

Propelling High-quality Development of Education: The Promotive Role of Educational Research

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“Do not wait for extraordinary circumstances to do good action; try to use ordinary situations.”

–Jean-Paul Richter

EDUCATION, by common consent, is a sophisticated endeavor. As human society advances, people impose increasingly high standards for the quality of education. Educational research has been instrumental in driving educational development and optimizing the function of education. In its broad sense, educational research spans investigations, observations, experiments, systematic discourse and comparative analyses of all phenomena, issues, technologies, strategies, and paradigms arising in the field of education as well as cross-disciplinary studies that relate to education. In its narrow sense, educational research is mainly concerned with education and teaching activities at all levels of schooling (Wang, 1999).

The rise of educational research worldwide was since the turn of the 20th century. In Europe, for example, Sweden established its educational research and development bureau in 1926; England and Welsh set up the national educational research foundation in 1947; France established its national education research institute in the 1960s; Spain built its national educational research center in 1969 (Gretler, 2007). In the United States, the Congress enacted the “2000 Goals: American Education Act” in 1994, which stipulated in Article 9 that the Department of Education establish the Office of Educational Research and Improvement to strengthen the management, popularization, and funding of educational research in primary and secondary schools; to provide educational research training programs; and to improve the quality of teaching in public schools to reach national education goals (Heise, 1994). Japan’s Educational Employees Special Law provides that educational personnel have the responsibility to constantly undertake educational research to enhance their professional competence. All types of educational research agencies have been set up in and out of schools in Japan, including the National Institute for Educational Policy Research (Dong, 2005).

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In the meantime, chief international organizations have also engaged heavily in educational research to reach thorough understanding of the status quo of global education, provide specific advice to nations around the world, and formulate strategies to coordinate and promote the development of education in various countries. These international organizations include the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Council, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, among others, having played a significant role in the research and formulation of education policies for the global community (Huang, 2011)

Teacher professional development necessitates organizational support as well as personal endeavor. According to Thomas et al. (1998), contemporary teacher education places a greater value on the “learning community” than on individualistic effort. Teachers should see peer support as an important resource for personal career development and seek to broaden professional horizons through collegial interaction. Education and teaching research provide teachers with opportunities to continuously upgrade their professional competence in a learning community and consequently, enhance the quality of education.

Each country’s educational research system has its own national characteristics, varying in the scale, components, and structure. It has typically gone through basic processes such as initiation, development (localization), and institutionalization. As a country with the largest-scale basic education system and biggest number of teachers in the world, it is particularly important for China to build an educational research system that suits its national conditions. After more than 70 years of exploration, China has successfully developed its five-level education and teaching research system (ETRS), based on its national education experiences (Qi & Hu, 2019).

China’s five-level ETRS is an integral part of its powerful basic education system. *The Five-level Education and Teaching Education System: A Distinctively Chinese Research Mechanism for Basic Education* in this issue gives a relatively complete picture of the evolution of the system and pinpoints its functions and advantages (Zhou, 2024). It facilitates our understanding of the unique value of the ETRS in promoting high-quality development of education and teacher professional development in China. We believe that the article can also provide implications for the worldwide development of educational research.

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Conflict of Interests: None

Doi: 10.15354/sief.24.co276