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2. A CONTINUOUS JOURNEY: CURRICULUM POLICY CHANGE IN MAINLAND CHINA

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum change is the core of education development. Tracing the history of education development in the 20th century, most of the large-scale worldwide educational changes began with curriculum. Since the 1980s, the new trend of systematic curriculum change across the world has impelled curriculum reform to develop from incremental reform to restructuring and system-wide changes, and from fixing mere parts to fixing the entire system. This new trend in curriculum change has also triggered and relied on government involvement. Governments in different countries and regional areas have become active in curriculum change, publishing policy documents and working agendas, as well as guidelines to manage the process of curriculum change. In this sense, curriculum change is not merely an issue related to curriculum theory and practice; more importantly, it is a crucial policy issue (Zhong & Zhang, 2001). However, the systematic and overall change of the curriculum system has also restructured internal curriculum power relationships. States with centralized curriculum policy systems are devolving the authority of central government, those with the tradition of localized curriculum autonomy are beginning to strengthen the unified management of curriculum at the central level, and the original polarized curriculum power structure is moving toward a decentralized system. This new approach of power equilibrium in curriculum change does not weaken the power of government; rather, it reinforces the importance of government involvement and policy arrangements at both the central and local levels. Therefore, curriculum change and curriculum policy are related. In one way, curriculum change is the product of curriculum policy change (Hu, 2001); in another way, new curriculum policy always reflects the focal problems in the curriculum, aiming to respond to the need of curriculum practice.

At the turn of the new century, Mainland China launched a nationwide curriculum change in basic education. The change was extended to the senior high school level and continues to be implemented presently. As promoted by the central government, the initiation of the new policy change can be traced back to 1997, when the basic education division of the Ministry of Education (MOE) organized a large-scale investigation of nine-year compulsory education on curriculum implementation and identified sets of problems in the curriculum system. In 1999, the state council adopted the “21st century education revitalizing action plan” developed by MOE. The action plan proposed a cross-century “quality education project” as one of the four major projects, and stated the urgent need for establishing a 21st century

curriculum system in basic education with a modernized curriculum framework and standards as the first public articulation of the new curriculum policy. In 2001, the complete statement of the new curriculum policy, “Guidelines of basic education curriculum reform,” was published, signifying the beginning of a new curriculum change across the nation. In the autumn of 2001, 38 national pilot areas were initiated. In 2005, the new curriculum was promoted to the whole country. With more than 10 years of exploration and practice, the new curriculum is now entering the phase of routinization and institutionalization. The curriculum system continues to change and be shaped in Mainland China. As an ongoing process, curriculum policy change is an emergent and constructive process, rather than a settled one. In the current paper, we aim to examine the 10+ years experience of curriculum policy change in Mainland China to explore how the process evolves and develops as the new curriculum policy is implemented, to articulate the Chinese experience in curriculum policy change, and to identify the localized features and perspectives, as well as possible reflections for optimization of future changes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Curriculum policy change is never a subjective abstraction, neither is it a context-irrelevant practice. It is always enmeshed in its social historical circumstances at a particular time and place. As Stephen J. Ball (2006) points out, two major defects exist in educational policy studies: (1) the lack of the sense of time and process, seeing policy change as “snapshots” rather than a process “in continuousness, adaptation of practices, the arts of resistance and maneuver and value drift,” and (2) the lack of the sense of “place,” neglecting the “particularities of policy” or dislocating “schools and classrooms from their physical and cultural environment” (Ball, 2006). The current chapter intends to answer four essential questions to avoid the above problems in our research and acquire an overall picture of the new curriculum change:

1. What is the context of curriculum policy change in Mainland China?
2. What are the key areas of curriculum policy change?
3. What is the diachronic process of the policy change and its mechanism?
4. With the operation of new curriculum policy in practice, what explicit and implicit changes have occurred during the process? Specifically, what are the attitudes, perceptions, and actions of participants toward the new curriculum policy?

During the systematic exploration of these questions, we not only highlight existing experiences in curriculum policy change in Mainland China, but also apply our experience and views to a broader platform to “agree on the basic nature of this next stage, and the nature of the move required to take us there” (Pinar, 2002).

Thus, in our exploration of the new curriculum policy change in Mainland China, we attempt to resituate the process of policy realization in its historical context and social networks, elucidate what really transpired and changed during the process, and identify the features and meaning of the new curriculum policy change with

“Chinese” particularities. The above four questions are crucial in fully understanding the new curriculum policy change.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Document analysis and empirical analysis are the major methods used to explore our research questions. Questions 1, 2, and 3 cover the basic description and explanation of background, content, and procedure of curriculum policy change, respectively, which are based mainly on document analysis and synthesis. Documents collected for the analysis cover the following categories: (1) all the official documents related to the new curriculum policy, including formal curriculum policy documents or texts, meeting summaries, investigative reports, government communication, briefs, memorabilia, important leader speeches during policy operation, and so on; (2) studies and publications on the new curriculum policy, including theoretical, empirical, practical, or experience-based studies, among others; and (3) other documents or materials related to the understanding of new curriculum policy, such as documents that provide the background and social conditions of new policy, and informal discussions regarding the new policy in public media.

Question 4 involves the explanation and reflection of specific changes during the policy change process. A combination of document analysis and empirical analysis is used. The document analysis is divided into two categories: (1) empirical research work evaluating the new curriculum reform, including studies conducted by the “new curriculum implementation” evaluation project commissioned by MOE, evaluation studies organized by local government, and studies conducted by scholarly institutions and researchers; and (2) studies on curriculum policy analysis supplying suggestions and reflections for policy improvement.

Collection of time series data to supplement the inadequacy of document analysis for the empirical studies was conducted in two phases. The first-phase empirical data collection was conducted in 2005 (May to July) in Zhejiang Province, a relatively advanced and prosperous location in Southeast China, through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in 14 sample schools in the national and provincial pilot areas. We chose the sample schools through purposive cluster sampling to expand the representativeness of the sample schools, covering different types of schools and basic education systems in the area.

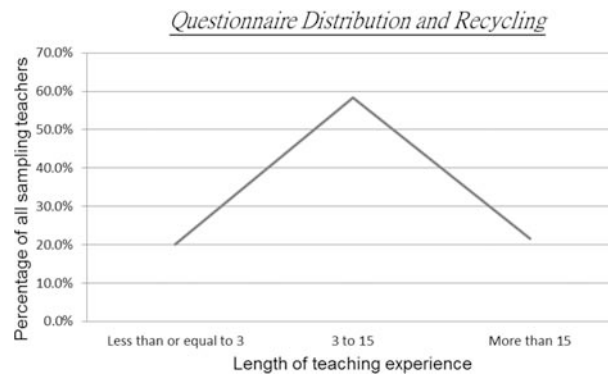
Beginning 2005, the national pilot area implemented a new curriculum over the next four years, whereas the provincial pilot area launched new curriculum changes over the next three years; thus, not all teachers participated in the new curriculum reform. The anonymous questionnaire was distributed to 400 teachers who were already implementing reform in 14 sample schools. In all, 286 (71.5%) valid returns were collected. The questionnaire included six sections: implementation of the new curriculum, curriculum structure, textbook and curriculum resources, teaching and learning, evaluation and professional development, and three open-ended questions (data of attitudes of teachers, actions and experience, and perceived and experienced

Table 1. Types of sample schools

School category	Number and code	Total
Coastal area	7 schools (NE+NS+NN+NT+NX+NQ+NH)	14
Inland area	7 schools (HY+HC+HEB+HEC+HEA+HS+HM)	
Urban area		14
Experimental school	5 schools (HY+HC+HEB+NE+NN)	
Ordinary school	5 schools (NS+HM+HS+HEC+NH)	
Combined area of city and country	1 school (HEA)	
Rural area	3 schools (NT+NX+NQ)	14
Public school	12 schools (HY+HC+HEB+HEA+HS+HM +NE+NS+NN+NT+NX+NQ)	
Private school	2 schools (HEC+NH)	

Table 2. Questionnaire distribution and recycling

Length of teaching experience	Percentage of all sampling teachers
Less than or equal to 3	20.1%
3 to 15	58.4%
More than 15	21.5%



constraints and concerns). The overall conditions of the implementation were included in the investigation.

Interviews with school principals, leaders, and teachers with no administrative rankings were also conducted in the 14 sample schools. In all, 23 participants (4 school leaders at different levels and 19 ordinary teachers) were interviewed across the 14 schools (see tables 1 & 2). The questionnaire data were analyzed using SPSS V19.0, and the interview data were analyzed and categorized in accordance with five major aspects of the interview: (1) understanding and attitude toward the

Table 3. Status of sample schools and interviewees

<i>School code</i>	<i>School level</i>	<i>Teacher code</i>	<i>Number</i>
QT	Ordinary school (9 years basic education)		P: 1 SL: 4 ML: 6 T: 13
ZH	Key junior high school	Principal: P Senior school leader: SL Middle level school leader: ML Teachers: T	P: 1 SL: 2 ML: 4 T: 11
SY	Batch 2 key senior high school		P: 1 SL: 7 ML: 4 T: 18

new curriculum policy; (2) impact and innovation of curriculum implementation in school; (3) constraints and barriers in implementation; (4) effective external and internal support in implementing the new curriculum policy; and (5) further concerns and reflections toward curriculum policy change. Data used in the following discussion were combined with the school code, sample code (P = principal, L = School leader, T = Teacher), and number sequence. For example, HY-T1 means Teacher 1 in sample school of HY (see [table 3](#)).

Collection for the second-phase empirical data was conducted in March 2012 in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted in 3 sample schools (public schools) with 72 interviewees. In each sample, school interviews were categorized into the following focus groups: principals, senior school leaders (vice principal, academic director, and moral education director), middle level school leaders (year team leader and subject department leader), and subject matter teachers (Chinese, English, and mathematics).

The interview was focused on four aspects: (1) impact and practice of new curriculum policy in school and class; (2) effective external and internal support that facilitate the implementation; (3) key constraints and barriers in implementing new curriculum; (4) further reflections and suggestions for curriculum change, which also correspond to the first phase interview questions. The wide range of respondents provides diverse perspectives and experiences. The data were first categorized according to interviewed questions, and then coded according to major themes and key thematic categories using the qualitative data analysis system.

The discussion of curriculum policy change in Mainland China includes three levels of analysis: factual, value, and normative. Factual analysis is descriptive analysis regarding what and how the policy change takes place and is operated. Value analysis is the judgment of the change that considers social and cultural

features, understands the internal mechanism, and comments on the quality of the change. Finally, normative analysis is the rational proposition and reflection of what should be done and improved in policy change based on the status quo.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Context of Curriculum Policy Change

Era of knowledge economy. The arrival of knowledge economy has changed the mode of economic growth and the quality of new labor. Basic knowledge and skills no longer meet the needs of innovation in the ever-changing world. The new society needs a new kind of education to equip people with advanced self-learning abilities, problem-solving skills, interdisciplinary understanding and cooperation, innovative consciousness, and critical insights and creativity, as well as a sense of ethics and responsibility in leading and balancing the society. The new economy requires the transition of the curriculum system from the traditional “discipline-centered, classroom-centered, teacher-centered” approach to a new “real-life related, learning-centered, student-oriented” system. School curriculum policy change in Mainland China is the appropriate response to this reality.

Epoch of social transformation in the modernization of China. Chinese society has been experiencing systematic social transformation in economic, political, cultural, and societal aspects since the 1980s. From the planning economy to market economy system; from omnipotent, centralized government control to limited, service-oriented, and decentralized government, market choice, and public selection (Liu, 2003); and from a binary (politics and economy) to a tertiary social structure (politics, economy, and public civil society), we are not only reshaping the social structure, but are also bringing in new notions and values of modern civilization to China. The subjectivity, self-rationalization, flexibility, and awareness of public rules in new economy; the ideas of democratic, fair, equal, and effective politics in society; and the notions of efficiency and equity, fair competition and diversified excellence, and individuality and collective cooperation in social relationships are immersed in our value system during the process. In this sense, curriculum policy change in Mainland China is part of this multidimensional social transformation. It is necessary in constructing a new society because schools are where future citizens are molded. Therefore, the new curriculum policy proclaims the ideals of social transformation, and is designed and operated in accordance with other changes in the modernization of society.

International and domestic discourse of curriculum change. At the turn of the new century, a big wave of curriculum change swept across the world. Seeing education as the core of national power in the new century, most developed countries initiated new curriculum reform at the national and provincial levels to prepare the younger generation with a more comprehensive, flexible, updated, and diversified curriculum system. The domestic education system was also prepared for the curriculum change.

First, the nationwide advocacy of “quality education,” in contrast to “examination-oriented education,” since the late 1980s has prepared the education system for a transformative change. In addition to the discourse of “quality education,” the experience and lessons accumulated from reforms in curriculum and decades of teaching also called for a systematic change in the curriculum system. Second, the rise of curriculum study as an independent field and its theoretical development after the mid-1980s provided intellectual and professional support for curriculum change. Third, criticisms of the existing curriculum system and systematic investigation on implementation of former curriculum reform (1993 curriculum reform) in 1997 created a sense of urgency for a change and triggered the new curriculum reform. The report of the investigation was later used as the original reference for new policy development.

Curriculum policy change is always a historical and social construct embedded in the reality and ideals of the society as “the product of interactions among political, social, cultural, and economic factors” (Hu, 2005). In this sense, the rational inquiry of one particular curriculum policy change should be based on the exploration of contextual conditions where the new policy is nurtured and developed, thus supplying the “all-encompassing totality” in understanding the logic and particularity of the change.

Key Areas of Curriculum Policy Change

Rationale of curriculum policy change The basic notion of the curriculum policy change is “for the development of every student”. The slogan implicates the major value of the change, which is to construct a new curriculum system that pursues both equality and quality. The new curriculum policy will protect the equal “right to learn” and “right to develop” of every student in the name of social justice. In addition, it will also emphasize the “quality” of student development, which is a holistic, balanced, comprehensive, diversified, and all-around development, rather than development with excessive emphasis on examination preparation and academic achievements. It is a curriculum system that will “enhance moral education, pay attention to humanity spirit, emphasis on information literacy and encourage knowledge integration” in nurturing future citizens (Zhong, 2001, 2003). The curriculum policy change attempts to achieve four fundamental transformations:

- From elitist education to education for all;
- From subject-centered curriculum (with narrow emphasis on subject-oriented knowledge and skills) to social-constructed curriculum (more comprehensive, integrated, and related to real life and people);
- From didactic methods of teaching to a progressive and child-centered approach of teaching; and
- From centralized curriculum control to curriculum decentralization at the national, local, and school levels.

Key areas of curriculum policy change. As a systematic change to the original curriculum system, the new curriculum policy covers six major dimensions of

Table 4. Six dimensions of curriculum policy change

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>
Curriculum objectives	Knowledge and skill, performance focused, and examination oriented	All-round development of student, three-dimensional curriculum objective, i.e., basic knowledge and skills, learning process and learning method, positive attitude, emotion and value
Curriculum Structure	Academic subject-centered curriculum; single, fixed, and inflexible curriculum structure	Balanced, comprehensive, and flexible curriculum structure; combination of subject curriculum and integrated curriculum and national, local, and school-based curricula
Curriculum content	Unified national textbook; textbook-centered, difficult, complicated, obscure, and outdated content in textbook	Curriculum context connected with real life interests and experiences of students and modern society; new textbook system of one standard and multiple versions
Curriculum implementation (teaching and learning style)	Excessive emphasis on passive learning, lecturing, cramming, and rote learning	Facilitation of active involvement of student in learning; enhancement of discovery learning, exploratory learning, and project learning; emphasis on ability of information processing, problem solving, communication, and cooperation are emphasized
Curriculum evaluation	Summative evaluation; examination-centered; excessive focus on academic achievements stratification, and screening	Comprehensive, diversified, and multidimensional evaluation; formative evaluation; value-added assessment, and process-oriented evaluation
Curriculum management	Curriculum management by central government, unified national curriculum	Three-level curriculum management system (national, local, and school level curriculum); enhancement of the flexibility and adaptability of curriculum to specific regions, schools, and students

change: curriculum objectives, curriculum structure, curriculum content, curriculum implementation, curriculum evaluation, and curriculum management (MOE, 2001) (see [table 4](#)).

Process of Curriculum Policy Change

Key stages of curriculum policy change. The process of curriculum policy change can be divided into four key stages: initiation and conceptualization of the

Table 5. Key stages of curriculum policy change (Compulsory education)

<i>Stages</i>	<i>Working schedule and content</i>
Initiation and conceptualization (1997–1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National investigation of nine-year compulsory education curriculum implementation conditions; report of the investigation analyzed the issues of curriculum system and gave suggestions for holistic reform (July 1996 to December 1997). • Basic education “quality education” experience exchange meeting held by MOE in July 1997 determined the initiation of new curriculum as the key issue in promoting “quality education” in China (Liu Bin, 1997). • Publication of the “21st century education revitalizing action plan” officially revealed the plan of the new curriculum policy change (MOE, January 1999). • Publication of “Decisions on deepening educational reform, promoting quality education” detailed the policy advocates of constructing the new curriculum system in basic education (State council, September 1999).
Policy development and deliberation (1999–2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Basic education curriculum reform experts working group” (40 educational experts across the country from the university, research institution, government, and schools) was set up, responsible for the development of the “Guideline of basic education curriculum reform” (January 1999). • “Basic education curriculum and textbook development center” as the major research, development, and management institution of curriculum reform at the national level (June 1999) and 16 “basic education curriculum research centers” in China National Institute for Educational Research and 15 other universities were set up as professional support for the change (January 2000). • Initiation and public bidding of the “National basic education curriculum reform project,” and the set up of 18 “curriculum standard development groups” on different subjects in progress (December 1999 to May 2000). • Research, discussion, investigation, development, and publication of the “guideline of basic education curriculum reform” were conducted by the expert group (with 28 revised versions) (January 1999 to June 2001). • Research, discussion, investigation, development, and publication of a “compulsory education curriculum standard” of different subjects were conducted (July 2000 to July 2001).

(continued)

Table 5. Key stages of curriculum policy change (Compulsory education) (continued)

<i>Stages</i>	<i>Working schedule and content</i>
Pilot experiment and promotion of new curriculum policy nationwide (2001–2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of 38 national curriculum reform experimental areas in September 2001. • Construction of 528 provincial curriculum reform experimental areas in September 2002. • Expansion to 1642 national and provincial curriculum reform experimental areas (57% of the country) in September 2003. • Implementation in 2576 counties across the country (90% of the country) in September 2004. • Nationwide implementation of new curriculum in basic education in September 2005. • Nation-wide investigation on implementation of new curriculum in December 2001, March 2003, and November 2004. • Investigation on the usage of curriculum standards and revision of the standards (May 2003 to June 2004). • Reform of the junior high school graduation examination system and senior high school enrolment system in national experimental areas in 2004.
Continuation and routinization of new curriculum policy (2005–present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second revision of curriculum standards (March 2007 to January 2008). • Since 2008, the efforts to deepen curriculum reform have been focused on the following crucial issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhancement of curriculum reform in the rural areas and western parts of China; – Supervision and revision of textbooks of new curriculum; – Improvement of the quality of education and reduction of the burden of students; – Expansion of the curriculum reform of senior high school; and – Reform on examination and evaluation system in education at different levels • Publication of 2011 version curriculum standards of basic education in Dec, 2011

new curriculum policy, development and deliberation of policy documents, pilot experiment and implementation of the new curriculum policy nationwide, and the continuation and routinization of the new curriculum (see [table 5](#)).

With the development of curriculum change in basic education (Year 6 to Year 12), new curriculum reform in senior high school (Year 13 to Year 15) was also initiated in 2001 and developed simultaneously with the change in the basic education system (see [table 6](#)).

Given the routinization of the new curriculum policy in the basic education system, the policy focus of central government has gradually transferred to changes

Table 6. Main stages of curriculum policy change (Senior high school)

Initiation and conceptualization (2000–2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National investigation on implementation of senior high school curriculum and the quality of senior high school education in 2000 to 2001.
Policy development and deliberation (2001–2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning of the development of the senior high school new curriculum reform plan and curriculum standards of different subjects in 2001. • Publication of the senior high school curriculum reform plan and 15-subject curriculum standard in March 2003.
Pilot experiment and promotion of new curriculum policy nationwide (2004–present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot experiment of senior high school curriculum reform in four provinces of Guangdong, Shandong, Hainan, and Ningxia in September 2004. • Investigation of implementation of new curriculum in experimental provinces in 2004 and 2005. • Experiments extended to 10 provinces in 2006. • Reform of senior high school graduation examination system (academic proficiency text) in pilot provinces beginning 2006. • Reform of college entrance examination in four pilot provinces in 2007. • Experiments extended to 21 provinces in 2008. • The new curriculum continuously promoted to the other provinces in China in 2009 and 2010. • Comprehensive reform of the college entrance examination and enrolment system in 10 provinces in 2009 • Set up of the “National education examination advisory committee” in support of the college entrance examination reform in 2010. • Continuous exploration and promotion of academic proficiency test (graduation examination) and comprehensive quality evaluation system in common senior high schools across the country. • Start of the investigation and revision of the senior high school curriculum reform plan and curriculum standards in 2012. • Development and publication of the college entrance examination and enrolment system reform plan in 2012.

of the curriculum, evaluation, and examination system at the senior high school level. With the shifts of priority in the policy agenda, the main responsibility of the continuous promotion and deepening of curriculum change has also transferred to local agencies and schools. The success or failure of the change in practice is actually dependent on the understanding, will, and capacity of local administrators, school leaders, and teachers.

Mechanism of the policy process. The process of the new curriculum policy change is dramatically different from that of the traditional method of policy change in

China. Given the “top-level design”, the “Guidelines of basic education curriculum reform,” the new curriculum policy change has been systematically designed with rationales that intend to break away from the bureaucratic, centralized, and experience-based approach of curriculum change, and to seek a more democratic, scientific, and professional change.

System design. The operation of the change is scientifically planned and organized with reasonable procedures, aiming to guarantee the legitimacy and “fair outcome” of the process through “procedural justice”. This operation begins with nationwide investigation and theoretical exploration, followed by experimental demonstration at the national and provincial levels, which is then gradually extended to the whole country, together with the ongoing evaluation and revision system. Admittedly, the smooth promotion of the new policy is largely dependent on administrative motivation. The power and the influence of the central government enable the rapid spread of the new policy, and also bring unnecessary burdens and chaos.

Professional leading. The change emphasizes the scientificity of the new policy based on professional engagement during the process. Special research and development institutions, advisory groups, and centers are established across the country. Educational experts are summoned from universities, government, research institutions, and schools, and are closely engaged in development, deliberation, training, consultation, and evaluation of the new policy.

Public deliberation. Public participation is an important feature in the development and deliberation of the curriculum policy. The 28 versions of the “Guidelines of basic education curriculum reform,” as well as the revision of curriculum standards, are based on public consultations, hearings, proposal submissions, and discussions in public media. Public deliberation enables people from different areas to be involved in the process; expanding the public foundation of the new policy also triggers disputes and arguments in the process. The policy operation in Mainland China is especially meaningful because it is the first time the national curriculum policy has stepped out of the conference room of central government to seek public recognition and agreement.

Combination of multiple policy instruments. The usage of a broader set of policy tools (Hong, 2006) is another prominent feature in the operation of the new curriculum policy. Although the traditional mandates, incentives, sanctions, and inspection that reinforce top-down government control continue to be the main instruments of the policy operation of China, many new tools are employed and expanded in practice, exhibiting the new look of policy operation. First, great efforts are exerted in policy propaganda by formal and informal channels to persuade the public to identify with and believe in the value and notions of new policy, using slogans such as “for the development of every student.” Second, funds from the central and local government, incentive systems, and policy support for school improvement are employed as positive inducements in implementation of the new curriculum. Third, the government stresses capacity building of teachers and educational administrators through professional development to meet the new

requirements of curriculum change. Various training programs are provided at the national, local, and school levels to “build resources and capabilities for future use” (Hong, 2006). Fourth, levers are also used at the regional and school levels, such as schools with teaching and research systems, university and school partnerships, and school alliance systems, which play an important role in leverage change in various settings. The simultaneous usage of multiple policy tools in curriculum policy change shows us that, in addition to the mandatory tools that assert authoritative ruling of the government, optional instruments also influence the change with explicit and implicit implications. With the increase of complexity of change in the modern educational system, the government also needs to become more flexible in promoting new policies. To this end, the new curriculum policy change in Mainland China can be considered as the most useful attempt thus far.

Changes of Attitudes, Perceptions, and Actions during the 10+ Years' Journey

With more than 10 years of exploration, the new curriculum policy has inevitably brought changes in the curriculum system and change in people. Compared with the changes in structure, content, form, and system of the curriculum, the changes in attitudes, perceptions, and actions of participants are more fundamental. In this section, based on empirical investigation and interpretive analysis, we focus on the changes of attitudes, perceptions, and actions of participants to determine the positive changes that have occurred during the process of the implementation of the new curriculum policy.

Change of attitudes. From vague to clear acceptance. When people encounter changes, especially significant changes, they always develop different attitudes, such as active support, determined resistance, wait-and-see equivocalness, and pragmatic acceptance. However, in the new curriculum reform of China, even at the very beginning of the promotion of the new policy, we find a surprisingly high degree of acceptance of the new policy. During the 2005 investigation, 76.7% of teachers expressed belief that the new curriculum reform is meaningful, 84.3% of teachers expressed belief that the rationale of the new curriculum reform reflects their own ideas of good education, and 88.5% of teachers expressed agreement that the new curriculum reform is the positive impetus for teachers to reflect on the daily practice of teaching. This high degree of support is reasonable, partly because of the dissatisfaction of teachers with the conditions of the original curriculum and teaching system; they have already suffered from the inherent problems in the curriculum system and have desired change for a long time. Another reason for the high acceptance rate is the passive acceptance in the response; some teachers simply “try to tolerate” or “go along” (Evans, 1996) with the reform, which is different from sincere support. As noted in the 2005 investigation, 43.7% of the respondents expressed belief that they participate in the reform because they are active supporters of the reform, 50% of the respondents claimed that they participate in reform because

the curriculum reform is part of their work, and 6.3% expressed belief that they have been forced to participate in the reform. This variation explains the different status of attitudes of participants in acceptance of the new policy. Even though most of the participants approve of the new curriculum policy and agree with the basic ideas of the change, the acceptance of the new policy is mixed with fears, concerns, uncertainties, fake understanding, and suspicions, which makes the acceptance of the new policy vague and unstable.

“New curriculum cares for the development of students, which is very good, but the conservative ideas of education for academic achievements and examination are deeply rooted; schools and teachers could not abandon the basic knowledge and skills, that’s the reality” (HM-P).

“The new curriculum reform is acceptable in ideas, but difficult to carry out in practice” (HC-T4)

In this sense, the acceptance of the new curriculum policy at the early stage of the policy change supports the policy ideally, rather than practically. In the later stages of policy change, the attitudes of participants in support of curriculum policy become more clear, mature, and definite.

“What ideas we have will influence our practice, the professional leading of experts in curriculum and teaching is very crucial in implementation of new curriculum, because the constant remind of ideas in reform will help teachers stay on the right track, and reflect their practice from time to time” (QT-P)

“The real change in beliefs and ideas is difficult but vital; the deficiency of action is the reality we need to tackle in the change” (QT-SL1)

“We have lived in new curriculum for years, this experience of implementing new curriculum is the process of learning and changing, our understanding of what is good curriculum and classroom teaching is gradually developed with improvement of our experience, you can say the new curriculum exerts imperceptible influences on our thinking and actions” (QT-ML2)

“After the implementation of new curriculum, we begin to concern and care more about students rather than the process of teaching itself, focus more on students’ experience and practice in learning, that’s a fundamental change. In the old system, we will also carry out some activities in teaching and learning, but those activities are the goals or objectives of the teaching, the major change is that the final goals or objective is the development of students, that’s crucial” (SY-ML3)

These responses show us that, with the development of curriculum policy change, the acceptance of the new policy is not merely the recognition of superficial features of the change. Rather, it is the internalization and understanding of the rationale of the policy, the sympathy for the development of education and society, and the

“active commitment and participation” (Evans, 1996) of those concerned in reality. This internalization is the premise of the new curriculum policy change, and thus must be accomplished to a significant degree.

Change of perceptions: From multiple views to coherent understanding. With regard to perceptions on new curriculum, much concern is on the identification of barriers and constraints in its implementation. At the early stage of policy implementation, the feeling of being unable to control the implementation makes teachers sensitive and agitated because they perceive stress and conflict as constraints and barriers. In a 2005 investigation, participants identified several factors that hinder the implementation of curriculum policy. According to importance, the 12 identified factors are as follows: lack of professional guidance, complexity and difficulty of the reform, difficulty in usage of new curriculum standard, difficulty to adapt to new ideas and methods, lack of experience reference and practical training program, the constraints of examination system, lack of teaching resources, the quality and practicality of new textbooks, big class size, understanding of new curriculum, lack of holistic support from related organizations and authorities, and insufficient time and energy (see figure 1).

At the beginning of curriculum policy implementation, the lack of a holistic picture of the reform causes the perceptions of participants to be indefinite, overlapping, and

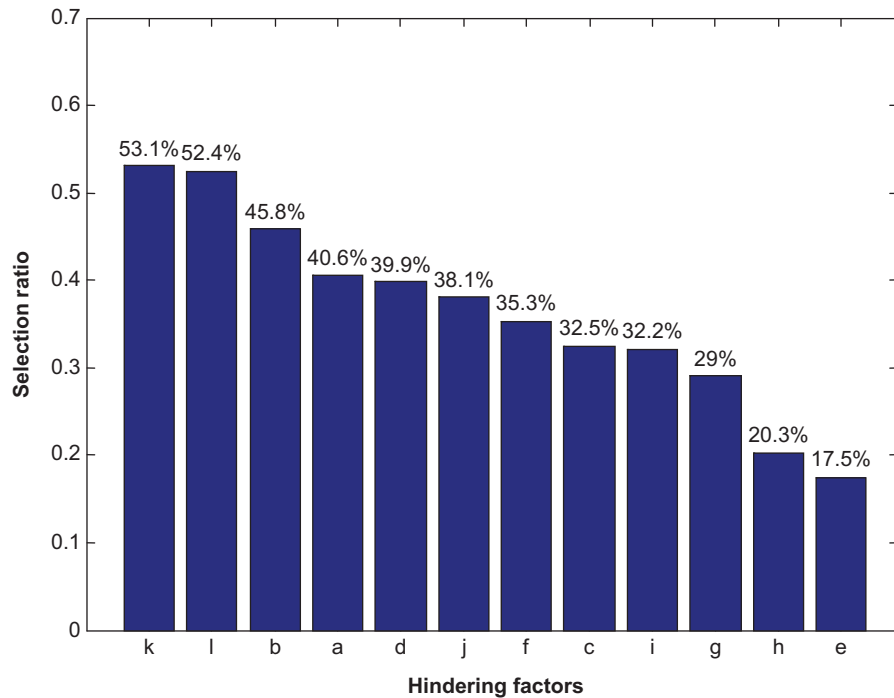


Figure 1. Identification of constraints in policy implementation.

perplexed. Most constraints identified are explicit and superficial. Some constraints are typical at the beginning of implementation, such as the conditional support of policy and the basic understanding of new ideas and methods.

In the interviews conducted in 2012, the participants' responses regarding the constraints and barriers of curriculum implementation are much more mature, profound, and focused. The perceptions are organized with an internal logic and can be easily categorized into three types: constraints from system, policy, and people perspectives. In the first perspective, three important system barriers are identified by different respondents. The first and greatest constraint mentioned is the profound difference between the new curriculum and the traditional examination system (junior high school graduation system and college entrance examination system).

“College entrance examination is always the lifeline of the school, to the teacher, they teach according to the examination. The problem is that the examination system is not changed in consistent with the new curriculum” (SY-P)

The second constraint in the system perspective is the strict quality monitoring system of local authority. The strict supervision and inspection system is a legitimate control and hierarchical intervention of a school's autonomy. Regulative system in education does not facilitate, rather interrupts, because it is hypocritical. This strict controlling of higher authority reflects the distrust of local government and schools, which ends up in even more severe conflicts in fake decentralization and empowerment to schools implementing new curriculum policy.

“Too much regular examination, tests and inceptions organized by local authorities, excessive control from the higher authorities, the school couldn't breathe” (QT-P, SL-2)

“We are tired up with all the administrative works and all kinds of inceptions and supervisions, the time for real research and preparation of teaching is limited” (ZH-T5)

The third constraint in the system perspective is the stress and expectation coming from the society, the deep-rooted examination orientation, and academic achievement-centered value system. The accustomed beliefs, traditions, relations, and values in the society are developed over time and with persistence in our society.

“The priority concern of the society is still the academic achievement of student; the holistic development is at the second place, the fickleness and utilitarian of the commercial society is contradictory with the culture of new curriculum” (QT-SL4)

Aside from the constraints in system perspective, those from perspectives of the policy and the people are also identified. Constraints from the perspective of policy are considered from two aspects: the problem on practicality of new curriculum standards and textbooks in use and the problem of frequent adjustments and the irrational rush in promotion of new curriculum policy.

“New curriculum standard is very flexible in organization; it gives much autonomy to teachers in the classroom, but also increases the difficulty to handle” (QT-T3)

“The quality of new textbooks is questionable, for example, in mathematics, most of textbooks are shallow and broad, it is very difficult to teach, and unable to reflect the ideas of new curriculum at all” (ZH-T3; SY-T2)

Moreover, three key constraints related to people are identified: the conflicts of new curriculum ideas and teaching method with the traditional ones, the challenge on teachers’ competence and capacity, and teachers’ autonomy to have enough time and space to research and teach.

“New curriculum has set up a very high standards for teachers, the school is lacking of professional teachers in operating new curriculum, such as the integrated curriculum, comprehensive activity learning, etc., that’s a challenge to school and also to teachers” (QT-ML4).

“The new curriculum is very comprehensive and flexible, I am a history teacher, but in order to teach the new curriculum, I also need to know the knowledge of politics, geography, and even economy and laws, if you do not keep learning, you will not be qualified to teach” (ZH-ML2).

“New curriculum is a reform of traditional ideas and methods of teaching and learning, the conflicts between the old and the new is always there, for example, the teachers’ authority in teaching, overemphasis teacher lecturing, is never easy to change” (SY-T13).

“Teachers are too busy; they really need enough time and space to research into curriculum and teaching” (QT-SL4).

After 10 years of implementation, most participants have developed rational and holistic perceptions toward the new curriculum policy. Most have formed a profound understanding of the ideas in change and its reality. They are able to identify the substantive conflicts and “deeper relationships” of constraints in the implementation of new curriculum policy. These changes indicate that, not only would the attitudes change, people’s perceptions will also develop as they accumulate experience.

Change of actions: From surface-level attempts to core and substantial innovations. At the early stage of implementation, much effort was focused on familiarization with the new curriculum, ideas, structures, materials, skills and techniques, relationship, and power, among others. At the national and local level, the government provided necessary “hardware” and “software” investments, including financial investment, resources support, equipment and appliance update, class size control, and teacher training programs, among others. The teacher training program is an example. In the 2005 investigation, although 89.1% of teachers acknowledged the importance of training, most also mentioned its inadequacy.

“Too much talk about the theories, lack of practical guidance” (NE-T6).

“In need of trainings closely related to classroom teaching by subjects, such as lesson observation, workshop of successful experience, method and skills” (HC-T2).

At the school and classroom level, many actions are carried out in the early implementations of new curriculum. The new curriculum timetable is acquired by schools, with new integrated curriculum and comprehensive practice activity. In schools, new textbooks are adopted, and school-based teaching and research system¹ are established. New methods in teaching and learning are practiced in classroom teaching. In the 2005 investigation, 96.9% of the teachers stated that they are trying diversified methods in teaching, whereas 89.2% expressed advocacy of the new methods of active, cooperative, and explorative learning. In addition to traditional written examinations, new assessment methods are introduced into student assessments in the new curriculum (Figure 2). Local and school-based curricula are integrated into the curriculum structure.

The early implementation of new curriculum involves mostly marginal attempts. The start-up of new changes, such as use of new materials and learning of new techniques, is superficial. At this level, the implementation is more “focused on the surface-level forms”, indicating the imitation of the new policy in forms. For example, to inspire active involvement of students in learning and to respect their subjectivity in learning, the new curriculum advocates cooperative, participatory, and explorative methods of learning in classroom teaching. Consequently, we may see several classrooms with excessive activities. Such a situation seems to show the achievement of goals of the new policy; however, in reality, the fundamental rationale of the policy is lacking. In this sense, the similarities in forms of policy implementation do not reflect the underlying functions of the policy ideas. As Fullan (2007) points out, the profound level change is not only the grasp of new techniques,

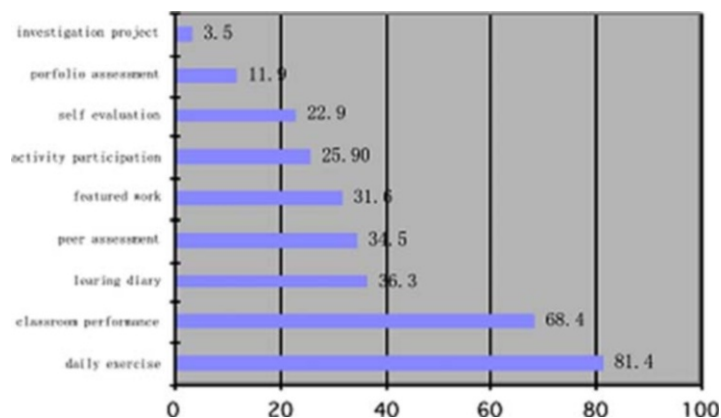


Figure 2. Use of different assessment methods in the new curriculum (%).

but the internalization and understanding of the rationale to make the appropriate judgments regarding when to and how to use these techniques, and how to adopt them creatively. In our case, we have acquired the skills and techniques of cooperative learning or participatory learning. We do not need to engage our kids every second in our classroom, or occupy the class with activities. More important is to break the loop of imitation in forms, and to fully take control of new skills and techniques.

However, the surface-level implementations are important foundations for the development of change. In the 2012 interview, the actions of the policy change were found to be more focused on essential and substantial issues. At the national and local level, great efforts have been exerted in the reform of the examination and evaluation systems. Based on the pilot experiment in several provinces, the college entrance examination and college enrolment system reform plan are to be published in 2012. At the school and classroom level, the implementation of new curriculum are focused on the following domains: the continuous capacity building of school leaders, teachers at different levels, cultivation of broad partnership and communication, curriculum and teaching initiatives at school level, construction of supportive school culture and innovative leadership, and so on. A number of innovations have taken place to deepen the implementation of new curriculum.

In support of in-service professional development of teachers, most schools have developed school-based platform for research, teaching and training, and organizing effective and professional program or activities within or out of school.

“Our school has a specific teacher development group to establish training and school based teaching and research programs according to the needs. Except for the regular training and in-school research and teaching activities, our school also provides teachers with many out-of-school training programs across the country” (QT-SL2).

“We have very well-organized and effective school-based teaching and research programs. Each semester, each subject oriented research and teaching group will develop a series of core themes for the professional development of the whole semester, based on the core themes, we will developed related workshops by teachers in each subject department, all of these activities are practice focused and are very helpful in daily teaching and research work” (QT-T6).

“Teachers are gathered to develop school based curriculum, exercises books, and other learning materials to facilitate the learning of students” (ZH-T6).

“We will also invite teachers from other schools to come to our school and organize research and teaching activities together, to display exemplars of lesson plan and teaching, and exchange ideas” (ZH-T3).

The broad partnership and communication with sister schools within the region and across the country are also important measures for schools in learning from other’s experiences in curriculum change.

“The regular teaching exchange programs organized with brother schools within and out of our province, such as schools in Shanghai, Suzhou, Nanjing, etc., are very crucial in promoting the understanding of new curriculum through professional dialogue” (QT-SL3).

“We have district-wide Internet platform for teachers to share teaching materials (ZH-T4).

“All staff training program and thematic training program are also organized at district, municipal level, as well as the teacher’s research league across the schools” (QT-T8).

“Peer support is also very important in the change, in our school, we have teacher mentorship tradition, and young teacher will be grouped with experienced teacher in carrying out new curriculum” (SY-T5).

More importantly, most schools have begun their own exploration under the new curriculum change, and have initiated series of grass-rooted reforms in curriculum and teaching at school level. On one hand, most reforms are focused on classroom teaching and school-based curriculum in operation. On the other hand, those reforms are considered core issues that are consistent with the overall plan of school development, seeking for schools’ own characteristics and particularities in the nationwide curriculum change.

“The real curriculum change is happening in school and in every classroom, so it is very important for schools to initiate their own change in adapt to school context and requirements. In the new curriculum change, our school take the ‘low burden high quality’ as the brief understanding of the main idea of change, we started school-based research project, pay attention to curriculum development, and acquire professional support from local government and universities in facilitating our school-based initiatives” (QT-P).

“Curriculum change is not only a broad sense for school if it is going to be carried out in reality, it need some specific and concrete action plans to fulfill the change step by step in school, such as small class size experiment, learning directed teaching mode, in this semester, our school promoted some new teaching methods in classroom teaching” (ZH-ML3).

“The new curriculum promotes diversity and flexibility in curriculum. In order to cultivate our own feature in the change, we restructured our curriculum system by adding more selective courses for the individualized development of every student and start the mobile school-based curriculum system. Students from Grade 7 can choose their own school-based curriculum. For example, two of our featured courses are robot curriculum and critical writing; both of them are very competitive and famous in the city. Take the robot curriculum for example. We cooperate with companies and universities and help our

student to compete in international robot competitions. With these selective curricula and flexible system, it is not only our students who find confidence and interests, but also our teachers, who have developed their specialties. In the long run, with the development of new curriculum, a school is going to be judged by its feature rather than by its academic performance, this is the opportunity for the development of schools” (SY-P).

“The innovations in school are based on our school development plan. In these past few years, we have had five major projects, and three of them are related to curriculum development and teaching, for example, the ecological class teaching project, harmonious teacher students relationship project, featured curriculum projects, etc. They are playing a key role in the new curriculum change” (SY-ML4),

Most schools have also noticed that curriculum change not merely involves curriculum, but is related to the change of school culture and management system. The supportive evaluation and reward system in school, professional support and opportunities provided for teachers, concern for teachers’ recognition, satisfaction and welfare in their career, cooperation from parents and community, flattened management structure that encourages inclusive engagement of teachers in school management, and energetic school culture as a learning community in favor of new initiatives are all considered important factors in implementing the new curriculum.

“The curriculum management and leadership at school level are very crucial. Systematic and specific planning at school level, in subject department and year team group, are important in engaging the whole school in the reform with clear blueprints and guidelines” (QT-T11).

“In our school, we have collaborative lesson planning group, and also other curriculum resources to support teachers’ preparation of lessons. In addition, our school is also active in building platform and seeking opportunities for teachers’ professional development from the city” (ZH-T9).

Therefore, with the development of new curriculum implementation, we should be able to witness the reform. It will gradually nest in the complex web of the school system, be embedded in the specific context of every school, become a series of concrete reform initiatives in school’s daily practice, and break away from the superficial imitation at the early stage of reform. The sense-making process of new curriculum implementation in reality is transforming the policy documents to real actions to realize core ideas and underlying intent of curriculum reform. It is regularly connecting the reform with the school’s organizational structure, development plan, institutional system, in-service training for teachers, research project, requirements for students, and outside partners. In this sense, with the contextualization of curriculum reform, the actual reform eventually takes place in grassroots action.

CONCLUSIONS

Curriculum policy change is not a series of instructions or intentions that can be easily achieved. It always displays a variety of stances, styles, and problems in the “real relational settings in which schooling is located” and evolves with time. Institutionalizing the new curriculum policy is a long, continuous process. The new initiatives in curriculum policy become a stable curriculum behavior and part of daily teaching activity.

More than ten years of curriculum policy change in Mainland China has been shown as a holistic process in the systematic curriculum reconstruction. The changing process is developed vis-à-vis the modernization of China’s social, political, and economic systems. It brings a more scientific, normative, and democratic process of policy change that emphasizes power decentralization, system design, professional leadership, and public participation. All these efforts indicate the maturation of curriculum policy operation, breaking away from “experience-oriented approach” (Huang, 2003) and focusing on the effectiveness, justice, and legitimacy of change. However, as previously mentioned, the procedural justice in the change process does not absolutely justify the fair result of the change. A real change in a particular nation or region is always affected by its cultural, political, and ideological conflicts or struggles. Based on the ten years’ experience of curriculum change in Mainland China, further considerations and concerns need to be pondered. These reflections are based on the experience of the Chinese and developed from their perspective, but may still shed new light on the curriculum policy change process with international significance.

Importance of Strengthening Curriculum Research.

Curriculum policy change is a professional and specialized field of change, unlike other educational policy change. Curriculum change always involves design of new curriculum structure, content, resource, or evaluation system. Hence, the continuous adjustment of curriculum system is not only based on previous experience, but, more importantly, based on the profound understanding of curriculum and its system and prediction of its development. The understanding of the system and the ability to suggest and adjust the change can only be developed through theoretical and practical curriculum research. Although in China’s new curriculum reform, the importance of basic research on curriculum has been realized, basic research is still at the early stage, and related research on curriculum policy is far from sufficient. First, the theoretical basis and methods of existing curriculum policy research remains quite weak. “Most research involves only the general policy comments”, rather than comprehensive policy analysis. Meanwhile, the usage of traditional research methods, such as document and historical analyses, comparative study, and empirical research, remain greatly preferred. The lack of theoretical foundation and interdisciplinary explanatory research has limited the research vision in curriculum

study and resulted in similar, unimpressive research findings. Second, structural imbalance is another prominent issue in the current curriculum policy research. It focuses more on structural analysis, over detailed discussion and interpretation. In addition, the practice-oriented curriculum research is still a weak link in curriculum study, expanding the gap of theoretical curriculum research with curriculum policy design and curriculum action in practice, which is known as “three skins” (Huang, 2003) in the field. Considering these facts, more efforts should be focused on the basic research of curriculum theory, policy, and practice to develop a systematic, multidimensional, and in-depth research foundation for curriculum change, as these are important to the optimization of curriculum policy change, as well as to the scientific development of curriculum field.

*Construction of Specialized Working Group and Normalized System
in Curriculum Change*

Effective and responsible curriculum change needs to rely on long-term and sustained research and demonstration through specialized groups on a regular basis. Without the specialized organization and persistent attention, we cannot guarantee the continuity and coherence of curriculum system development. In China, curriculum policy change continues to follow the project-driven model, which is only effective in one-time curriculum change. It is able to gather a group of experts in the field in a short time, and guarantee the scientificity and integrity of change to some extent. However, sustaining the consistency and continuity of curriculum policy is difficult in the long run. The continuous development of curriculum system is based on the systematic, long-term exploration of the system and on insightful perception, and on sustained reflection of a specific subject matter or thematic domain. To achieve such a goal, curriculum change should become an institutionalized activity, rather than a one-time government agenda. A specialized research and development team should be established to promote the adjustment and revision of curriculum policy on a regular basis in order to ensure the inherent continuity of curriculum policy that targets continuous curriculum system development. Recently, the need to establish a specialized team and an institutionalized system in curriculum change has been noticed by MOE.² In addition to the set up of professional agency, the specialization of internal staff of education offices in government is also a fundamental key to enhance the professionalization and institutionalization of curriculum policy change.

*Awareness of Shared Curriculum Power and the Assurance of Specific Working
Mechanism in Curriculum Change*

In the trend of the worldwide curriculum policy change, the distribution of curriculum power has become a consensus. However, the achievement of democratic participation and power autonomy in curriculum change relies on careful consideration of following issues. The first aspect is the consciousness of every participant of his/

her rights and shared participation and power in curriculum policy change. In China especially, the long-term bureaucratic control and hierarchy monitoring in education administrative system have formed the tradition of obedience to authority. To foster the sense of distributed power in curriculum change, “people need to view them as subjects.” They need to “acknowledge the existence of their perspectives and perceptions,” and “respect for their shared intelligence and powers of choice” (Scheffler, 1984) in the change. This self-consciousness of shared curriculum power is divided into two parts: (1) reflection of people who are in power and the self-awareness of their role in new curriculum policy change as policymaker, inspector or supporter and service provider; and (2) reflection of people who have been long absent in curriculum decision making (teachers, the public, students, and so on) and the self-awareness of their legitimate power in curriculum policy change, such as the right to be informed, to participate, express one’s views, make recommendations, and their professional authority in classroom teaching, among others. Clarifying the subjective power without being marginalized and objectified is the first and most crucial step in guaranteeing actual power distribution and democratic participation in curriculum policy change. The second aspect is the substantive and detailed work mechanism and institutional specifications to guarantee the democratic participation and power implementation. Without institutional assurance and a feasible working mechanism, the decentralization of curriculum power, the scientificity of curriculum change process will only remain at the level of symbolic significance, and will result in empty talk. In curriculum policy change, some important working mechanisms need to be emphasized and established systematically, such as the information disclosure system, communication and feedback mechanism, policy deliberation system, power supervision mechanism, accountability advisory mechanism, and so on. Thus, the awareness and commitment of every subject in curriculum change, as well as the strong support in institutional and mechanism construction, are important basis for effective operation of curriculum policy.

*Maintaining Coherent and Consistent Attention Toward
One Curriculum Policy Change*

Every reform has its own rules. A curriculum change also has its time cycle. As Fullan (2007) comments, compared to a step-by-step task, the performance of new behavior needs more time. Any aggressive and catch-up of policy operation would be counterproductive. In Mainland China, even after more than ten years of promotion, complaints continue to be inevitable about the hasty curriculum policy implementation. As one principal commented, “some immature ways should be improved for the healthy development of curriculum change. The law of education should be followed and the curriculum change should be pushed forward gradually. Rome was not built in a day. Hence, we are not aiming to achieve holistic success in a short time, but to bring about fundamental changes through small efforts and innovations in practice. Instant success does not apply in curriculum change. Either

in the pilot or in the implementation period, the actual use of new curriculum will need more time than any utilitarian intentions.” With instability, modifiability, and a short processing cycle, the comment reminds us what curriculum change is facing. Any subtle factors, such as the transfer of key leaders, the change of government agenda, or the diminishing administrative support, would challenge the coherence and consistency of curriculum policy, placing in danger the effectiveness and depth of the new change. Considering the complicated and persistent curriculum change, the enhancement of curriculum policy change is better not seen as a one-spot political action, but as a professional and continuous process of trying out that requires consistent attention and support.

Significance of Supportive Public Opinion and Social Environment

Curriculum policy change is always accompanied by various opinions. Some are supportive, defensive, resistant, and some stay neutral. The diverse opinions of different stakeholders form the social environment in which the curriculum policy change resides, bringing social pressure to school leaders and classroom teachers in curriculum decisions making. Primarily, the academic direction of curriculum change in professional field also directs public opinion. Especially in China, with the tradition of respect for authority and scholars, the academic discussions will always indicate the general trend in policy interpretation, lead the focus of public attention, and finally guide policy practice. The rational and decent academic direction of public opinions in curriculum change not only depends on the professional competency of educational researchers, but also relies on their moral commitment and social responsibility. Another crucial power in forming public opinions is from mass media. The media not only play an important role “in the policy-making process,” but also determine “what the masses will know about, think about, and talk about” (Dye, 2001). Generally, in China, the public opinion environment of curriculum policy change needs to be improved. In the public discussion of curriculum policy, the media still lack accurate sense of problems identification and capacity for professional deliberation, focusing on micro-level questions that belong to teachers’ professional regulation and autonomy in classroom teaching. They do not require universal discussion, and ignore the decisive problems that will facilitate public understanding of new curriculum policy. The market-oriented mentality and the pursuit of tabloidization in mass media will also result in false progress with regards to public opinion of curriculum change. It will miss the inherent duties of serious investigation, insightful thinking, and social responsibility. Furthermore, the establishment of sound public opinion and guidance system is also important in preventing irrational arguments in building the public opinion environment, and encouraging more rational and decent public interactions. Overall, curriculum policy change is not exclusive in the curriculum field, but goes far beyond the boundary of educational system as a social construct. We have common interests in curriculum policy change in terms of providing our

children with better education. Curriculum policy serves the society with a more well-prepared labors, and provides our nation with more well-educated citizens. In this sense, everyone has the responsibility to provide the curriculum policy change with optimum conditions during the process.

The process of curriculum policy is full of flexibility, uncertainty, fluidity, diversity, contradictions, and complexity. It is a process of recontextualization and adaptation, of empowerment and capacity building, and of discourse confrontation among different stakeholders, and a continuous exploration and interpretation of inner meaning of curriculum policy change. Similar to a competent doctor who not only provides a prescription for the patient, but also collects new evidences to modify his/her former diagnosis, curriculum policy change is the process to increase the possibility of new understandings based on their prior knowledge and pre-structure. After all, no research can claim total understanding of curriculum policy change, or that what is not discussed in research is not important. What is important is to deepen and extend the understanding of the curriculum policy change in different situations and contexts to facilitate and optimize our related behaviors and practices. Curriculum policy change is an open and evolving process that cannot be confined in the existing model. Only through ongoing reflections and criticisms can we develop the capacity to face the emerging issues. As Fullan (2007) reminds us, success is only the measure we take with regard to the ever changing problems. Therefore, the research on curriculum policy change in this chapter is only a brief glance of Chinese experience and a reflection of our perspectives.

NOTES

- ¹ School-based teaching and research system are newly introduced to schools in the new curriculum reform. School-based professional development system for teachers involves professional leadership, peer cooperation, and independent reflection. The research and teaching activities are carried out regularly in school, and are a very effective, practice-oriented, and flexible system in promoting teachers' professional development.
- ² The establishment of a specialized curriculum guidance and deliberation team (organization) at the national level has been noted by MOE. MOE also entrusts a specialized group to research the project, and has submitted a consultation report on "National Curriculum and Textbook Guidance and Deliberation Committee: Internal Experience" (Cui Yunhuo, 2008). From the international experience, to promote curriculum development along with society, a permanent and specialized group that is able to track, research, investigate, and demonstrate necessary changes in curriculum system at regular basis is not only an important and indispensable organizational structure, but also a scientific and effective way to carry out new changes, which is the purpose of the system in a particular nation or region.

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