

10th International Conference on Education Research

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON  
DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS ON  
EDUCATION RESEARCH COMPETENCE**

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# Background of the study

- The purpose of university education
- The purpose of graduate education (LaPidua, 1997)
  - Preparation for research as one of the major roles of graduate education
  - Ability to carry out an independent research project as the primary and the sole criterion for degree

# Background of the study

- A list of competence required for education research
- Need to investigate the actual process and features under a specific academic cultures and convention

# Background of the study

- Case of nursing
  - Integration of research and clinical competence to improve the field
  - Evidence-based research competences (Burke et al., 2005)
    - Understanding research competence in terms of developmental course
    - List of competences in connection with developmental path constructed by experts' experiences

# Research purpose

- To understand education research competence not as a list or an attribute, but as something that is operated and developed through negotiation and meaning-making process
- To investigate the ways graduate students and researchers characterize education research competence

# Research methods

- Participants: Department of education from a research-oriented university in Korea
  - Two focus group interviews on 10 master students, 10 doctoral students
  - Four graduates working as a researcher and a university professor
  - Nine professors

# Research methods

- Interview questions
  - Students: challenges in doing research; critical research experiences
  - Graduates: core competence required for doing education research after graduation; the effectiveness of curriculum in developing research competence
  - Professors: core competence required for graduate students; efforts to develop graduate students' education research competence



# Research methods

- Analysis
  - Summarizing and categorizing the characteristics of education research competence
  - Mapping the features of education research competence
  - Weaving education research competence to the developmental stages

# Different conceptions on education research competence

- Students in master program reported that
  - *"I don't know much about what research would be like and have enough knowledge in my field, either. Therefore, the pressure of being productive got me stressed out."*
  - *"Although the process of writing a manuscript was difficult, as I saw my name next to that of my advisor's on the first page of the paper published, I felt happy and proud. Experience like this becomes a drive for me."*

# Different conceptions on education research competence

- Students in doctoral course suggested that
  - *"Rather than technical research skills, academic dialogue and communication are needed as students are exposed to a variety of research topics and perspectives."*
  - *"The study is originated from my advisor's questions, not from my own. I got in trouble when I had to understand and wrote on that topic as if they were my own."*
  - *"Professors kept saying that you need to have your own perspectives and research questions. I cannot figure out, however, what they actually meant. It is because all the research I was doing was on my advisor's responsibility."*

# Different conceptions on education research competence

- Graduates stressed

- *"I believe that I developed various research skills during my doctoral program. The most difficult task when I was in the program, however, was to find out my own research agenda and perspective with which I can examine the phenomena of my interest."*
- *"I, as a researcher at a government-funded national education research institute, need to have ideas on education policy. To be honest, I have not had classes on current education policies while in master and doctoral program. This is very critical."*

# Different conceptions on education research competence

- Professors highlighted
  - *"Students need to try to be critical. Students have tendency to find solutions and keys, which is not important at all. A good idea is thousand times more important than a solution."*
  - *"What the graduates of this department need to have, I think, are two: one with the perspectives on current education policy and political issues on education; and the other with teamwork competency."*

# Education research competence: A new understanding

- Different conceptions on the meaning of education research competence
- Not a list of research competence; rather, some of the critical aspects of a research process (e.g.) writing skill
- A list of meaningful research competence according to the context and situation at different level of competence development

# Education research competence: A new understanding

- Need to consider developmental approach to interpreting the meaning of competence
- Emphasis on context-based approach rather than stressing the best research performance
- Every attribute of research competence is proved to be important; the appreciation of such attribute might not be the same across the developmental stages of research competence.

# Education research competence: A new understanding

- Assumption that all levels of employees can do or try to do what the best performers do: High performers are the one who possess key competencies
- Conceptions not an attribute as the focal point for research competence development
- Designing, developing and implementing graduate programs by focusing on students' conceptions on research competence



# Directions for future research

- To reflect larger institutional context
- To consider the mission and philosophy of education

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH!**