

## 2.2. New training and professional development models

### SP - (18681) - RESEARCH METHODS IN ADVANCED STUDIES IN EDUCATION: TRENDS AND PITFALLS

André Freitas (Portugal)<sup>1</sup>; João Piedade (Portugal)<sup>2</sup>; Elsa Estrela (Portugal)<sup>1</sup>; João Filipe Matos (Portugal)<sup>1</sup>

1 - Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias; 2 - Instituto de Educação Universidade de Lisboa

#### Short Abstract

According to OECD (2017) reports, there has been a shift across most countries to de-centralise decision-making in education, giving more responsibility and mandating to local authorities. Given greater information, less quality control, a more informed public, and a greater diversity of policy makers, the role of research for evidence-informed policy in education becomes newly important. In Portugal, research in education is mainly carried out by academics in higher education institutions where research methods courses are included in the study plans in a variety of Master and Doctoral programs.

It is non-controversial that a solid preparation on research methods provides important knowledge and skills to undertake better research and thus significantly contribute to the educational community. Quality teaching in research methods requires developing a clear understanding of the complex relationships between the explicit syllabus guidelines of the courses, the previous competences of students, and the pedagogical options (e.g. Groessler, 2017). It is a great challenge to teach research methods in education as the target population of students usually come with different prior knowledge and has diverse interests and expectations.

In a survey study, Aguado (2009) concluded that in a significant number of research methods courses emphasis is placed on data collection, using statistical or other software and writing up results, thus missing the whole point of doing research. The key issue is that research in education is not to be conceived, primarily, as a sequence of stages, nor as a collection of skills and techniques, nor as a set of rules, though it entails all of those. First and foremost, research in education should be understood as a continuous application of particularly coherent, systematic and reflexive ways of questioning - a mode of interrogation (Dowling & Brown, 2010).

It is possible that research methods courses are not adequately providing students with the needed background and analytic skills they need to formulate research problems in education and deal with its complexity in order to make adequate methodological options (e.g. Nind et al., 2020). This issue calls for a research-based approach and debate about what makes quality research methods courses.

Project ReMASE - Research Methods in Advanced Studies in Education<sup>(1)</sup> aims to understand how master and doctoral programs in education in Portugal address and organize students' preparation in research methods. For this purpose, a survey of the national master and doctoral programs in education will be providing the raw data to be analysed with the framework categories that are being identified from the scooping literature review. The detailed analysis of the research methods courses and their learning objectives, themes, working methods, assessment strategies, etc. will allow the identification of trends and pitfalls thus providing research-based principles and guidelines for the design of research methods courses in education.

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