Teacher Education Reform and National Development in China (1978-2017): Four Metaphors

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Abstract

This chapter reviews the history of China’s teacher education in the past four decades (1978-2017). Different from previous work on the same topic (e.g., Lee & Song, 2016; Zhou, 2014; Li, 1999), this review explores an important relationship that has been scantily examined in the existing literature: how teacher education has been shaping and being shaped by the national development discourses. Drawing on policy documents, statistical data, and research literature, we contend that teacher education has played changing roles in supporting China’s national development. Specifically, teacher education has served as a cornerstone for national reconstruction (1978-1992), an engine for boosting economic growth (1992-2004), an equalizer for harmonizing the society (2004-2012), and a window for envisioning a global agenda (since 2012). On the one hand, the national development discourses keep driving the teacher education system to reform its goals, structure, and practices for preparing educators. On the other hand, the development of teacher education in return supports national development. In conclusion, we discuss this study’s implications for teacher education reform in China and internationally.