Editorial

Introduction to Doctoral Education and Beyond: Learning Experiences, Competence, and Career Plans in East Asia

Jung Cheol Shin

College of Education, Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea

Corresponding author

jcs6205@snu.ac.kr

Futao Huang

Research Institute for Higher Education, Hiroshima University,

Hiroshima, Japan

futao@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

Abstract

This introductory paper explains the background of the special issue *Doctoral Education and Beyond* and provides overviews of the selected eight articles. Six of the eight articles address policy-related topics such as career choice, international mobility, and time-to-degree, and two articles explore theory related topics, especially socialization theory for doctoral students. These articles are based on empirically collected data. Five articles are based on the GRN survey, and three articles are based on national survey data and international survey data collected by each research team. Although some findings in these articles resemble those from studies conducted in the West, mostly in the US, but similar findings do not necessarily mean doctoral students in East Asia have similar learning experiences to their colleagues in the West.

Keywords

doctoral education – East Asia – learning experience – competence – career planning

Doctoral education is growing swiftly in East Asia and elsewhere, given the mounting demands of the creative society. In response to increased academic and policy interest in doctoral education, academic communities (especially in

the higher education field) began actively leading new research into doctoral education. This special issue of the *International Journal of Chinese Education* (*IJCE*) reflects collaboration among East Asian higher education researchers. It builds on collaborations among East Asian scholars underway since the emergence of global rankings and world-class university initiatives in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

One noticeable collaborative initiative was the Global Research Networks (GRN) launched by the University of Hong Kong, National University of Singapore, and Seoul National University. Research teams from these universities developed a common survey questionnaire to compare, and inform development of, doctoral education practices in their respective national systems. Tsinghua University and Peking University joined the collaboration based on their national research projects in China. In June 2018 these collaborations were showcased in a special issue of *Asia Pacific Education Review*. Further, Hiroshima University and National Chengchi University (in collaboration with the University of Taipei) joined the project and in 2018 collected nationwide data using the GRN survey. This collaborative research spurred formation of the Asian University Alliance (AUA) conference on doctoral education, hosted by Tsinghua University in November 2018.

The themes of this special *IJCE* issue highlight doctoral students' learning experiences, competence development, and career plans. Six of the eight articles selected for this special issue address policy-related topics such as career choice, international mobility, and time-to-degree (Huang & Shen, Arimoto et al., Chen et al., Jung, Ge & Ho, and Lim et al.). Two articles explore theory related topics, especially socialization theory of doctoral students (Shin et al., and Kim & Kim). All eight articles are based on empirically collected data. Five articles are based on the GRN survey (Arimoto et al., Chen et al., Jung, Lim et al.). Three articles are based on national survey data (Hung & Shen) and international survey data (Ge & Ho, and Shin et al.) collected by each team. The eight selected papers discuss major findings from empirical studies and propose theoretical implications for studies on the theme of doctoral education.

Career planning is a critical topic in the region because the job market for doctoral degree holders has saturated in Japan, Korea and Taiwan, though there is relatively more room to hire doctoral degree holders in mainland China. Huang and Shen analyzed doctoral students' career choice and found gender and disciplinary differences for career plans. In addition, they found scholarly orientation is significantly associated with intention to become an academic. Arimoto, Daizen, Huang and Kim studied doctoral students' research productivity and their career plans. According to their study, supervisors' research

productivity is closely associated with doctoral students' productivity. In addition, doctoral students' career planning is diverse and preferences differ by discipline. Chen, Ho and Hsu applied socialization theory to study the association between doctoral study and career planning. They found the socialization process has a weak association with career choice, and proposed socialization after doctoral study has some positive association in the Taiwanese doctoral education context.

Ge and Ho expanded scholarly and policy discussions from a country base to a regional base. They researched Chinese doctoral students' experience in three economically developed countries: Japan, Korea, and Singapore. They proposed that facilitating higher education migration infrastructure (commercial, social, and regulatory) is critical for attracting talented doctoral students from abroad, especially from China. Jung further explored stressors between local and non-local students in the Hong Kong context where a large share of non-local students is from mainland China. Her finding implies that non-local students' stressors differ from those of local students; thus, universities are encouraged to consider these dimensions in student management.

Shin, Jung and Lee expanded socialization theory from doctoral study to postdoctoral study using the concept of professional socialization. They argued that professional socialization during postdoctoral training is closely related to academic identity and disciplinary affiliation, as well as scholarly performance. This study proposes to develop and redesign doctoral education and postdoctoral training so that it reflects a continuous process of academic and professional socialization. Kim and Kim highlighted how the human relationship between supervisor and doctoral student is perceived differently by doctoral students from different Eastern and Western contexts. They found that doctoral students in a research focused US university encounter much that is positive about relationships with supervisors, in comparison to their peers in a research focused Korean university.

Finally, Lim, Li and Jung's article explored time-to-degree of doctoral students; a conventional topic of doctoral education research. They found a disciplinary difference in the determinants of time-to-degree between STEM and non-STEM students in a South Korean research university. Among their findings is that research productivity, as measured in international journal publications, is closely associated with time-to-degree, implying that doctoral students as well as researchers contend with publish or perish.

Many findings in these articles resemble those from studies conducted in the West, mostly in the US. Similar findings, however, do not necessarily mean doctoral students in East Asia have similar learning experiences to their

colleagues in the West. As Kim and Kim found, between East and the West doctoral students experience a qualitatively different socialization process in their relationships with their supervisors. Socialization theory based on Western academic culture might be understood differently in East Asia, especially in Confucian societies. The relationship between professors and students is more than that of the relationship between supervisor and student in the Confucian tradition. The relationship is considered similar to relationships between parents and their children which lead to “closed” and more intimate relationships, casting new light on topics such as meritocracy and rationality. Sometimes the close relationship contributes to emotional stability and helps with learning processes. At other times, the close or intimate relationship is a source of corruption, student abuse, and isolation. Interpreting socialization theory in this context needs further theoretical development.

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