

Chapter 9

Higher Education Research in South Korea: Research Themes and Methodologies in National Journals

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Abstract This chapter explores the development of higher education research in South Korea (Korea, henceforth) from international and national perspectives. It first presents a brief historical background of higher education research in Korea in terms of academic programs, related associations, and specialized journals. The chapter points out the limited international engagement of the higher education research community in Korea and particularly focuses on the analysis of higher education research publications in national journals in terms of research themes, methodologies, and levels of analysis. The results show that higher education research in Korea has been heavily focused on policy studies at the national level and some student issues at the individual level. Moreover, research has mostly been based on quantitative methodological approaches and document analysis. The study suggests that higher education research in Korea needs to be more internationally engaged and more diversified in terms of research themes and methodologies.

Introduction

Higher education research is widely regarded as a subdiscipline of education rather than an independent field of study, and it is object-focused based on a broad range of disciplines (Altbach et al. 2006; Teichler 1996). Higher education research has normally progressed when the system expands (Jones 2012) as it needs more structured information gathering and a broader academic lens to interpret certain phenomena and provide practical advices (Altbach et al. 2006). For this reason, there is a huge difference in the development of higher education research between regions depending on the maturity of their higher education systems. Some countries, such as the USA, have accumulated numerous documents for higher education research at the national and institutional levels, and they also have advanced academic programs at

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the master's and doctoral levels (Altbach et al. 2006). Europe also has a relatively long history of higher education research although its focus is somewhat different from that in the USA (Tight 2008; Teichler 1996).

On the other hand, interest in higher education research in Asia only started very recently. Despite the rapid growth of higher education in Asia (Marginson 2011), its research community has had limited scope and audiences. Although some researchers, including Arimoto (2000) and Chen and Hu (2012), have examined the development of higher education research in Japan and China, these studies were not sufficiently conducted in other Asian higher education systems. Recently, some researchers such as Jung and Horta (2013, 2015) conducted an analysis of higher education research in Asia based on international publications and collaboration patterns, and they found that international publications in the higher education field among Asian authors were very limited and relied on collaboration with authors from English-speaking countries. Their studies are meaningful in that they shed light on the evolution of higher education research in Asia. However, their approach was limited since they only focused on international publications with a lack of understanding of the local context. As Marfarlane and Grant (2012) pointed out, understanding the development of higher education research cannot be done without reference to national systems. In fact, some East Asian countries have a long history in their national higher education research communities.

This chapter explores the development of higher education research in South Korea (Korea, henceforth). The Korean higher education system has grown rapidly during the last 60 years in terms not only of size and scale but also of quality. With the development of higher education, the higher education research also has become specialized and professionalized (Jung 2015). In this context, the chapter first briefly examines the historical background of higher education research in Korea in terms of academic programs, related associations, and specialized journals. The study also points out the limited international engagement of the higher education research community in Korea. The chapter particularly focuses on the analysis of higher education research publications in national journals in terms of research themes, methodologies, and levels of analysis.

From the 1960s to the 2010s

Higher education research in Korea began in the late 1960s, but the research agendas have mostly been driven by the government rather than by the academic community. Jung (2015) presented the initial organizations for higher education research in Korea at the government level, such as the Division of Higher Education Committee supervised by the Educational Policy Department, Ministry of Education (formed in 1968), the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) (formed in 1972), the Korean Council for University Education (KCUE) (formed in 1982), and the Korean Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET) (formed in 1996). These institutes are fully or partially supported by the government in terms

of funding resources, and due to the nature of the sources of funding, they have mostly conducted policy-oriented research and focused on publishing policy reports rather than academic journals. As other higher education systems have already experienced, the main functions of these institutions are to consult and support central and local governments on higher education issues (Chen and Hu 2012). For example, with the 5.31 Education Reform in 1995, the Korean government announced several higher education reform policies including quality assurance and a university evaluation system, an academic promotion system, and the restructuring of several legal issues. Since then, higher education research has been highly active, focusing on the main policy reform issues from an academic perspective. This developmental process is similar to what happened in education research in different contexts. For example, as Hofstetter (2012) pointed out, education research becomes highly active and socially engaged when there is a need to respond to certain social and professional demands.

Higher education research in Korea is relatively new and underdeveloped but an emerging field (Jung 2015). It is difficult to define higher education research as an independent academic field in Korea as it still has a limited number of specialized academic programs and academic appointments. It also has a limited number of national scholarly associations and the emergence of core journals, which are the requirements of a new academic field (Bayer 1983; Blackwell and Blackmore 2003; Jones 2012). First of all, having an academic program matters as a response to demands for specialized knowledge and skills (Jones 2012). Jung and Horta (2013) have already pointed out the challenges to higher education research in East Asia, and these challenges are mostly related to the small number of academic programs specializing only in higher education. Exceptionally, China has 10 PhD and 60 master's higher education programs (Li 2005), and Japan has a few programs, but other countries in Asia have a very limited number of degree programs. Most universities do not have higher education programs at the postgraduate level. Although some colleges of education provide a small number of higher education-related curricula, they are mostly subprograms under the educational administration or lifelong education. Only three university research institutes exist that focus on higher education research in Korea (Rumbley et al. 2014), and other research institutes conduct higher education research partly when they focus on education research in general. Most education issues are related to primary and secondary schools, while higher education has been mostly ignored by researchers in the field of education, as Altbach et al. (2006) pointed out. Despite the small number of academic programs specializing in higher education, it is promising that more academics are specializing in higher education in recent years. A few major research universities in Korea, including Seoul National University, Korea University, Yonsei University, and Sungkyunkwan University, have recruited academics specializing in higher education, and they have been actively engaged in higher education nationally and internationally.

It is believed that having a core journal is essential to build a field of study (Bayer 1983), but there is no academic journal exclusively focusing on higher education research in Korea. Instead, researchers publish their articles in education journals such as *Educational Administration*, the *Journal of Economics and Finance of*

Education, and *Educational Sociology* (Shin et al. 2008; Byun 2009; Kim et al. 2010). Higher education researchers in Korea have a scholarly association, which is called the Korean Society for the Study of Higher Education Policy and was formed in 1988; however, most members in the association overlap with the Korean Educational Administration Society instead of being exclusively affiliated with the higher education association. Moore's (1989) comment, "higher education is a sister field of educational administration," is still employed in the Korean context.

International Perspective

The increased interest in the research community based on a common identity complements the development of higher education itself (Teichler 1996). In this process, engaging an international higher education research community is critical as several higher education systems share similar challenging issues regionally and globally, and they require mutual understanding to resolve issues (Jung and Horta 2013). However, higher education research in Asian countries has been nationally oriented for several decades (Arimoto 2000), and several scholars including Chen and Hu (2012) argue that more efforts are needed to strengthen the Asian higher education research community at the international level.

Higher education research in Korea is particularly less active in the international community. According to Jung and Horta's (2013) research, which compared the number of publication in international higher education journals among Asia countries, Korea is ranked eighth. Authors affiliated with Korean institutions published only 25 articles in higher education-specialized journals from 1980 to 2012. Compared to the scale (i.e., high enrollment rate) of higher education in Korea, this is somewhat disappointing. For example, academics in a small-scale higher education system like Hong Kong produced five times as many articles in international journals during the same period. The results show the underrepresentation of Korean-based authors in international journals, and it is also presents a continuing national focus trend in higher education research in Korea. As Chen and Hu (2012) have already pointed out in the Chinese context, international higher education research in Asia is still limited since it is very much based on individual networks, foreign visitors, translations of classic works, and returning scholars educated overseas.

Jung and Horta (2013) also compared coauthorship patterns of each country to see the collaboration trend of higher education research in Asia. Authors in Korea rely heavily on international coauthorship when they publish articles in international journals. On other hand, the number of articles based on domestic collaboration is very unusual. For example, there have been 12 coauthored articles between Korean authors and international authors, but there have been only 2 articles between Korean authors. Interestingly, those 12 articles were all written with US-based coauthors, which indicates that collaboration with authors from Asian regions or other European countries is very rare. In the following analysis conducted by Jung and Horta (2015), which included a broad range of journals, not only higher

education-specialized journals but also social science journals, the result shows a similar trend. Of the coauthored articles related to higher education, 69% are coauthored by peers based abroad. In addition, Korea is the country with the lowest collaboration with other Asian countries in higher education research; instead, it relies overly on collaboration with US authors on issues that are of interest. Researchers attribute these results to the fact that the majority of academics in social science and education in Korea were trained in the USA for their PhDs, and their influence remains when they return to Korea and conduct their research, in terms not only of individual networks for coauthorship but also of the theoretical and methodological frameworks that they apply.

With these developmental trends, Jung (2015) discusses the challenges in balancing national and international perspectives in higher education research in Korea. Although higher education research in Korea has developed rapidly during the past three decades in terms of diverse themes and methodologies, its drivers have been focused on national peer-reviewed journals, and two academic communities at the national and international level are separately employing different participants and strategies.

Journals: Where Is Higher Education Research Being Published?

To explore the main research themes and methodologies in Korean higher education research, this study selected key national journals in the field of education. Since there is no independent journal specializing only in higher education, the study selected journals that include higher education research most frequently. Although a number of journals include higher education research themes, this study selected 16 journals based on Jung (2015)'s classification. They are all peer-reviewed journals and registered in the Korean National Research Foundation. As Table 9.1 indicates, a number of journals are highly active in publishing articles in the field of education, and the total number of such articles from 1995 to 2012 was 7956. Among these 7956 articles, 1385 articles are related to higher education, with an average of 17.4% of the content of each journal related to higher education. There are differences between journals in terms of the proportion of higher education research. For example, 27.4% of the content of *The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education* is related to *higher education research*, while only 10.2% of the content of *The Journal of Educational Evaluation* concerns higher education-related issues. Despite the differences between journals, it is common that the number of higher education-related articles from all journals has increased in recent years. This study selected four main journals based on a reasonable number of articles for analysis and online accessibility: the *Korean Journal of Educational Administration*, *The Journal of Career Educational Research*, the *Korean Journal of Comparative Education*, and *The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education*.

Table 9.1 Number of articles in higher education

Journal	Total number of articles in 1995–2012	Number of articles with higher education themes	Percent(%) of higher education research in a journal
<i>Korean Journal of Educational Administration</i>	1057	219	20.7
<i>The Journal of Career Educational Research</i>	502	132	26.3
<i>Korean Journal of Comparative Education</i>	490	124	25.3
<i>The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education</i>	420	115	27.4
<i>The Journal of Vocational Education Research</i>	543	103	19.0
<i>Korean Journal of Educational Research</i>	768	96	12.5
<i>The Journal of Korean Education</i>	592	91	15.4
<i>Asian Journal of Education</i>	441	85	19.3
<i>The Journal of Educational Information and Media</i>	419	68	16.2
<i>Journal of Educational Technology</i>	556	60	10.8
<i>The Journal of Law in Education</i>	294	58	19.7
<i>Korean Journal of Sociology of Education</i>	462	55	11.9
<i>The Journal of Educational Evaluation</i>	527	54	10.2
<i>Journal of Vocational Education & Training</i>	255	44	17.3
<i>The Korean Educational Review</i>	330	41	12.4
<i>The Journal of Research in Education</i>	300	40	13.3
Total	7956	1385	17.4

Themes: What Areas of Higher Education Have or Have Not Been Researched?

This study followed Tight's (2004, 2012) eight categories to examine main research themes in higher education and added one new research theme, internationalization. The nine themes are related to the following issues:

- Teaching and learning: student learning, different kinds of students, teaching in higher education, the “how to” genre
- Course design: the higher education curriculum, technologies for learning, student writing, assessment, postgraduate course design

- Student experience: accessing higher education, the on-course experience, success and non-completion, the postgraduate experience, the experience of different student groups, the transition from higher education to work
- Quality: course evaluation, grading and outcomes, national monitoring practices, league tables, system standards
- System policy: the policy context, national policies, comparative policy studies, historical policy studies, funding relationships
- Institutional management: higher education management practice, institutional leadership and governance, institutional development and history, institutional structure, economies of scale and institutional mergers, relations between higher education, industry, and community
- Academics: academic roles, academic development, academic careers, women and minority ethnic academics, the changing nature of academic work, academic work in different countries, nonacademic work
- Knowledge: the nature of research, disciplinarity, forms of knowledge, the nature of the university
- Internationalization

As Table 9.2 shows, research themes are very diverse in higher education although some research themes are much more popular than others. Articles about system policy are the most frequently published in educational journals (32.8%) even if we consider certain differences in the focus of journals. For example, *The Journal of Career Educational Research* is highly specialized in student issues (80.0%), while policy issues are less regarded in general. On the other hand, it is

Table 9.2 Research themes in higher education

	<i>Korean Journal of Educational Administration</i>	<i>The Journal of Career Educational Research</i>	<i>Korean Journal of Comparative Education</i>	<i>The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education</i>	Total
Teaching and learning	5 (2.3)	–	–	–	8 (1.4)
Course design	13 (5.9)	18 (13.8)	18 (14.5)	1 (0.9)	51 (8.6)
Student experience	28 (12.8)	104 (80.0)	5 (4.8)	33 (28.7)	170 (28.8)
Quality	30 (13.7)	2 (1.5)	31 (25.0)	10 (8.7)	73 (12.4)
System policy	83 (37.9)	2 (1.5)	45 (36.3)	64 (55.7)	194 (32.8)
Institutional management	39 (17.8)	2 (1.5)	6 (4.8)	6 (5.2)	53 (9.0)
Academics	17 (7.8)	1 (0.8)	9 (7.3)	–	27 (4.6)
Knowledge	3 (1.4)	1 (0.8)	–	–	4 (0.7)
Internationalization	1 (0.5)	–	9 (7.3)	1 (0.9)	11 (1.9)
Total	219 (100.0)	130 (100.0)	124 (100.0)	115 (100.0)	591 (100.0)

clear that policy issues are the most popular ones in several key journals such as *The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education* (55.7%), the *Korean Journal of Educational Administration*, and the *Korean Journal of Comparative Education* (36.3). Student issues are also frequently published in several journals including the *Journal of Career Educational Research*, *The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education* (28.7%) and the *Korean Journal of Educational Administration* (12.8%). Student issues are less common in the *Korean Journal of Comparative Education* since a comparative perspective is more useful in discussing macro-level issues including policies rather than individual student matters. On the other hand, specific themes such as quality and internationalization (7.3%) are relatively important in the *Korean Journal of Comparative Education* (25%) as the concept itself has been initialized in the global context, and authors have interpreted issues from a comparative education perspective. Topics regarding institutional management are the most frequently published in the *Korean Journal of Educational Administration* (17.8%). Course design topics appear in some journals such as *The Journal of Career Educational Research* (13.8%) and the *Korean Journal of Comparative Education* (14.5%), while they are less regarded in different journals. Other topics such as teaching and learning, academics, and knowledge are not common in selected journals, and they are explored less frequently.

Although the nine research themes well describe in general what has or what has not been researched in higher education, it was difficult to see what specific issues were studied. Therefore, the study elaborated research themes based on subthemes, as Table 9.3 demonstrates. For example, topics regarding teaching and learning deal very little with learning experience, learning community, and teaching and learning competency. On the other hand, there are various other topics regarding course design, and many of them include case studies such as implementations of new courses. Some curriculum issues such as curriculum for freshmen, postgraduate education, teacher education, online learning, and general education are also important in course design. It was expected that there would be a lot of different issues regarding students' experience; however, the results showed that some topics are dominant in student issues. For instance, employment issues such as job search and job performance are regarded as extremely important, and other issues including access, admission, or student loan are also commonly studied. The issue of quality is mostly defined with a few dimensions such as university evaluation, program evaluation, organizational effectiveness, and quality assurance. The system policy theme includes several subtopics, with reform policy, finance, tuition and scholarship, legal action, and marketization being well-developed research areas. In addition, when the government implements new policy programs, several articles are published to analyze the effectiveness of those programs. The theme of institutional management is intensively discussed in the *Korean Journal of Educational Administration*, and several topics have been discussed in the journal such as governance and culture, funding management, autonomy, student recruitment, leadership and presidency, and university social services. Regarding the theme of academics, most articles focus on the human resource management perspective such as recruitment, salary, promotion, evaluation, and related legal issues rather than on academ-

Table 9.3 Research topics in higher education

	<i>Korean Journal of Educational Administration</i>	<i>The Journal of Career Educational Research</i>	<i>Korean Journal of Comparative Education</i>	<i>The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education</i>
Teaching and learning	Learning experience (1)	Learning experience (1)		
	Learning community (1)			
	Learning competency (2)			
	Teaching competency (1)			
Course design	Implementation of new courses (3)	Implementation of new courses (3)	Implementation of new courses (7)	Implementation of new courses (1)
	Teacher education (2)	Programs for freshmen (1)	Teacher education (1)	
	Programs for freshmen (2)	Curriculum design (1)	Programs for freshmen (1)	
	General education (1)	Career development program (13)	General education (5)	
	Postgraduate education (2)		Credit system (1)	
	Credit system (1)		Curriculum design (3)	
	Online learning (1)			
	Course satisfaction (1)			
	Access, enrollment, and dropout (6)	Access, enrollment, and dropout (3)	Self-esteem (1)	Access, enrollment, and dropout (4)
	Student loan (2)	Extracurricular activities (1)	Academic achievement (1)	Student loan (6)
Student experience	Academic achievement (5)	Job search (20)	Admission (2)	Academic achievement (2)
	Extracurricular activities (1)	Job performance (2)	Job search (1)	Extracurricular activities (1)
	Admission (4)	Gender (2)	Diverse background of learner (1)	Private tutoring (9)
	Job search (3)	Career development (74)		Admission (1)
	Job performance (5)	Cognitive development (2)		Job performance (10)
	Graduation requirement (1)			
	Student mobility (1)			

(continued)

Table 9.3 (continued)

	<i>Korean Journal of Educational Administration</i>	<i>The Journal of Career Educational Research</i>	<i>Korean Journal of Comparative Education</i>	<i>The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education</i>
Quality	University evaluation (17) Quality assurance (3) Organizational effectiveness (2)	Program evaluation (1) Quality assurance (1)	University evaluation (19) Quality assurance (10) Organizational effectiveness (1)	University evaluation (1) Quality assurance (2) Organizational effectiveness (5)
System policy	Course evaluation (8) University reform (17) Market (2) Finance (7) Public vs. private university (7) Policy for local university (2) Admission policy (11) Tuition and scholarship (8) New institutions (7) New policy programs (12) Degree awarding system (3) Science and research policy (3) Legal issues (4)	Admission policy (2)	Quality of teaching (1) University reform (24) Market (2) Finance (4) Admission policy (13) Tuition and scholarship (1) New institutions (1)	Program evaluation (2) University reform (1) Market (1) Finance (23) Public vs. private university (6) Policy for local university (2) Community college (3) Admission policy (1) Tuition and scholarship (19) New policy programs (5) Science and research policy (2) Legal issues (1)

Institutional management	Funding management (5)	Student recruitment (1)	Managing new institution (2)	Funding management (4)
	Governance (4)	University-industry collaboration (1)	Institutional autonomy (1)	Student recruitment (2)
	Managing new institution (2)		Student recruitment (1)	
	Institutional autonomy (6)		Program management (2)	
	Program management (2)			
	Student recruitment (2)			
	Administrative staff development (4)			
	University leadership and presidency (6)			
	Alumni (1)			
	Culture (1)			
Environment (2)				
Social service (3)				
University-high school collaboration (1)				
Academics	Academic recruitment (7)	Human resource management (1)	Academic recruitment (4)	
	Evaluation: promotion and tenure (4)		Evaluation: promotion and tenure (1)	
	Research productivity (2)		Salary (1)	
	Teaching activities (1)		Gender (1)	
	Academic freedom (1)		Professional development (1)	
	Patent (1)		Human resource management (1)	
	Legal right (1)			
Knowledge	Research trend (1)	Research trend (1)		
	Academic capitalism (1)			
Internationalization	Mobility program (1)	Foreign students (1)	Foreign students (1)	Internationalization policy (1)
			International exchange program (1)	
			Internationalization policy (7)	

ics' daily activities. There is a lack of research on knowledge issues in general. The internationalization theme focuses on foreign students' experience or government policy for internationalization strategy.

Methodologies: How Has Higher Education Been Researched?

This study also examined the research methodologies that were used in selected publications following Tight's (2004, 2012) classification. Those methodologies are as follows (see Tight 2012 for more details):

- Case study: practices in specific departments or institutions (as described by authors)
- Action research: small-scale, evaluative case studies, which mainly examine the application of innovative practice or policy within a course, department or institution
- Ethnography: the study of people in their natural settings (i.e., examining the lives of academics and students within universities)
- Document analysis: most studies include documentary analysis, but this indicates text analysis no further than a reference to the existing research or policy literature on the topic (i.e., historical studies, literate reviews)
- Interviews: asking people questions and listening to their responses (i.e., structured, semi-structured, unstructured, conversational, depth, individual, group or focus)
- Multivariate: quantitative in nature, based on questionnaires offering multiple-choice answers
- Critical: taking a critical perspective on the issues, seeking solutions
- Conceptual: concerned with ideas and their contested meanings
- Auto-/biographical: qualitative in nature, focusing on individual experience

As Table 9.4 indicates, multivariate studies were the most common analytical method in some journals, in particular, studies about students' careers and the financing of higher education frequently apply quantitative research methods. In other journals such as the *Korean Journal of Educational Administration* and the *Korean Journal of Comparative Education* employ document analysis and conceptual analysis in many studies. The results are consistent with previous studies in different contexts. Volkwein et al. (1988) showed that multivariate studies based on survey or secondary data sources are the most common method of analysis in higher education research, and other methods including descriptive policy critiques and small-scale, evaluative case studies are also common (Hayden and Parry 1997; Tight 2003). Tight (2011) pointed out that there is a lack of diverse methodological approaches to higher education research, and new methods need to be introduced, including auto/biographical and observational studies. For a long time, higher education research in Korea has relied on documentary analysis, and authors have focused on introducing policy documents from government or secondary documents from other countries' cases; however, empirical analysis has been increasing in recent (Jung 2015).

Table 9.4 Research methodologies in higher education

	<i>Korean Journal of Educational Administration</i>	<i>The Journal of Career Educational Research</i>	<i>Korean Journal of Comparative Education</i>	<i>The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education</i>	Total
Action research	11 (5.0)	8 (6.1)	–	3 (2.6)	22 (3.7)
Biography	1 (0.5)	1 (0.8)	–	–	2 (0.3)
Case study	14 (6.4)	–	6 (4.8)	3 (2.6)	23 (3.9)
Conceptual	24 (11.0)	–	1 (0.8)	2 (1.7)	27 (4.6)
Critical	19 (8.7)	–	1 (0.8)	9 (7.8)	29 (4.9)
Documentary	78 (35.6)	10 (7.6)	112 (90.3)	33 (28.7)	233 (39.5)
Ethnography	–	–	–	–	–
Interview	5 (2.3)	4 (3.0)	1 (0.8)	–	10 (1.7)
Multivariate	65 (29.7)	108 (81.8)	3 (2.4)	65 (56.5)	241 (40.8)
Scientometrics/bibliographic	2 (0.9)	1 (0.8)	–	–	3 (0.5)
Total	219 (100.0)	132 (100.0)	124 (100.0)	115 (100.0)	590 (100.0)

Table 9.5 Level of analysis in higher education research

	<i>Korean Journal of Educational Administration</i>	<i>The Journal of Career Educational Research</i>	<i>Korean Journal of Comparative Education</i>	<i>The Journal of Economics and Finance of Education</i>	Total
Individual	45 (20.5)	100 (75.8)	4 (3.2)	32 (27.8)	181 (30.7)
Course	9 (4.1)	20 (15.2)	16 (12.9)	1 (0.9)	46 (7.8)
Department	5 (2.3)	–	2 (1.6)	–	7 (1.2)
Discipline	3 (1.4)	1 (0.8)	–	–	4 (0.7)
Institution	67 (30.6)	9 (6.8)	29 (23.4)	28 (24.3)	133 (22.5)
Policy (program)	20 (9.1)	2 (1.5)	17 (13.7)	18 (15.7)	57 (9.7)
Region	6 (2.7)	–	–	3 (2.6)	9 (1.5)
Nation	61 (27.9)	–	46 (37.1)	32 (27.8)	139 (23.6)
International	3 (1.4)	–	10 (8.1)	1 (0.9)	14 (2.4)
Total	219 (100.0)	132 (100.0)	124 (100.0)	115 (100.0)	590 (100.0)

Research methodologies are also related to the limited levels of analysis. The majority of the analyses focused on either the individual or the national policy level, as shown in Table 9.5. For example, in the *Korean Journal of Educational Administration*, 20.5% of the studies were at the individual level, while 27.9% were at the national level. Studies at the individual level were also common in the *Journal of Career Educational Research* (75.8%) and in the *Journal of Economics and Finance of Education* (27.8%), and they mostly focused on student issues. Studies at the national level were also popular in the *Korean Journal of Comparative Education* (37.1%) and the *Journal of Economics and Finance of Education* (27.8%). The results show the lack of a multilevel approach in higher education research, which suggests the need for research on a variety of issues at different levels such as department and regional levels.

Conclusion: Issues and Challenges

Higher education research in Korea has progressed significantly during the last two or three decades in terms of the number of publications; however, engagement with the international community is still limited. Only a few academics publish their research in international journals, with most academics preferring to publish their research in national journals. Although we note the difficulties that non-English-speaking authors have in publishing their articles in international journals (Kwan 2013), there is value to be had in engaging with the international research community to share research ideas and findings in a global context. As higher education has

become globally important and shares common issues across higher education systems, involvement in the international research community offers new chances for academics to have access to new, international research networks of scholars and to disseminate knowledge in the broader research community. This will eventually contribute to the development of policy and practices that might be locally available (Jones 2012).

As Jones (2000) mentioned, a higher education research community emerges during a time when the system has expanded. Higher education research in Korea has also increased in terms of the number of publications, especially in national journals, in line with the expansion of higher education, and it is important to maintain national roots and engage in a national research dialogue. However, even if many educational journals include higher education topics in national education journals and its coverage has increased, the themes and methodologies are still limited. One main finding of this analysis is that policy issues are dominant themes in journals, and most of them are highly contextualized national agendas such as reform policy, new funding schemes, new legal actions, and admission policies including entrance exam issues. Even if we consider the nature of higher education research with an emphasis on social relevance (Teichler 1996), research themes need to be diversified.

A second finding is that some research themes at the individual level, such as academics and students, are also excessively related to the policy dimension to policy dimensions. For example, research on academics mainly concerns personnel policy such as recruitment, evaluation, salary, or legal issues of adjunct academics, and there is a lack of studies about culture, values, ideas, and practices among academics. Regarding student issues, many articles focus on employment problems or admission policy rather than on students' lives at university. In addition, many studies focus on institutionalization rather than practice (Jung 2015). For example, studies on institutional leadership describe the process and regulations for presidency selection rather than the impact of leadership on university culture or governance. A lot of studies on quality focus on indicators and methodologies for evaluation rather than on what the real changes are caused by these evaluation policies (Jung 2015).

Third, there are also many comparative studies in Korean national journals. In general, comparative research is supposed to involve internationally collaborative articles (Kosmutzky & Krucken 2014). However, in Korea, comparative studies are mainly based on existing document analysis without any collaboration with international academics or field research. In many cases, they are simply translations or summaries of policy reports and literature from secondary documents in other languages. This is consistent with the concerns of Teichler (1996), who stated that comparative study often tends to provide sketchy, incomplete knowledge, with a lack of theoretical and methodological rigor despite the growth of its popularity with more accessible information.

Regarding research methodology, although there have been more empirical studies since 2000, the majority of papers are still prescriptive in nature, providing implications for national policies and their implementation, and many of them are based on reviews of the literature including policy reports.

In conclusion, there is still not enough *critical mass* (Jones 2012, p. 711) in higher education research in Korea. Having critical mass is important for moving the field forward as it requires a larger number of core members working on research and a greater investment in research infrastructure. There also needs to be more integration and collaboration between academics from diverse disciplines, and more attention needs to be paid to graduate education to train higher education experts. The results also suggest that higher education researchers in Korea need to be more engaged in the international academic community, applying their research to international discourses. Having diverse perspectives and various actors in research design and the interpretation of findings is important for higher education research (Teichler 1996).

There is no doubt that higher education research has become important both globally and nationally. Higher education research is expected to have a substantive academic growth, and it is also important to have roots in the research imperative and the dynamics of disciplines (Clark 1996). It is also important to realize “what really matters is whether a piece of research is based on sound methods, has something interesting or useful to say and has been properly peer reviewed before publication” (Macfarlane 2011, p. 127).

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