Educational Effectiveness Research in Mainland China

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Abstract

This study is a part of an important educational research project entitled “义务教育质量评价标准研究” (JG11ZD03) in China. It focuses on classifying and analyzing the educational effectiveness research (EER) at different levels in mainland China. Since the establishment of the China Educational Effectiveness Research Association in 2005, EER has attracted more and more attention from the policymakers, scholars, experts, school administrators and practitioners in mainland China. From then on, educational effectiveness research is developing very quickly. This paper tried to collect and overview all the researches that were carried out in the field of EER in mainland China from 2006 to 2010. It has revealed the status quo, the influences, the problems and the important findings in EER in China. It has analyzed the key issues, summed up three EER features and for the first time revealed the whole picture of the educational effectiveness research in mainland China.

Introduction

Educational effectiveness has attracted more and more attention from policy-makers, scholars, school principals and practitioners in mainland China, particularly since the establishment of China Educational Effectiveness Research Association in the year 2005. From then on, educational effectiveness research (EER) is developing very quickly in China. Faced by the great challenges for educational equality and excellence, EER has played an important role in enhancing educational equality and excellence in China. Since 2005, lots of articles have been published. This paper tried to review and overview all the researches that were carried out in the field of EER in mainland China from 2006 to June 2010. It has revealed the status quo, the influences, and the important findings in Chinese EER field. Finally it has analyzed the key issues and summed up the features of the EER development tendency in China. Since the limitation of the page numbers, the definitions of the concepts and the literature review part have to be deleted. We started directly from data collections and level classifications.

I. Data Collections and Level Classifications

In order to get a clear and whole picture of educational effectiveness research during the Eleventh-Five-Year-Plan period in China (2006-2010), all the published articles, books, projects and theses (both Master degree theses

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and PhD dissertations) were classified into five different levels according to their contents: the student level, the classroom level, the school level, the national level and the international level. When we collected the data, the research methods such as literature review, interactive collection and screening, content-analysis were used. We searched all the largest data bases in China, such as “CNKI”, “Wan fang Data Base”, “Duxiu Net”, “Baidu” and “Google (HK)”, etc. In total, we’ve collected and reviewed 1430 related items. Among them, there were 130 newspaper articles, 941 academic journal articles, 186 Master degree theses, 9 PhD dissertations, 44 conference articles, 25 almanac articles, 7 government documents, 60 works, and 28 large projects. Concerning the distributions of the published articles or works at each level, we will detail them below.

2.1. The Published EER at the Student Level

At the student level, 105 items have been collected. Among them, there were 63 journal articles, 12 newspaper articles, 8 conference articles, 1 almanac article, 13 Master degree theses, 2 PhD dissertations, 5 published works, and 1 large project. Chart 1 shows the data distributions of the published EER at the student level from 2006 to June 2010 (see Chart 1).

![Chart 1: Statistical Data of the Published EER at the Student Level](image)

We also found that most authors of the above mentioned articles were teachers, school leaders, and the school administrators.

2.2. The Published EER at the Classroom Level

At the classroom level, 1180 items were reviewed and collected, among them, 1127 were about “teacher effectiveness”, 49 about “effective classroom curriculum”, and 4 about “classroom facility and equipment” (see Table 1 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Journal articles</th>
<th>Master &amp; Doctorate theses</th>
<th>Conference articles</th>
<th>Almanac articles</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Works</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECTC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: “TE” stands for “teacher effectiveness”; “ECTC” stands for “effective classroom teaching curriculum”; “FAE” stands for “facility and equipment”.

Table 1: Statistical Data of the Published EER at the Classroom Level
We also found that authors of the articles published at the classroom level were mostly educational practitioners. In addition, most published articles were focused on three core subjects: Chinese, Mathematics and English. Their number accounted for 55% of the total at this level. On the contrary, there were only 3 published articles about preschool education at this level. Indeed, for a long period of time, preschool education was a neglected area in mainland China.

2.3. The Published EER at the School Level

At the school level, 109 published items were collected. We divided them into two parts: school effectiveness (SE) part and school improvement (SI) part. We collected 73 items about “SE” and 36 about “SI”. At this level, journal articles accounted for most (82) and school leadership was the focus (see Table 2).

Table 2: Statistical Data of the Published EER at the School Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Journal articles</th>
<th>Master degree theses</th>
<th>PhD theses</th>
<th>conference articles</th>
<th>Almanac articles</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Works</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: “SE” stands for “school effectiveness”; “SI” stands for “school improvement”.

2.4. The Published EER at the National Level

At the national level, 20 items were collected. Among them, there were 3 newspaper articles, 4 journal articles, 1 conference articles, 1 works, and 11 projects. Items in 2007 accounted for most (7), and there were 5 items in 2006, 4 items in 2008 and 4 items in 2009 as well (see Chart 2 below).

![Chart 2: Statistical Data of the Published EER at the National Level](chart.png)

2.5. The Published EER at the International Level

At the international level, 16 items were collected. Among them there were 2 newspaper articles, 9 journal articles, 2 conference articles and 3 published works. At this level, one published book was named “From the Weak
towards the Excellent” (Sun, 2006) which introduced over 25 effective school improvement case studies in six European countries. It was the first book written by Chinese scholars in mainland China. It has opened a door for Chinese scholars and educational practitioners to look at the effective school improvement in six European countries. Table 3 below shows the published EER items at the international level in mainland China.

Table 3: Statistical Data of the Published EER at the International Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper articles</th>
<th>Journal articles</th>
<th>Master degree theses</th>
<th>PhD theses</th>
<th>Conference articles</th>
<th>Almanac articles</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Works</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Conclusion and Discussion

Having analyzed the collected data, we discovered that in Chinese EER field the “Two-More and Five-Less” phenomena clearly existed. We will detail them below.

The term “Two-More” refers to:
(1). There were more EER at the classroom level than at any other levels.
(2). There were more EER that focused on teacher effectiveness.

Talking about the first “More”, as a matter of fact, EER literature and items at the “classroom level” accounted for the most. They were up to 1180 items which accounted for eighty-one percent of the totals in the Chinese EER field from 2006 to June 2010. From this phenomenon, we can conclude that “classroom level” has definitely attracted more attention from the Chinese educational practitioners and researchers. According to Creemers (1994) that classroom level is the “cutting edge”, it is the most important level to enhance educational effectiveness and school effectiveness.

Talking about the second “More” — the teacher effectiveness (TE), we found that there were 1127 TE items at the classroom level. If we say classroom level was the “cutting-edge”, therefore, “teacher effectiveness” was the “heart” or the “core” within this cutting-edge.

The term “Five Less” refers to:
(1) Research on SE at the student level was much less;
(2) Research on SE at the contextual level was much less;
(3) Research on SE at the international level was much less;
(4) Research on the latest development of EER methodology was much less;
(5) Research on “value-added” assessment was much less.

Firstly, at the student level, the collected literature and items were only 105 pieces (less than 8% of 1430). Even more, the collected items deceased since 2007.

Secondly, at the contextual level, there were only twenty collected items. On the contrary, outside of mainland China, educational effectiveness research at “the the contextual level” was getting increasingly popular. For example, the researches on school choice, on accountability, on functional centralization or functional decentralization at the contextual level become more and more.

Thirdly, at the international level, the knowledge of the latest development of EER outside of mainland China and the positive experiences that could be obtained from participating international conferences are badly needed in China. Therefore, enhancing EER at the international level becomes inevitable.

Fourthly, concerning the 4th “Less”, it was the lack of researches on the latest development of research methodology. At present, in the field of EER worldwide, the mixed and various research methods (combined quantitative one with qualitative one) are mostly used, such as class observations, school site investigations, round-
the-clock follow-up observations, multilevel analysis, etc. Comparatively speaking, the EER methodologies used in mainland China are still at a rather low stage.

Fifthly, the research on “value-added” assessment was much less in mainland China than that in the UK or in the USA. As a matter of fact, “value-added” assessment is the highlight of EER. As Sun (2009) and Ren (2004) both pointed out that assessing school effectiveness with “value-added” approach was a rather fair and significant method. In this way, schools will pay less attention to the input but rather they will pay more attention to enhancing the student outcomes and their fully development. This will reduce the furious competitions between Chinese schools for attracting good students. Meanwhile, schools will pay more attention to decreasing the student dropout rate.

In short, we discovered and analyzed the “Two-More and Five-Less” phenomena in educational effectiveness research field in mainland China. As a conclusion and prediction, we would like to sum up the three features of the EER development tendency in mainland China:

(a). More and more researchers and educational practitioners have been engaged in EER. Four large national or international EER conferences have been held in mainland China since 2005. The number of the participants is growing from hundreds up to thousands. The publications were from dozens up to thousands.

(b). The influence of the EER has been expanded in mainland China from no influence at all twenty years ago to a little influence ten years ago and up to a certain influence nowadays.

(c). The EER methodology used in mainland China has started to change. Before educational effectiveness research in mainland China was dominated by speculative approach or concept definitions. In recent years, more empirical and quantitative studies appeared. The development tendency will be more towards the combination of the qualitative approach with the quantitative approach!

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References