

## The Gap between Philosophy and the Philosophy of Education in Japanese Academia: A Statistical Survey of the Largest Competitive Research Funding Database in Japan<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

This short article is based on my special lecture entitled “Aristotle and the Philosophy of Education” at Tamagawa University Research Institute in Tokyo on September 19, 2015, through a recording of the spoken language transcribed in written form with some corrections. The lecture delivered on that day consists of two parts: referring to historical research and a statistical survey, the first half focuses on uncovering the fact that the philosophy of education has been slighted both in Japanese and Western academia and that this fact is valid for both Aristotle’s and contemporary studies on the philosophy of education; the second half endeavors to describe two possible research projects—namely, a classical-philosophical and interpretative study of Aristotle’s philosophy of education and a contemporary-philosophical and Aristotelian study of the philosophy of education. Some of these topics have been published but others have not.<sup>3</sup> This short article concerns the first half of the lecture and measures the gap between philosophy and the philosophy of education in Japan through a statistical survey of the largest competitive research funding database in Japan: KAKEN.

### 1. A personal Impression

My 10-year philosophical *Lehrjahre* in academia has led me to form a personal impression that scholars of philosophy and those of philosophy of education do not seem to mingle with each other. Throughout this period, I belonged to the field of philosophy more so than to that of philosophy of education. However, the fact that my dissertation concerns Aristotle’s concept of education (*paideia*) naturally led me to have an interest in the latter field.<sup>4</sup> Accumulating knowledge of its history, major philosophical-educational theories, and contemporary hot debates certainly helped me to put my thesis into a wider context. However, I noticed that I had little knowledge about the philosophy of education in advance and that I had little experience in discussing topics on (presumably) the philosophy of education with my

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<sup>1</sup> This article is mainly based on my short report written in Japanese (Tachibana 2016). I would like to thank the editors of *Humanitas* for their permission for the translation. In the course of translating the report into English, I enriched the content by adding, revising, and updating descriptions as well as correcting some careless descriptions. I hope this enrichment helps readers to understand an aspect of Japanese academia that concerns the relationship between philosophy and the philosophy of education.

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<sup>3</sup> Those includes Tachibana (2012b), Tachibana et al. (2016) and Nakazawa et al. (2016) as well as my single-authored Japanese articles, which will be translated into English sooner or later.

<sup>4</sup> Tachibana (2012a).

colleagues and teachers. There is no doubt that I should be cautious about generalizing from my experience. There could indeed be other philosophers who are familiar with those experiences. Still, I assume not so small number of philosophers would have had a more or less similar experience to mine. It looks strange, then, that we have had such a poor experience in the philosophy of education when we remember various experiences where we learned and discussed philosophical methods (logical, phenomenological, and analytical) as well as philosophical topics such as time, death, and perception, even though we did not specialize in them. Thus, philosophy of education might be a distant-related subject for philosophers.

My other tentative research suggests that the situation is similar in Western philosophical academia, as Siegel puts it impressively, due to “[t]he ‘benign neglect’ of philosophy of education by the general philosophical community.”<sup>5</sup> My research on this point will be discussed on another occasion; here I focus on the Japanese situation. Regardless, how will the gap be verified? Some may have an impression that philosophy of education belongs to pedagogy and that pedagogists work on it. The name—*philosophy of education*—may also give rise to a contrary impression: as philosophy of science is a part of philosophy but not of science, so philosophy of education is a part of philosophy but not of education or pedagogy. Others may have an even different impression—that philosophy of education is a composite subject of philosophy and pedagogy. However, we know very well that impressions as well as personal experience, bias, and prejudice easily distort facts. To avoid such distortion, I addressed the topic with a statistical survey.

## 2. Method

To address the gap between philosophy and the philosophy of education, this article carried out a twofold attitude survey of the identity of scholars. The first concerned the attitude of scholars—namely, principal investigators (PIs)—who have performed a study *related to* the philosophy of education. Under this concern, I investigated to which category, area, discipline, and research field the PI assumed his/her philosophy of education–related study belongs.<sup>6</sup> This will uncover the academic place to which philosophy of education is assumed to belong by Japanese scholars. The second part of the survey concerned the attitude of scholars who performed a study not *related to* but *interested in* the philosophy of education. Under this concern, I investigated to which category, area, discipline, and research field the PI assumed his/her philosophy of education–interested study belongs. This will uncover which academic regions are interested in the philosophy of education. This twofold attitude survey will show the academic status of philosophy of education in Japanese academia and, accordingly, its gap from philosophy there.

A survey by questionnaire did not seem to be a good method for proceeding with this research for the reason of cost-effectiveness. Instead, this article used the database of the largest competitive funds in Japan—namely, KAKEN Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, provided by the National Institute of

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<sup>5</sup> Siegel (2009, 5).

<sup>6</sup> On the relationship between category, area, discipline, and research field, see Table 1.

Informatics (NII) in cooperation with Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS).<sup>7</sup> This is an open-access and comprehensive database that allows users to see every post-war research project in detail that received funding. The following picture is of the search page of the KAKEN database in English (Fig. 1).<sup>8</sup>

Fig. 1: The English search page of the KAKEN database

The use of this database helped us to avoid the risk of overlooking philosophy of education–related/–interested studies in fields other than philosophy and pedagogy, and to gain relatively objective data, not swayed by impression, prejudice, or bias.

The problem was rather in the fact that KAKEN does not have the term “philosophy of education” in its category, area, discipline, or research field. The following table (Table 1) is the list of the Category of Humanities and Social Science.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://kaken.nii.ac.jp/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://kaken.nii.ac.jp/en/> This screenshot was taken on December 31, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> JSPS (2017, 53–54). These are not my translations but the original wordings.

Table. 1: Area, Discipline, and Research Fields of the Category of Humanities and Social Sciences

Category: Humanities and Social Sciences							
Area	Discipline	Research Field	Area	Discipline	Research Field		
Humanities/ Social Sciences	Area studies	Area studies	Social Sciences	Law	Fundamental law		
	Gender	Gender			Public law		
	Tourism studies	Tourism Studies			International law		
Philosophy	Philosophy / Ethics Chinese philosophy / Indian philosophy / Buddhist studies Religious studies History of thought	Philosophy / Ethics Chinese philosophy / Indian philosophy / Buddhist studies Religious studies History of thought			Social law		
					Criminal law		
					Civil law		
				New fields of law			
Art studies	Aesthetics and studies on art Fine art history Art at large	Aesthetics and studies on art Fine art history Art at large		Politics	Politics		
					International relations		
				Literature	Japanese literature Literature in English European literature Chinese literature Literature in general	Japanese literature Literature in English European literature Chinese literature Literature in general	Economics
Economic doctrine / Economic thought							
Economic statistics							
Economic policy							
Public finance / Public economy							
Linguistics	Linguistics Japanese linguistics English linguistics Japanese language education Foreign language education	Linguistics Japanese linguistics English linguistics Japanese language education Foreign language education		Management	Management		
			Commerce				
			Accounting				
			History		Historical studies in general Japanese history History of Asia and Africa History of Europe and America Archaeology	Historical studies in general Japanese history History of Asia and Africa History of Europe and America Archaeology	Sociology
Social welfare and social work studies							
Psychology	Social psychology Educational psychology Clinical psychology Experimental psychology	Social psychology Educational psychology Clinical psychology Experimental psychology		Psychology			Social psychology
							Educational psychology
							Clinical psychology
Human geography	Human geography	Human geography	Education	Education			
Cultural anthropology	Cultural anthropology	Sociology of education					
				Education on school subjects and activities			
				Special needs education			

This article adapted the following method to avoid this difficulty, extract the philosophy of education–related/–interested studies, and uncover their affiliations. As for philosophy of education–related studies and which category they belong to, the article focused on research projects that contain the words “philosophy of education” in their title, because this suggests that the PI assumed that the project was strongly related to the philosophy of education. Furthermore, the article also focused on research projects that contain “philosophy of education” in their keywords, because such keywords suggest that the PI assumed that the project was related to the philosophy of education. These two focuses made it possible to extract philosophy of education–related research projects. Based on the extracts, the article classified the affiliation of each of these projects, since this classification would show the academic place in which the philosophy of education is assumed to be located by Japanese scholars. As for philosophy of education–interested studies and their belongings, the article focused on research projects that contain the words “philosophy of education” in their abstract, report, and/or outputs, etc., but not in their research project title or keywords, because such contents suggest that the PI assumed that the project was not very related to the philosophy of education but was still interested in it.<sup>10</sup> In order to extract such projects, it was helpful to enter the search words “philosophy of education” in the free word search box and extract from the results those which contain the words in their research project title and/or keywords. This enabled the extraction of philosophy of education–interested research projects. Based on the extracts, the study classified the affiliation of each of these projects, since this will show the academic place of those who are interested in the philosophy of education.

### 3. Analysis

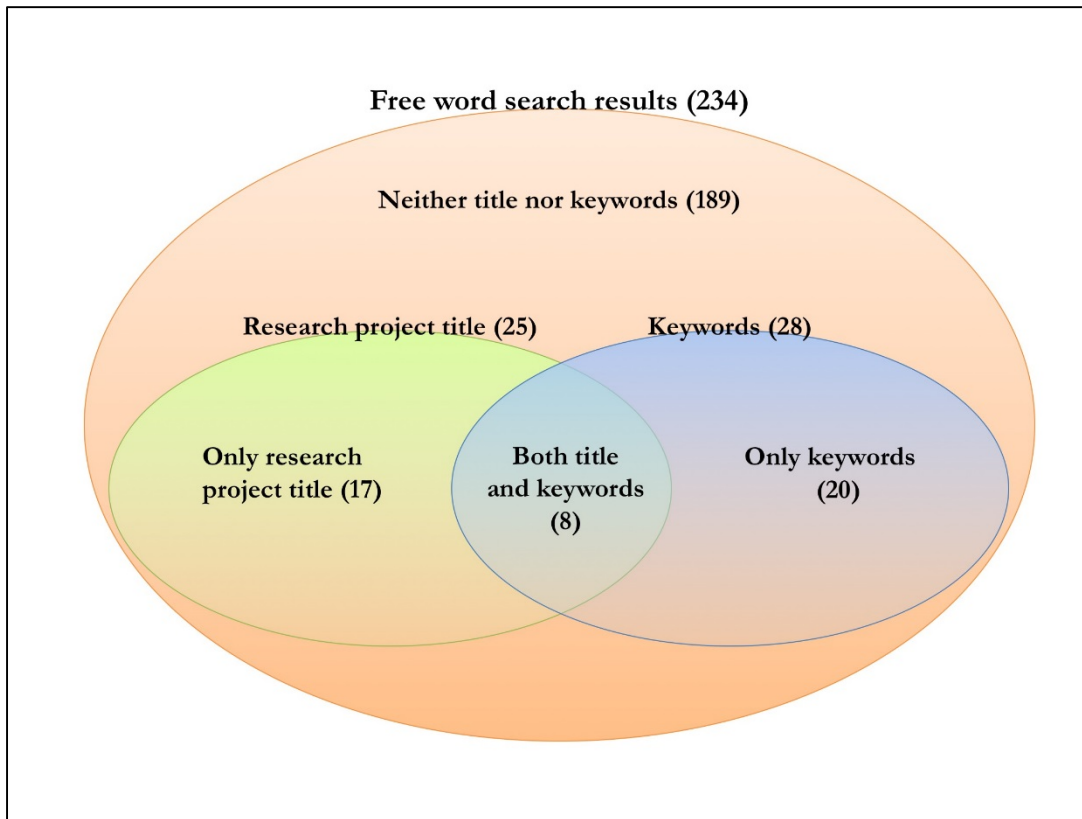
As for the search analysis, the number of projects that contained the words “philosophy of education” in their research project title was 25, and those with keywords totaled 28. Among them, those with both title and keywords totaled eight, 17 had the title but not the keywords, and 20 had keywords but not the title. Therefore, the number of philosophy of education–related research projects was 45. As a result of the free word search, the number of the projects that contained the words “philosophy of education” in any place was 234. Since there were 45 philosophy of education–related research projects, the philosophy of education–interested research projects totaled 189. The following figure illustrates those search results (Fig. 2).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The research reports and outputs sections do not appear in the search page (Fig. 1) but do in the free word search results.

<sup>11</sup> This search was performed in Japanese on January 29, 2016.

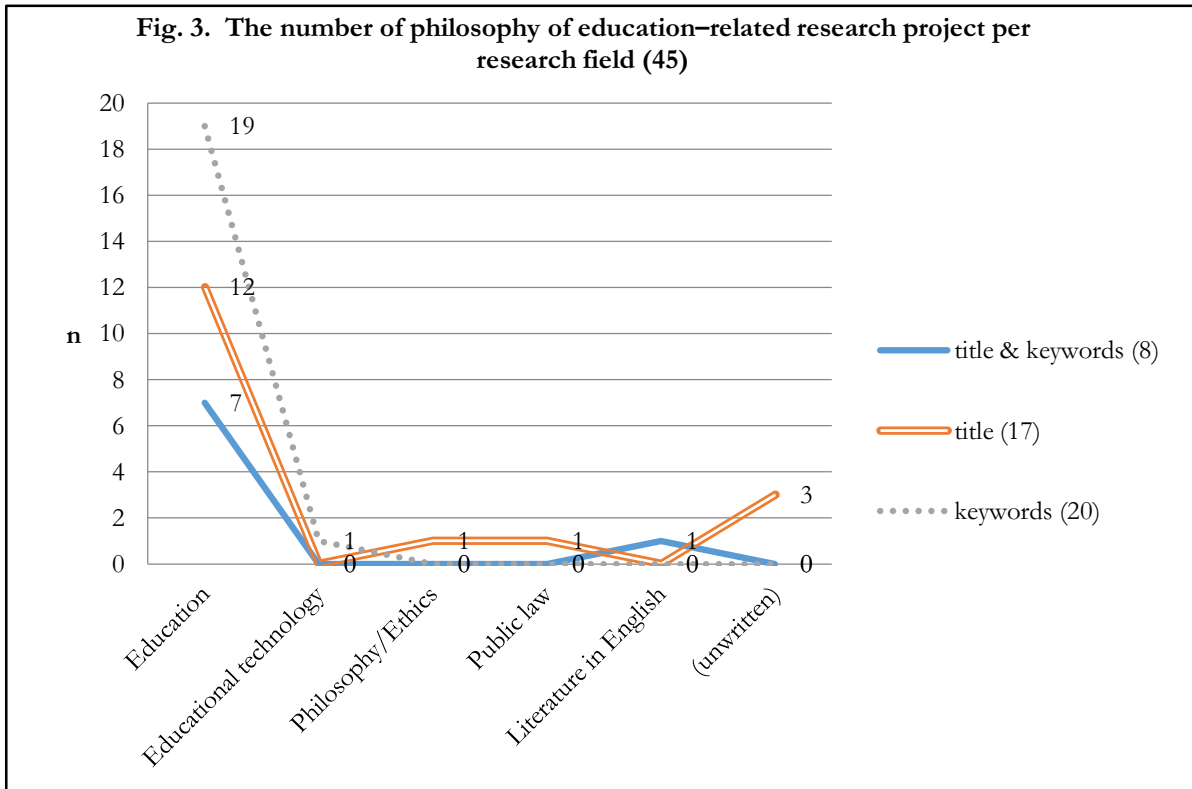
Fig. 2. A Venn diagram of research subjects that contain “philosophy of education”



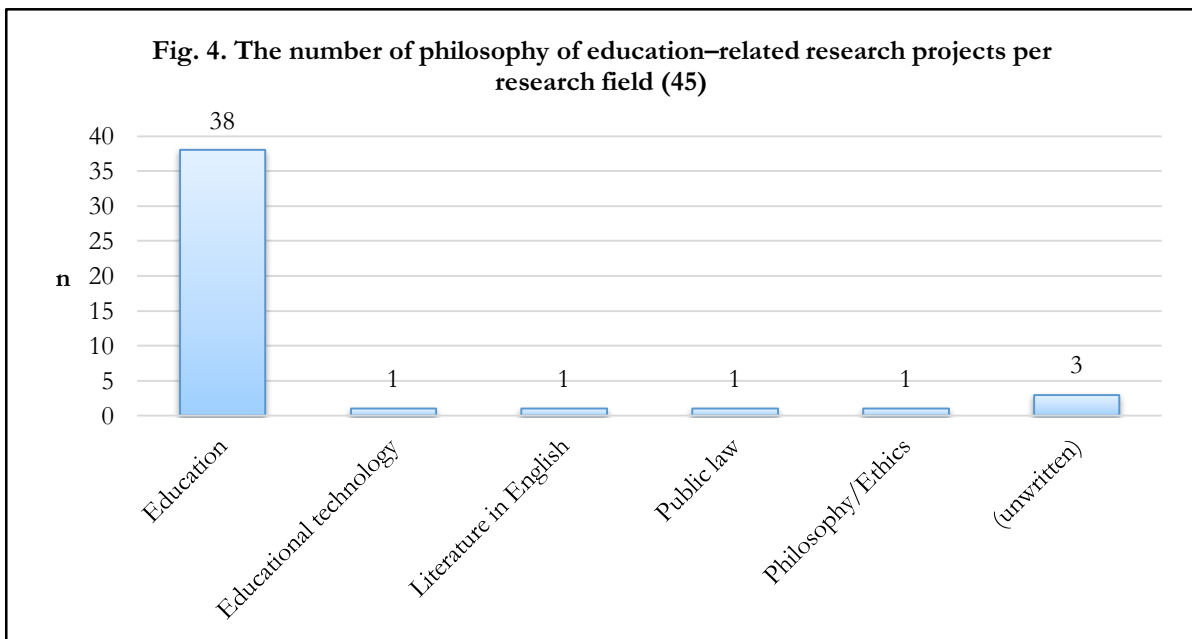
The number of projects per research field is as follows: Among eight projects that contained the words “philosophy of education” both in their title and keywords, seven belonged to education, one to literature in English, and none to philosophy/ethics. Among 17 projects that contained the words only in their title, 12 projects belonged to education, one to public law, one to philosophy/ethics, and three were unwritten.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, among 20 projects that contained the words only in their keywords, 19 belonged to education and one to educational technology.<sup>13</sup> These can be illustrated as in the following figure (Fig. 3):

<sup>12</sup> The reason the research field of these three projects is unwritten is this: As for research projects in the 1960s, KAKEN did not give or at least did not record the research field of each project. Among them, however, the PI of at least one research project seemed to specialize in philosophy/ethics, but it is still unknown whether the research project itself belonged to philosophy/ethics. Accordingly, this article categorizes them as “unwritten.”

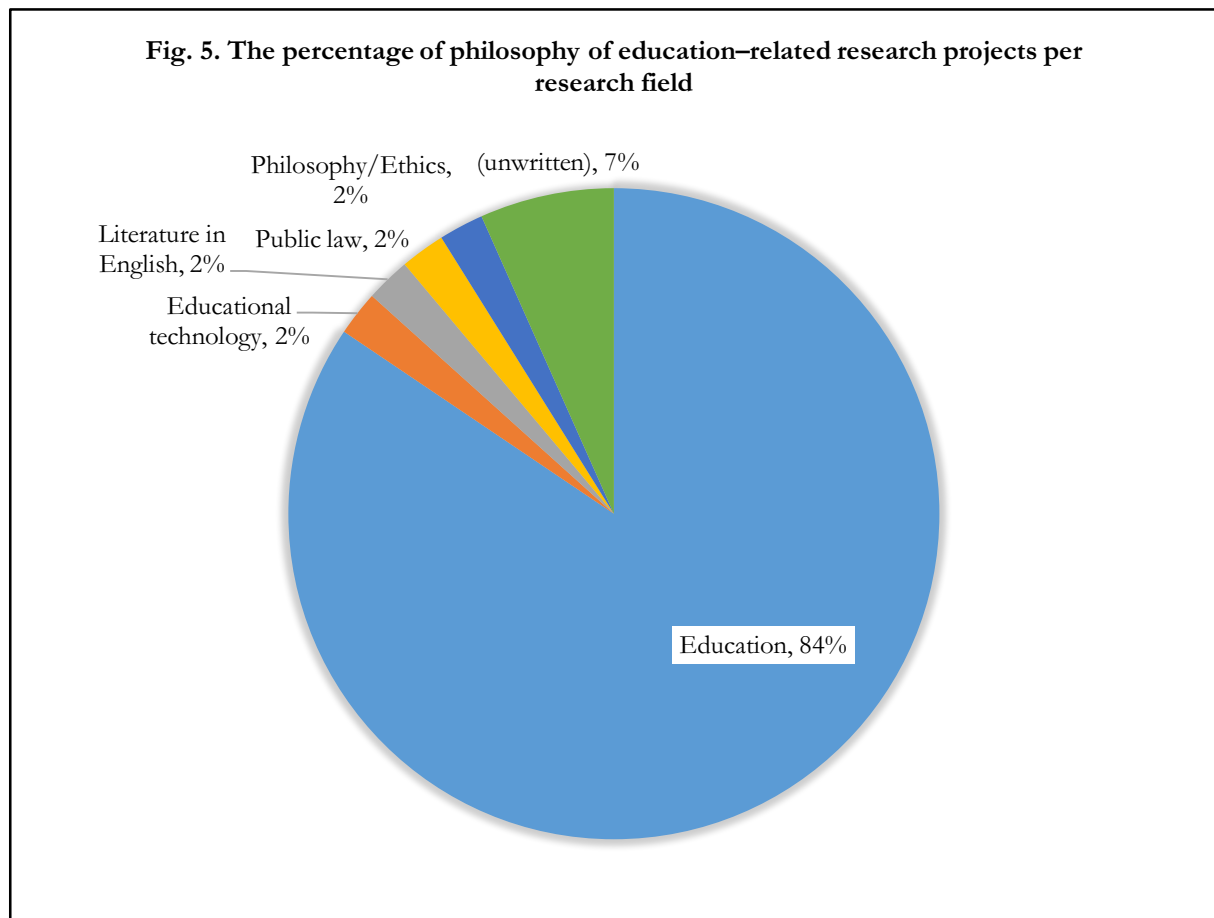
<sup>13</sup> “Educational technology” belongs not to Education (as a discipline) nor Social Sciences (as an area) nor Humanities and Social Sciences (as a category), but to Science education/Educational technology (as a discipline), Complex system (as an area), and Integrated Discipline (as a category) (see JSPS 2017, 53).



As for all philosophy of education–related research projects, 38 belong to education, one to educational technology, one to literature in English, one to public law, one to philosophy/ethics, and three are unwritten, as per the following figure (Fig. 4):



As for the percentage of distribution, more than 80% of philosophy of education–related research projects belong to education, whereas only 2% of belong to philosophy/ethics (see Fig. 5). This percentage distribution did not change when these projects were summed up per discipline: namely, 84% of them belong to education, whereas literature, law, philosophy, and science education/educational technology respectively have only 2%, and 7% are unwritten.<sup>14</sup>

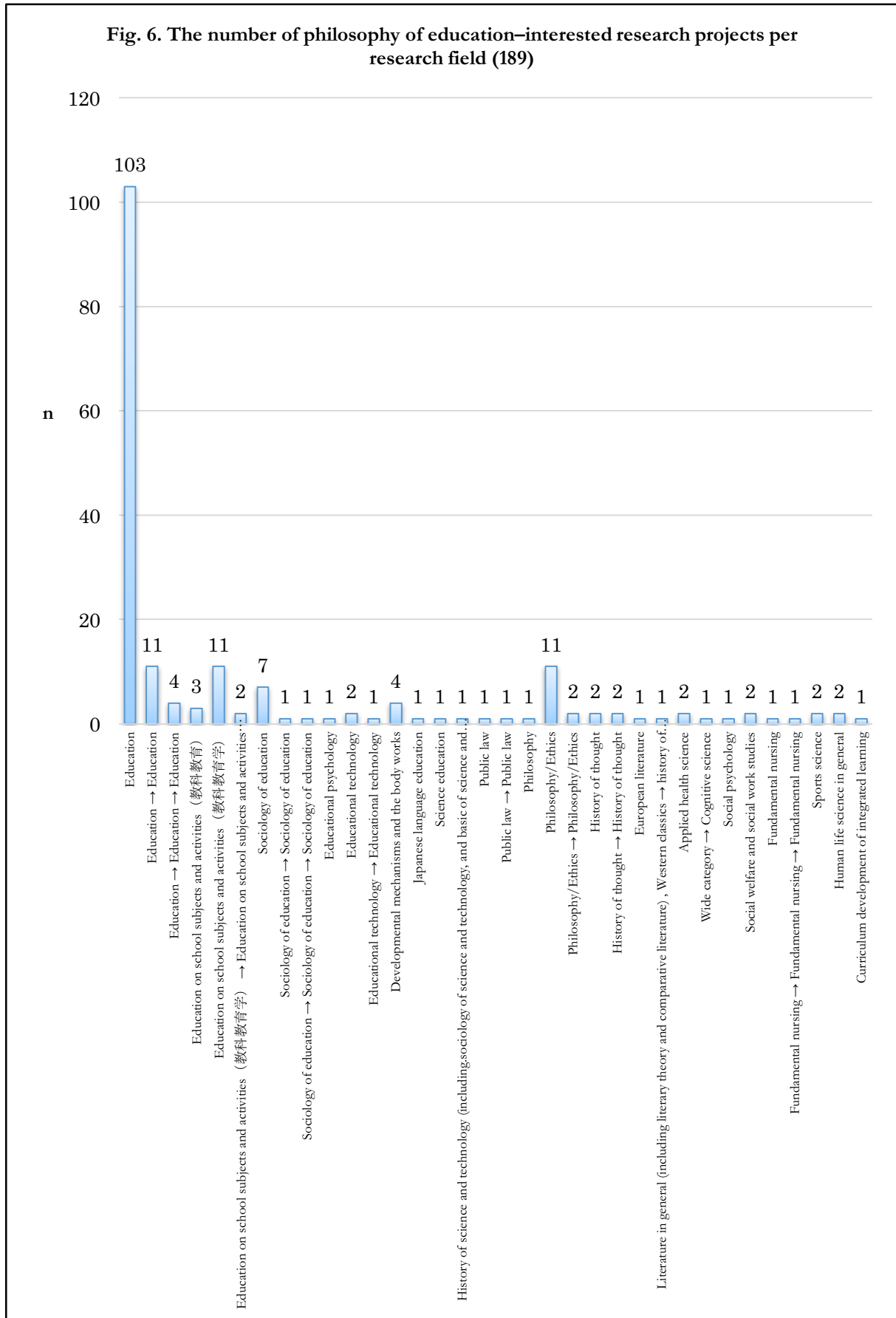


As for the results of the free word search for “philosophy of education,” the number of projects was 234. Since the number of philosophy of education–related research projects was 45, that of philosophy of education–interested research projects was 189. The following figure provides a detailed breakdown of the belongings per research field (Fig. 6):<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> When calculating the percentage, this article rounds off to the first decimal place.

<sup>15</sup> There are two research fields named “education on school subjects and activities” in the figure. This is because there are two in the original Japanese names that correspond to this English translation. Since the difference between the original Japanese names is slight, there seems to be no way to express it in the English translation. Therefore, I added the original Japanese name in parentheses.



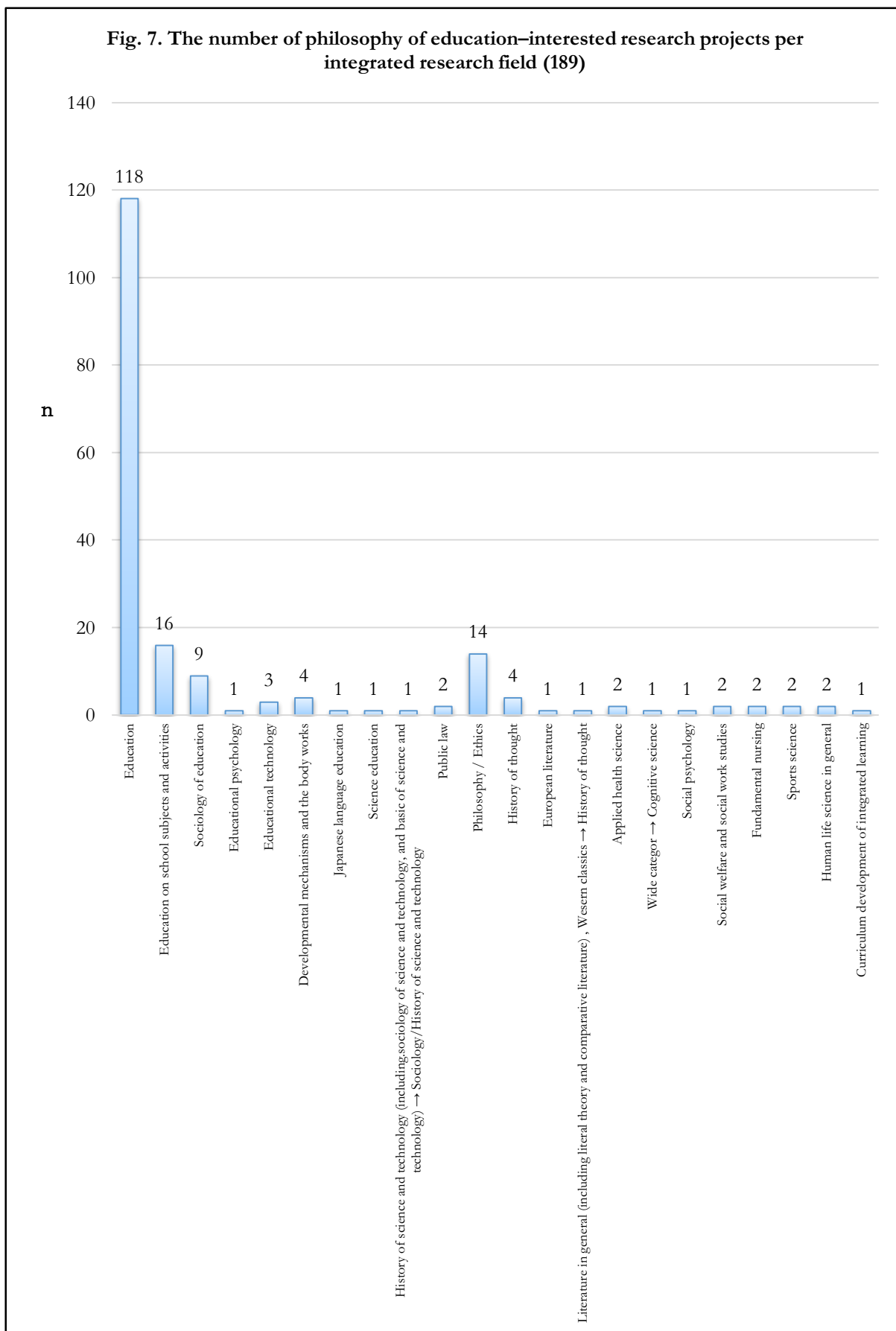


The figure above (Fig. 6) is rather cluttered, since it covers 34 research fields. To put them in order, some fields are integrated if they are differentiated by renaming. The research fields that are the subject of integration total 21, and the integrated names of the fields are as follows (Table 2):

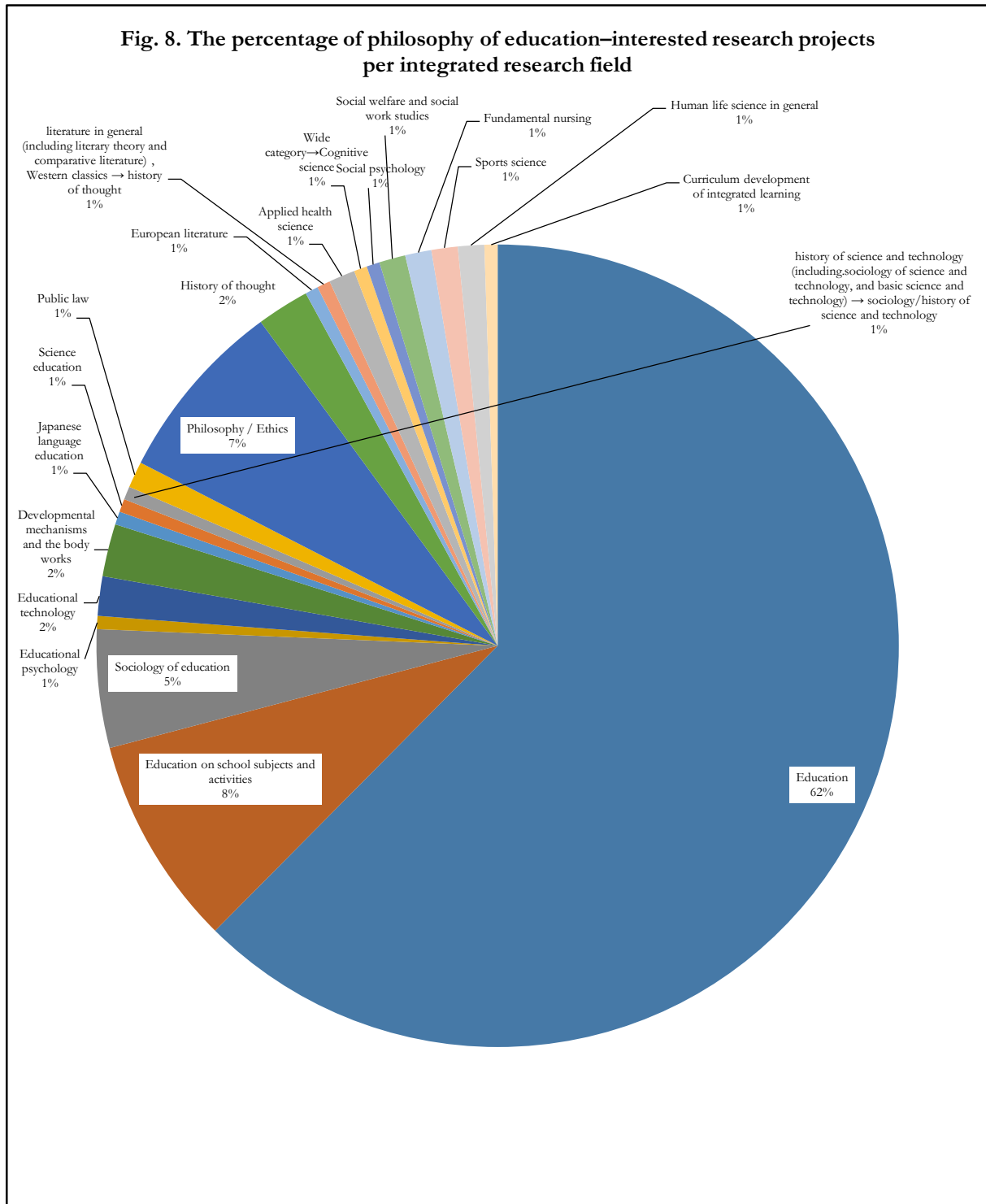
**Table. 2. List of integrations**

Integrated name of fields	Original name of fields
Education	Education
	Education → Education
	Education → Education → Education
Education on school subjects and activities	Education on school subjects and activities (教科教育)
	education on school subjects and activities (教科教育学)
	education on school subjects and activities (教科教育学) → education on school subjects and activities (教科教育学)
Sociology of education	Sociology of education
	Sociology of education → Sociology of education
	Sociology of education → Sociology of education → Sociology of education
Educational technology	Educational technology
	Educational technology → Educational technology
Public law	Public law
	Public law → Public law
Philosophy/Ethics	Philosophy
	Philosophy/Ethics
	Philosophy/Ethics → Philosophy/Ethics
History of thought	History of thought
	History of thought → History of thought
Fundamental nursing	Fundamental nursing
	Fundamental nursing → Fundamental nursing → Fundamental nursing

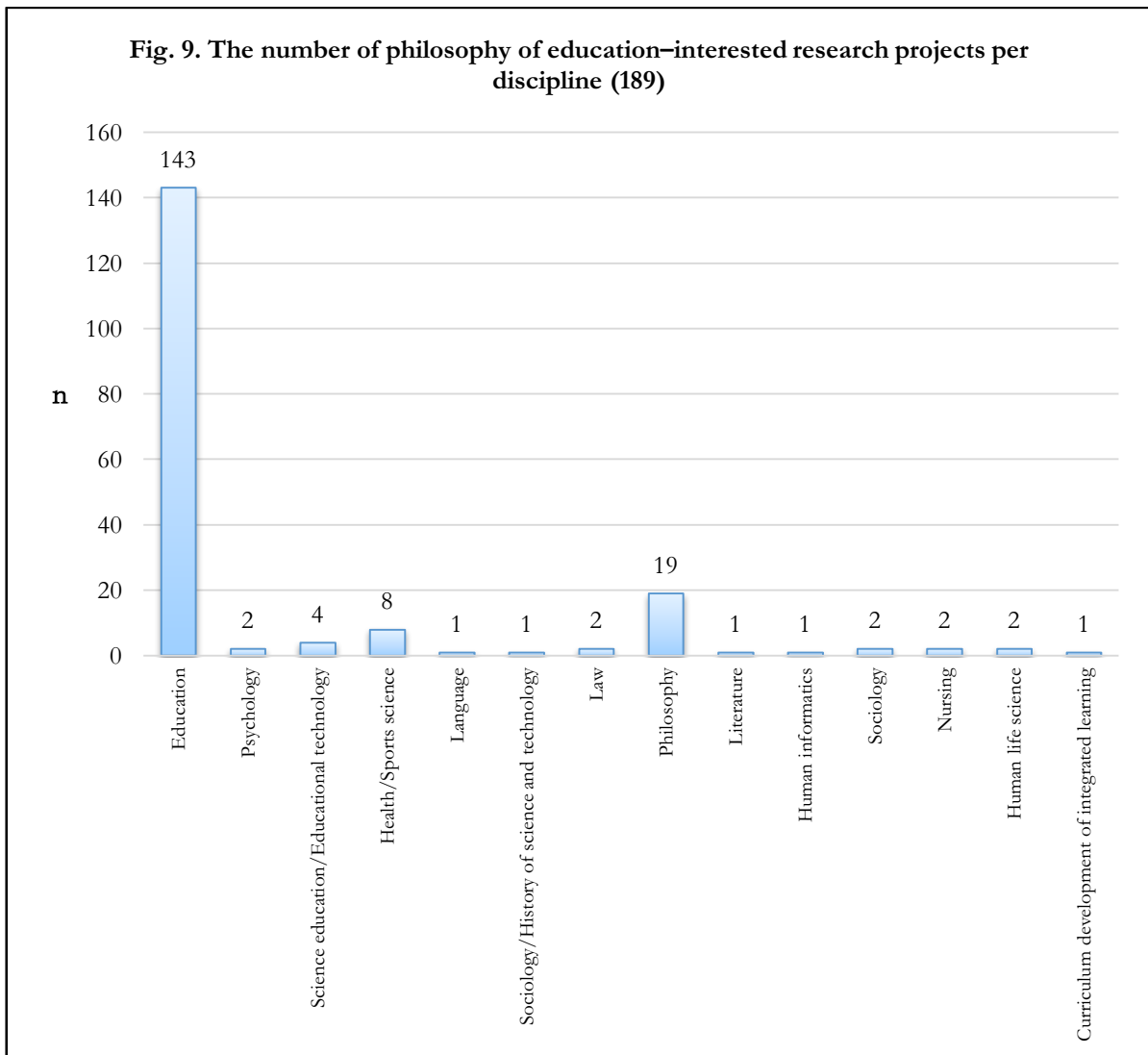
This integration reduces the number of research fields from 34 to 22, as the following figure shows (Fig. 7):



The following pie chart shows the percentage of each integrated research field (Fig. 8). The distribution of percentage by integrated research field shows that 62% of the philosophy of education–interested research projects belong to education, 8% to education on school subjects and activities, and 7% to philosophy/ethics.

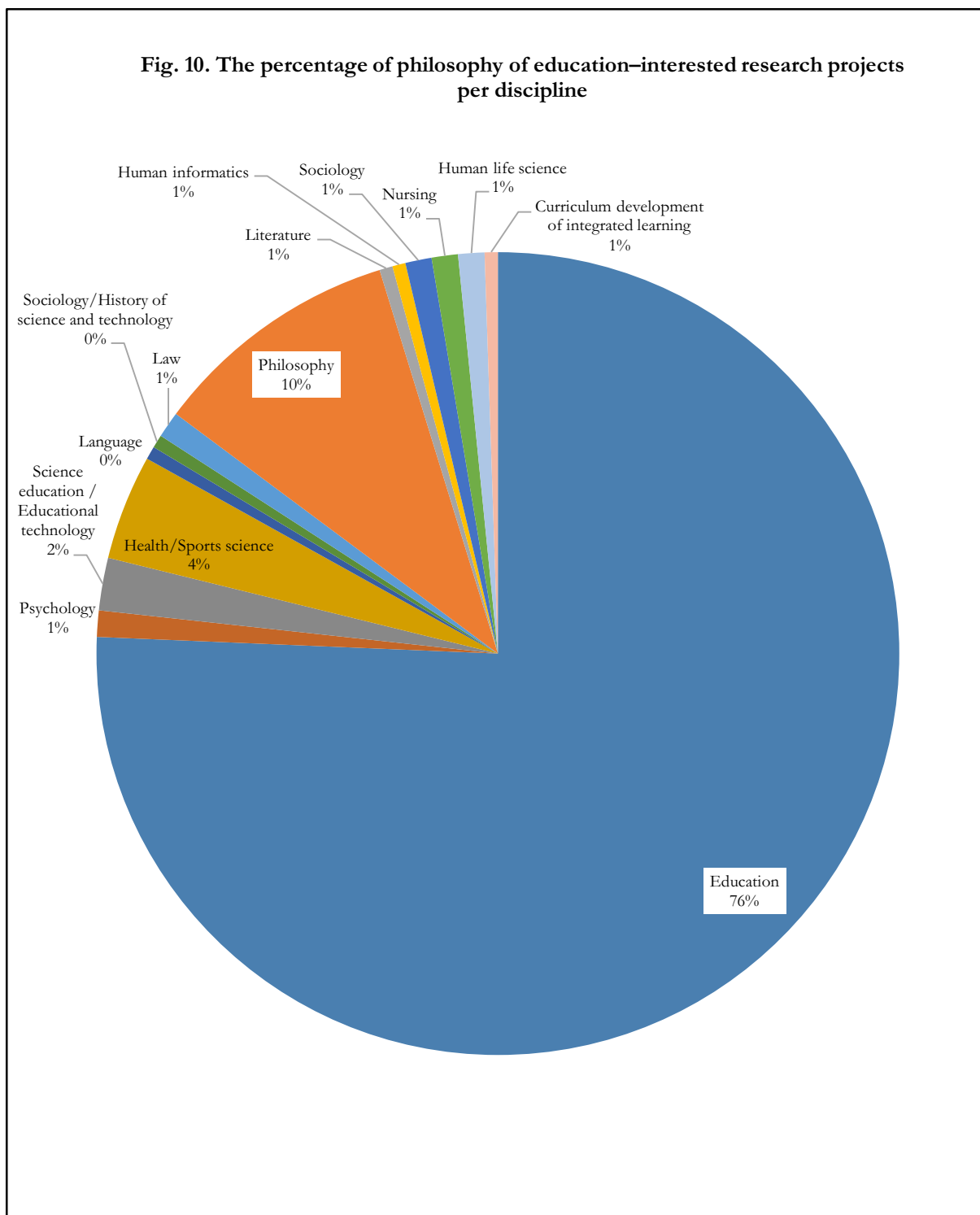


The following figure shows the number of philosophy of education–interested research subjects by discipline (Fig. 9). Please note that in the process of categorizing those research fields into each discipline, some research subjects for which the name of the research field has changed have been categorized into a discipline to which the final research field belongs, and that “curriculum development of integrated learning” remains intact, since it is a limited-time research field and does not belong to any usual discipline.<sup>16</sup>



The following pie chart shows the percentage of each integrated research field (Fig. 10). The distribution of percentage by discipline shows that 76% of philosophy of education–interested research projects belong to education and 10% to philosophy/ethics.

<sup>16</sup> On this point, see the JSPS website: [https://www.jsps.go.jp/j-grantsinaid/09\\_data/17/11.html](https://www.jsps.go.jp/j-grantsinaid/09_data/17/11.html)



#### 4. Results

The analysis presented so far seems to allow us to draw a relatively objective picture of the relationship or gap between philosophy and philosophy of education in Japanese academia. As for the philosophy of

education-related research projects per discipline, 84% of them belong to education, whereas only 2% belong to philosophy. This implies that the philosophy of education-related research projects are *de facto* performed as educational research rather than as philosophical research. On the other hand, as for the philosophy of education-interested research projects per discipline, 76% of them belong to education, whereas 10% belong to philosophy. Although philosophy is the second-largest discipline of those that are interested in the philosophy of education, most of these projects are rightly said to belong to education, given that they amount to more than 70%. Therefore, the following general conclusion can be legitimately derived—namely, philosophy of education has been performed mostly as educational research, and most educational research has been interested in the philosophy of education.

## 5. Discussion

This general conclusion supports my initial personal impression that scholars of philosophy and of philosophy of education seem not to mingle with each other. Given that the lines of the research discipline are flexible and often bypassed, the gap this research uncovered is not particularly important. However, it is true as well that the identification—the sense of belonging—of scholars has a certain influence on how research projects will develop.

Further comprehensive research will be required, since the analysis this research presented is limited and therefore the result derived should be enriched and/or examined. For one thing, for example, this research does not analyze transitions through periods. This means that the gap between philosophy and the philosophy of education in the 1970s and in the 2000s may be different. Once such a transition through a period is found, then the gap between the two would be able to be considered in more detail. For another thing, this research did not pay attention to individuality. There may be an individual philosopher who was interested in the philosophy of education and, accordingly, worked on it. The examination of his/her abstracts and reports will be, on the one hand, required to decide whether each project is related to/interested in the philosophy of education. On the other hand, however, an objective method needs to be found to exclude the human arbitrariness in such decision-making. Since this research aimed to find a relatively objective result in relation to the gap in question, it did not read them to avoid such arbitrariness. This restriction provided what it aimed to, but presumably overlooks some interesting aspects of the relationship between philosophy and the philosophy of education. Furthermore, the position and affiliation of the PI may have a certain superficial influence on the characteristics of a research project. These and other limitations that this research may have can be avoided by professional analysts with large-scale competitive funding. Such professional and exhaustive research is awaited to enrich and correct the results that this research has achieved.

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\*Every url has been accessed on February 27, 2017.

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