

Introduction to Research Methods in Educational Administration

Introduction to Research Methods in Educational Administration
(A concise, structured guide for students and practitioners)

1. Why Research Matters in Educational Administration

Purpose	What It Looks Like
Informed Decision Making	Use data to choose policies, allocate resources, and set priorities.
Accountability	Demonstrate impact to stakeholders (board, parents, funders).
Continuous Improvement	Identify strengths, diagnose problems, test solutions.
Professional Credibility	Ground leadership actions in evidence rather than intuition.

2. Core Concepts & Terminology

Term	Definition	Example in Education Administration
Research Design	The overall plan for collecting and analyzing data.	A mixed-methods study comparing graduation rates before and after a new counseling program.
Variable	Any characteristic that can vary (e.g., attendance, teacher morale).	Independent variable: implementation of a mentorship program. Dependent variable: student attendance.
Population	The full set of entities you want to understand.	All public high schools in a state.
Sample	Subset of the population actually studied.	30 randomly selected high schools from the state.
Reliability	Consistency of a measurement tool.	A survey that yields similar results when administered twice to the same group.
Validity	Accuracy of a measurement tool (does it measure what it claims?).	A leadership effectiveness scale that truly reflects administrators' ability to improve school climate.

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Term	Definition	Example in Education Administration
Ethics	Principles guiding responsible research (informed consent, confidentiality, etc.).	Obtaining parental consent before surveying students about school safety.

3. Major Research Paradigms

Paradigm	Ontology (Nature of Reality)	Epistemology (How We Know)	Typical Methods
Positivist / Quantitative	Reality is objective and measurable.	Knowledge through observable, statistical evidence.	Surveys, standardized tests, archival data, experiments.
Interpretivist / Qualitative	Reality is socially constructed.	Knowledge through participants' meanings and experiences.	Interviews, focus groups, observations, document analysis.
Pragmatic / Mixed-Methods	Reality can be both objective & subjective.	Knowledge is generated by using the method that best answers the question.	Combines quantitative & qualitative strands (e.g., survey + case study).

4. Steps in the Research Process

1. Identify the Problem / Question

- Start with a practical issue (e.g., "Why are teacher turnover rates rising?").
- Formulate a clear, researchable question or hypothesis.

2. Review the Literature

- Summarize existing studies, theories, and gaps.
- Use databases (ERIC, JSTOR, Google Scholar) and cite recent, peer-reviewed work.

3. Choose a Design & Methodology

- Decide on quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods.
- Select data-collection tools (survey, interview protocol, observation checklist).

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4. Define Population & Sampling Strategy

- **Probability sampling** (simple random, stratified) ? generalizable results.
- **Non?probability sampling** (convenience, purposive) ? depth of insight.

5. Develop Instruments & Pilot Test

- Write clear items, ensure reliability (Cronbach's ???0.70).
- Pilot with a small group; revise based on feedback.

6. Collect Data

- Follow ethical protocols (