many of the pressing issues in education—such as learning disparities, teacher preparedness, digital inequity, and classroom-level pedagogical challenges—require robust empirical inquiry and primary data collection. A decade-long trend analysis helps determine whether the academic community has increasingly relied on accessible forms of research or diversified into more rigorous methodologies, such as experimental designs, mixed methods, longitudinal studies, or design-based research. Understanding this methodological trajectory is crucial for diagnosing the strengths and limitations of current research practices, and for identifying areas where capacity building, research funding, or methodological innovation may be necessary.

In addition, this period has witnessed major educational reforms, most notably the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which articulates a forward-looking vision for India's education system. The NEP calls for renewed focus on foundational literacy and numeracy, competency-based curriculum reforms, multidisciplinary learning pathways, comprehensive teacher development, and effective integration of technology into teaching and learning. A trend analysis spanning ten years allows for an examination of whether research in education has aligned with these emerging priorities or continued along pre-existing thematic lines. Such an assessment helps reveal the responsiveness of the research community to policy imperatives and its ability to generate evidence that can guide implementation. It also sheds light on whether research themes have evolved in tandem with systemic needs or if gaps persist in addressing areas of high policy relevance.

Moreover, evaluating the trajectory of research output provides insights into the broader research culture within the field. The academic environment often places significant emphasis on publication quantity, which can inadvertently encourage repetitive or low-impact studies. A long-term analysis enables a more nuanced understanding of the balance between quantity and quality in educational research. It can reveal patterns in publication growth, citation impact, thematic diversity, and methodological rigor, offering a more comprehensive picture of how the field has matured over time. This, in turn, informs decisions around strengthening peer review processes, promoting collaborative research networks, and designing incentives that reward innovation, rigor, and real-world applicability rather than sheer volume.

Finally, trend analysis supports evidence-based planning for the future of educational research. By identifying sustained patterns, emerging gaps, and underexplored areas, it equips institutions, policymakers, and funding agencies with the information needed to channel resources strategically. It highlights capacities that need to be developed—such as advanced research training, access to primary data, or cross-disciplinary collaboration—and points to

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opportunities for creating more responsive and impactful research ecosystems. Such a study thus provides a foundational understanding of how educational research has evolved over a decade and offers direction for fostering a more robust, relevant, and future-ready research culture. In this way, a ten-year trend analysis does more than document the past; it becomes a critical tool for shaping the future trajectory of educational scholarship.

### **Impact of the Trend Study**

A ten-year trend study can make a real, tangible difference in how decisions are made in the education sector, especially when it comes to allocating resources and shaping policies. When we take the time to look closely at what kinds of research have been done over the years, we begin to see patterns that may not be obvious at first glance. We may find that certain topics have received a lot of attention, while equally important areas—like classroom practices, teacher well-being, early childhood learning, or digital access—have been studied far less. This understanding helps governments, universities, and funding organisations make smarter choices about where to invest their limited resources. Instead of continuing to support repetitive or low-impact research, they can focus on areas that truly need attention and have the potential to improve learning experiences for millions of students.

Such a study also helps policymakers move away from relying on assumptions or outdated information. When they have a clear picture of the strengths and gaps in existing research, they can design policies that respond to real needs on the ground—whether that means improving teacher training programmes, strengthening digital infrastructure, or creating more inclusive learning environments. For instance, if the trend analysis shows that very few studies explore how children in rural schools learn with technology, policymakers can prioritise funding in that direction. Similarly, if research on foundational literacy has grown but still lacks on-the-ground evidence, new support can be directed toward field studies and community-led innovations.

Beyond funding and policy, this kind of long-term analysis brings a sense of direction and purpose to the research community itself. Researchers, institutions, and educators gain clarity about where their efforts can make the greatest difference. It encourages collaboration, helps avoid duplication, and ensures that research addresses the everyday challenges that teachers and learners face. In this way, trend analysis becomes more than an academic exercise. It becomes a practical tool for shaping a more thoughtful, responsive, and impactful education system, one that is grounded in evidence and committed to improving learning outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

This trend analysis underscores the evolving landscape of educational research and highlights the need for more meaningful, impactful, and context-driven scholarship. While technological advances and easier access to information have expanded research possibilities, they have also contributed to a rise in descriptive, repetitive, and secondary-data-based studies. The findings reaffirm the importance of strengthening methodological rigor, encouraging primary and field-based research, and aligning scholarly work with national educational priorities. By identifying gaps, emerging patterns, and areas of neglect, this study provides a

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valuable foundation for more informed resource allocation and evidence-based policymaking. Ultimately, this analysis not only reflects where educational research has been but also points to where it must go in order to contribute more effectively to teaching, learning, and systemic improvement in the years ahead.

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