

Thematic developments in doctoral research in the philosophy of education: A survey of three decades of changes (1990-2010)

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to inform students and researchers about the current state of thematic issues in doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education, and has examined the thematic issues of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education in the past three decades. This study is applied in terms of its purpose and in terms of the method of data collection in the qualitative research group. In qualitative research, the qualitative content analysis method with inductive approach was used. The software (Max QDA) was used to analyze the data. A statistical sample of 245 copies of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education in public universities in the past three decades (1991 to 2010) was examined and analyzed. The whole-number sampling method was used. The analysis of three decades of research on doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education shows that the Iranian scientific community has moved from focusing on theoretical issues and problems such as educational theories in the 1970s to practical and contemporary issues such as new technologies in the 1990s. It can be said that in these three decades, while maintaining fundamental topics, the movement towards applied and emerging topics continues. This trend indicates an effort to respond to the challenges of technology, educational justice, and indigenous issues, and emphasizes that the Iranian scientific community is moving towards research related to real needs and current issues, but there is a need for strategic planning to better cover various topics.

Keywords: thematic course, doctoral theses, philosophy of education, qualitative content analysis

Introduction

Higher education and universities play a major role in creating intellectual abilities, promoting and promoting continuous educational work, transferring cultural and scientific experiences of humans (Beheshti Moez, 2010), and have a very wide sphere of influence on other institutions and economic, social, cultural, and political sectors of society. One of the main tasks of higher education is to grow students by increasing their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities, and rehabilitating them as constantly critical and thoughtful learners. This goal will be achieved when the higher education system is research-based (Taqvaei Yazdi, Hosseini Tabaqdehi, 2014).

Universities and educational centers of the country, as social institutions, play a major role and contribution in the production of scientific and technical information. (Godarzi, Sohofi, 2010). The efficiency of the university depends on the excellence and improvement of theses and dissertations and the performance of academic research to respond to the problems of society. Theses and dissertations are among the valuable academic information achievements in any field.

Thematic review of theses in each field in a specific period of time draws a picture of research activities in the field under study. Since these are valuable sources of information, it seems necessary to be aware of their content and identify their thematic trends (Azaranfar, 2006). Also, examining the contents of these information sources and examining their thematic trends can familiarize each reader to some extent with the mindset, taste, and intellectual direction of students and provide guidance for proper planning in the future. Research related to any field should have appropriate coverage of the various issues in that field. Ignoring or forgetting some topics and paying only attention to specific topics may lead to the loss of a country's research capital. After four decades of conducting a doctoral program in the field of philosophy of education in Iran and compiling a volume of theses, it seems that the time has come to examine it from a thematic perspective.

Awareness of the current situation of what is happening in the field of scientific and research topics in universities can provide an enlightening picture in this field. In addition, it prevents the repetition of previous research and is valuable as a reference for future studies. The scientific progress of any country relies on the research of its researchers. The greater the quantity and quality of a country's research, the higher its scientific rank and degree. These are considered a valuable type of scientific research that, due to their nature and specific characteristics, play an important role in the scientific progress of any society. Giving importance to the subject of research in policymaking of any country plays a critical and fundamental role in the development process. Among the research that helps us achieve this goal are theses and doctoral theses (Tarkashvand, 2015). The present study aims to examine the thematic developments of doctoral theses in the philosophy of education in the past three decades, seeking to answer the question of what topics have attracted the most attention of researchers and whether there have been changes in thematic priorities over time? The results of this study can help researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the field of education to better understand the trend of research developments, determine research priorities, and help improve the quality of research.

- What was the contribution of each state university in the production of theses?
- What is the topic of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education in the past three decades?
- What is the frequency distribution of thematic trends in the theses?

Methodology

This research is applied in terms of its purpose and qualitative in terms of data collection. To examine the topics of the theses, a qualitative content analysis method with an inductive approach was used. (Tabrizi 2014). To answer the research questions, a systematic study and record-keeping method of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education was used. With this tool, 245 theses were studied, which were analyzed based on the statement of the problem, objectives, questions, and research findings of each thesis. The statistical population of the research included all doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education in public universities in the past three decades (1991 to 2010). In The present study used all available dissertations.

To analyze the answer to the research question, MAXQDA software was used, because this software allows organizing, coding, and identifying hidden patterns in research texts. Using this software, the researcher has conducted open coding and categorization of topics based on the purpose, questions, and results of the dissertations. First, open coding was performed to extract primary categories. Then, similar categories were classified into more general categories (axial coding). Finally, the

main thematic patterns and the relationships between them were identified, extracted, and analyzed. To increase the validity of the findings, coding was performed by two independent researchers and the results

Findings

Were compared to reduce bias

The contribution of each state university in the production of dissertations:

In the seventies, Tarbiat Modares University accounted for the most dissertations with 58 percent, followed by Kharazmi University and the University of Tehran with two dissertations. Of course, in this decade, the field of philosophy of education emerged as a new field.

In the 1980s, the field of philosophy of education expanded to more universities.

In the 1990s, the field of philosophy of education grew significantly and expanded to different cities.

□ **Topics of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education in three decades:**

□ **Topics of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education in the 1970s:**

The number of theses written in the field of philosophy of education in the 1970s was seventeen. In order to categorize and analyze the topics of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education in the 1970s, the researcher divided the topics into several key categories based on the main themes and specialized areas that each of the theses addressed. As can be seen from this chart, in this decade, the main focus of doctoral theses was on theoretical topics such as educational theories and philosophical schools. The small number of these theses is due to the nascent nature of the field of philosophy of education in the country's universities and the limited research facilities.

□ **Topics of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education in the 1980s:**

In the 1980s, there were 63 theses. To categorize and analyze the topics of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education, the researcher categorized the theses based on their common characteristics and areas of expertise. In the 1980s, the diversity of the topics of the theses increased, and topics such as literature and philosophy of education and philosophy for children were considered for the first time. Of course, theoretical topics such as educational theories and philosophical schools continued to be of interest and constituted a major part of the research.

□ **Topics of doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education in the 1990s:**

The 1990s witnessed greater diversity in topics. The introduction of new topics such as the evolution of the fundamental document, technology, educational justice, etc. shows that educational research has moved towards expansion and progress in specialized and interdisciplinary fields. This growth reflects the scientific community's response to technological and social changes. Of course, topics such as philosophical foundations, educational theories, and educational schools still have an important position and have experienced significant growth. The expansion of topics such as Islamic and Iranian education, as well as religious and spiritual education, indicates the importance of reviewing indigenous and religious values in education. In the 1990s, the topics of theses focused more on practical issues such as curriculum, teaching and learning, and technology. These changes reflect the need for society to solve practical problems and adapt the educational system to current needs.

Conclusion

An analysis of three decades of research on doctoral theses in the field of philosophy of education shows that the Iranian scientific community has changed direction significantly in this field. In the 1970s, the focus of research was mainly on theoretical and conceptual issues such as educational theories and philosophical schools. As time passed and we entered the 1980s and 1990s, we witnessed a major transformation that focused more attention on practical and contemporary issues. In these decades, topics such as educational justice, new technologies, and indigenous issues became among the most important research topics in the field of philosophy of education. This trend reflects an effort to respond to emerging challenges and social developments, and in particular, it indicates an increase in the Iranian scientific community's desire for research related to real needs and current issues. Although the trend of changes towards updating and adapting to the needs of society is evaluated positively, there is still a need for strategic planning in the field of research. In particular, some areas such as multicultural education, professional ethics, and comparative studies, despite their high importance, have received less attention during these

three decades. This may be due to the lack of sufficient resources, implementation challenges, or methodological complexities in interdisciplinary research.

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