

Research Topics & Ideas: Education

About this document

This PDF contains 50 **education research topics** for dissertations and theses, organized into 10 areas of education, from curriculum, assessment and subject teaching to teaching practice and teacher development. Each topic is written as a researchable question and linked to a completed dissertation (2022–2026, 19 universities), so you can see how it was studied in practice. Use it to shortlist education dissertation topics and thesis ideas, then narrow one down to your own population, setting and timeframe.

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Curriculum, assessment and subject teaching

1. How does a teacher's understanding of giftedness develop from training into the job?

See it in a real dissertation: [Understanding and Supporting Gifted Learners: A Multi-Cohort Study of Teacher Preparation](#) · Alia Nerys Pineda Medina · Purdue University · 2026

2. Which children do trainee teachers picture when they hear the word gifted?

See it in a real dissertation: [Who “gets” to be gifted? Surfacing bias through visualization of pre-service teachers’ socially constructed assumptions about gifted students](#) · Abigail Johnson Allen · Purdue University · 2026

3. Do a music teacher and their students share the same idea of what success is?

See it in a real dissertation: [Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Goal Orientation Theory in Secondary Instrumental Music Classrooms: A Case Study](#) · Carlye McGregor · Louisiana State University · 2022

4. How is arts integration actually done in a primary classroom?

See it in a real dissertation: [Arts Integration: Models and Methods in Elementary Art Education](#) · Briana M Long · Georgia State University · 2022

5. Who evaluates curricular materials, and what do they actually look at?

See it in a real dissertation: [Critical approaches to curricular materials evaluation](#) · Deani Thomas · Iowa State University · 2023

Early childhood education

6. What does belonging look like to a four-year-old, and how would you know?

See it in a real dissertation: [Exploring Belonging in Early Childhood Care and Education](#) · Melissa Telford Buck · Boise State University · 2025

7. What happens to early childhood principles when a new grade level is added to a system?

See it in a real dissertation: [Core Principles of Early Childhood Education Through the Lens of California's Transitional Kindergarten Teachers and Administrators](#) · Furwa T. Rizvi · San Jose State University · 2022

8. Which teacher factors decide whether a good early years program works in practice?

See it in a real dissertation: [Educator Readiness and Relationships: Factors Relating to the Implementation of Interventions and Curricula in Early Childhood Education](#) · Kaela M. Tidus · University of Virginia · 2026

9. Who holds up the early care system, and what would it take to pay them properly?

See it in a real dissertation: [Early Care and Education Systems in the United States of America](#) · Timothy Harper · San Jose State University · 2025

10. Which policy would actually widen access to early childhood care in one state?

See it in a real dissertation: [Policy Alternatives to Increase Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in Massachusetts](#) · Meghan Lemay · University of Massachusetts Amherst · 2023

Educational technology and online learning

11. Which course design choices make an online learner feel they are learning?

See it in a real dissertation: [Impact of Course Design on Online Learners' Perceptions of Learning](#) · H. Young · Boise State University · 2025

12. What did teaching a language online cost the teachers who had to do it?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Reality of Teaching English Virtually: ESL Teachers' Perspectives and Experiences during the COVID-19 National Pandemic](#) · Natália Ribas Guerrero · Louisiana State University · 2023

13. How digitally literate do administrators need to be, and who decides that?

See it in a real dissertation: [Defining and improving higher education administrators' digital technology literacy](#) · David E. Homa · Northeastern University · 2022

14. Who has to collaborate before a campus technology actually gets used?

See it in a real dissertation: [Working Together: The Role of Collaborations in Promoting the Use of Academic Technologies in Higher Education](#) · Kate Hudson · University of Massachusetts Amherst · 2022

15. What stops a student succeeding in a required online course they did not choose?

See it in a real dissertation: [An Examination of Student Success and Barriers in a Foundational Secondary Teacher Education Online Course](#) · Gary Higham · Illinois State University · 2022

Equity, race and access in education

16. Which parts of the job does a visibly Muslim teacher navigate alone?

See it in a real dissertation: [Addressing the lack of representation of hijab-wearing teachers of color in education](#) · Feroza Solaiman · San Jose State University · 2026

17. What would actually change school climate for students of color?

See it in a real dissertation: [Improving School Climate and Cultural Responsiveness for Students of Color.](#) · Eujene Chung · University of Virginia · 2026

18. Does an African-centered curriculum move achievement, or move teacher belief first?

See it in a real dissertation: [African Centered Curriculum and Teacher Efficacy: Contributors to African American Student Achievement](#) · Efua Akoma · Georgia State University · 2022

19. What do Black students in rural schools say about learning mathematics?

See it in a real dissertation: [Learning Mathematics While Black in Rural Appalachia: Black Students' Counterstories and Freedom Dreams About Mathematics Education](#) · Sean P. Freeland · West Virginia University · 2022

20. How much of educational inequality is the family, the neighborhood or the school?

See it in a real dissertation: [Educational Inequality: An Exploration of Family, Neighborhood, and School Contexts](#) · K White · University of Chicago · 2024

Family, community and student wellbeing

21. What do parents who fled a country want from a school system they do not know?

See it in a real dissertation: [Parental experiences and aspirations for children's education post-displacement](#) · Noora Shuaib · University of Oxford · 2024

22. How does a four-year-old end up excluded, and what do their families say about it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Exclusionary Discipline in Early Childhood: Exploring Teacher Perceptions and Family Experiences](#) · Kyra Parker · University of Virginia · 2026

23. Which roles does an out-of-school program take on when mothers run it?

See it in a real dissertation: [An Exploratory Case Study Analysis of the Ecosystem of an Out-of-School Time Program: A Counterspace for Curriculum, Mothering, and Mentorship](#) · Renee Gibert · Purdue University · 2026

24. Do parental expectations raise achievement, or only how a student sees themselves?

See it in a real dissertation: [Impact of Chinese students' perceived parental expectations on academic achievement: The mediating role of academic self-concept](#) · Xinyue Fu · University of Oxford · 2024

25. What does a school have to give before families genuinely engage with it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Three Sides to Success: Exploring How Inclusive Partnerships Can Nurture Robust Family and Community Engagement in the Classroom for African-American Students](#) · Orianna Vaughn · Dominican University of California · 2023

Higher education and student success

26. What is accreditation for, and who does it actually serve?

See it in a real dissertation: [History, Power, and the Possibilities of Higher Education Accreditation](#) · Rachel Spraker · University of Virginia · 2026

27. How does a free-college policy change the economics of higher education?

See it in a real dissertation: [Essay on Economics of Higher Education](#) · Esperanza Johnson Urrutia · University of Chicago · 2023

28. Can a cross-border university alliance become one institution in practice?

See it in a real dissertation: [European Universities: building the future of higher education in the European Union through university alliances](#) · Antonin Charret · University of Oxford · 2025

29. Which places does a university have in mind when it calls itself global?

See it in a real dissertation: [The global university reimaged: a post-qualitative study of space and place in English higher education](#) · Darta Antonio · University of Oxford · 2026

30. Does scrolling other students' performances feed impostor feelings?

See it in a real dissertation: [A Mixed Methods Study of Online Social Comparison and Impostor Phenomenon in Undergraduate Music Education Students](#) · Thomas J. Rinn · University of North Texas · 2023

Literacy and language development

31. How much does background knowledge decide what a child can comprehend?

See it in a real dissertation: [How Teachers in Tier I General Education Classrooms Can Serve as Catalysts for Building Students' Domain Knowledge and Fostering Reading Comprehension Transfer](#) · Mosher, Douglas Malcolm · Harvard University · 2024

32. Does getting lost in a story make a child a better reader?

See it in a real dissertation: [Lost in a Book: Story World Absorption and Reading for Understanding](#) · Prezioso, MaryGabrielle · Harvard University · 2024

33. What does a reading policy actually change in the classrooms it governs?

See it in a real dissertation: [Policy and Perception: Investigating North Carolina's Reading Policy, the Science of Reading, and Teachers' Instructional Practices](#) · Stephen Rayfield · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill · 2025

34. Does a bilingual teaching license predict bilingual students' reading achievement?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Impact of Bilingual Teacher License, and Years of Experience on Bilingual Student Reading Achievement Across Multiple-Grade Levels](#) · Cuauhtemoc Reyes · Illinois State University · 2025

35. Where does a literacy reform get lost between the statute and the classroom?

See it in a real dissertation: [Bridging Policy & Practice in Literacy Reform](#) · Stephanie Tatel · University of Virginia · 2026

School leadership and education policy

36. Does school funding or performance accountability do more for education outcomes?

See it in a real dissertation: [Essays in the Economics of Education](#) · Yehyun Kyung · University of Chicago · 2026

37. When do the people asked to implement a reform decide to carry it instead?

See it in a real dissertation: [How Unions Bring About Policy Implementation: Education Reform, Teachers' Unions, and Subnational Politics in Mexico](#) · Coyoli, Julia · Harvard University · 2024

38. What raises graduation rates in a school built for the students the system lost?

See it in a real dissertation: [Beyond Traditional Education: Graduation Rates at an Alternative High School](#) · Kristen Crook · Portland State University · 2025

39. Is a curriculum change really a change in school culture?

See it in a real dissertation: [‘It ain’t what you do, it’s the way that you do it’ school culture and curriculum development- exploring an integrated approach to leading curriculum change](#) · Lekha Sharma · University of Oxford · 2024

40. Does where a district allocates money show up in what its students achieve?

See it in a real dissertation: [Opportunity Gap: The Correlations Between Resource Allocation and Student Achievement](#) · Brian J Etchison-Cook · Kennesaw State University · 2026

Special education and inclusion

41. Do teachers and government mean the same thing by inclusive education?

See it in a real dissertation: [How is inclusive education conceptualised by government guidance and teachers in England? · S Brazil · University of Oxford · 2025](#)

42. What keeps a veteran special education teacher in a job most people leave?

See it in a real dissertation: [Why They Stay: A Qualitative Study of Experiences of Veteran Low-Incidence Self-Contained Special Education Teachers Who Remain in the Profession](#) · Jessie Leyden · Kennesaw State University · 2026

43. Why are Latine students over-identified for special education, and what stops it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Addressing Disparities Among Latine Students in Special Education](#) · Jesabel Centeno · Portland State University · 2025

44. Which knowledge does a special education teacher need to teach well online?

See it in a real dissertation: [Investigating the Relationship Between K-12 Online Special Education Teachers' Tpack and Teacher Level Variables](#) · Brad R. Garrison · Boise State University · 2023

45. What stops universal design for learning being adopted across a whole institution?

See it in a real dissertation: [Best practices for institution wide implementation of universal design for learning in higher education](#) · Katrina Marie Herold · Northeastern University · 2022

Teaching practice and teacher development

46. Should professional development be differentiated for teachers the way lessons are for students?

See it in a real dissertation: [Differentiating for Teacher Learners](#) · Paula Uriarte · Boise State University · 2023

47. Does a national certification make teaching more of a profession, or only more credentialed?

See it in a real dissertation: [When Professionalization Is Not Enough: Teachers and National Board Certification](#) · Mildred Enid Rey · University of Chicago · 2025

48. How much does classroom autonomy explain whether a teacher stays satisfied?

See it in a real dissertation: [Does Instructional Autonomy Matter? Exploring Job Satisfaction for Math and Non-Math Teachers in Low, Middle, and High SES Schools](#) · Hannah Sean Ellefritz · Portland State University · 2022

49. Which professional learning do teachers say actually changed their practice?

See it in a real dissertation: [Teachers' Insights into Professional Learning Opportunities that Support Their Learning](#) · Sinclair-Slakk, Shawn · University of Virginia · 2025

50. Can adaptability be taught before a trainee has ever stood in front of a class?

See it in a real dissertation: [Developing Teaching Adaptability in Pre-service Teachers using Practice-Based Teacher Education](#) · Kyuil Cho · West Virginia University · 2022

How to turn a topic into your research question

A topic is a starting point, not something you can research yet. These four steps take you from a topic on this list to a focused question you can actually answer.

- 1. Shortlist three, not one.** Pick three topics from this list that genuinely interest you and fit the access you have to people and data.

Recommended reading: [How to find and choose a dissertation topic](#)

- 2. Read the dissertation behind each one.** Its literature review and its "recommendations for future research" section show you what is already known and what is still open.

Recommended reading: [How to find a research gap](#)

- 3. Narrow it to your setting.** Name one population, one setting and one thing you will measure or explore. That turns a broad topic into a question you can finish.

Recommended reading: [How to write a research question](#)

- 4. Line up your aims, objectives and questions.** Your committee will check that they agree.

Recommended reading: [Research aims, objectives and questions](#)

Work through these once and you will have a focused question rather than a broad topic, which is what the rest of your proposal is built on.