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5. CURRICULUM RESEARCH IN MAINLAND CHINA: LOCALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION*

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is associated with the non-Western countries' demand for localization. As a developing country faced with the Western countries' strong involvement in various academic subjects in philosophy and social sciences, China feels deeply worried. On one hand, it has been embracing Western academic thinking since the 20th century. This patronage is evident in China's introduction to and appropriation of the temporal spirit, academic thinking, academic standards, and academic system of the West, allowing it to secure its position as a global academic leader. On the other hand, since the introduction of Western academic thinking in China, some scholars have begun to establish and assert the relevance of local knowledge. For example, Yan Fu (January, 1854–October 27, 1921), a Chinese scholar and translator, believes that the “re-trial” of ideas and methods should be clearly advocated in the introduction of Western ideas. He said that the “test” of success is not in the books but in nature and society.

In Yan Fu's view, “reading the book of [the] original land” is the initial expression of localization. This view has a relatively far-reaching effect on China's localization of the social sciences. Zhang Taiyan (1869–1936), a Chinese scholar and translator, clearly points out that the subjects in the social sciences are different from those of natural science; hence, in studies on the former, researchers must pay attention to the social conditions in their countries. In *'Social Michiaki' Business Against* (1907), Zhang Taiyan explains that social science is different from natural science, because the latter can be copied without national boundaries, whereas the former has to pay attention to the specificity of its country. The pursuit of localization has become the emotional appeal of non-Western countries. The process of maintaining the necessary tension between globalization and localization is not only a worldwide issue but also an inevitable problem, which the non-Western countries need to address. In fact, the history of China's curriculum research is the same as the history of social science research. This essay analyzes the two complementary themes, namely, localization and globalization, as well as the respective histories of their development. Furthermore, this essay probes into the theoretical framework from which lessons can be drawn so that the future trend of the systematization and globalization of China's curriculum studies can be described.

Curriculum Research: Globalization and Its History

Since the early 20th century, China's dream has been to conduct a curriculum research that is meant for the globalized world. What is worth exploring are the history of the globalization of China's curriculum research as well as the background, conditions, and characteristics of academic research.

Some researchers pointed out that the word "globalization" first appeared in the English Dictionary in 1944, and the word "globalism" to which it was associated appeared in 1943. We believe that the term "globalization" is not only a concept but also a phenomenon of human social development. At present, the term is defined in many ways. Globalization refers to the fact that different cultures and economic systems around the world are connected and are similar due to the influence of large multinational companies, resulting in improved communication.¹ In the usual sense, globalization refers to the growing global links, the development of human life on a global scale, the rise of global awareness, and the political, economic and trade interdependence among countries. The term can also be interpreted as the compression of the world as a whole. Based on this basic interpretation, at least a few points can be generalized. Globalization is a concept that refers to people's vague understanding of "border" in the development of the world. In other words, globalization is the blending of the economic, political, and cultural spheres of different countries, thereby breaking down boundaries that divide them. Likewise, globalization is regarded as an inevitable development stage of modern society. From the perspective of Western scholars, modernization is a process of social development, which includes all the features of the high-level development of technology, politics and economy, among others. Last but not least, globalization is a social theory that allows us to explain and understand the whole process of social change. The theory explains the process of modernization as a grand theory that is known as the integration of different social science disciplines and the orderly process of the complex reality of the outside world.

Modernization theory refers to the following research perspectives. First, the characteristics of traditional society are determined by the cultural characteristics of Western society. Those that are different from Western society are considered the cultural characteristics of traditional society. The distinctions between traditional and modern societies are determined through the differences of their cultural characteristics. Second, the effects of concept, values, and moral are at the core of social change and modernization and are regarded as a cultural process. In other words, modernization promotes the spread of Western industrial civilization in the world. Third, modernization can be seen generally in the world; hence, third-world countries can import Western capital, technology, institutions, and cultural values to achieve modernization. However, because the stages of development and modernization vary, societies differ from each other in terms of the rate of success, particularly in appropriating the characteristics of other modernized societies. In short, globalization refers to the interaction of politics, economy, and other fields.

More importantly, it can be seen as a research perspective that stresses the world's universal nature knowledge which is often seen as a representative of the advanced Western academic standards. Thus, globalization has become a phenomenon that non-Western countries seek to achieve to obtain a more integrated academic thought. The process involved in the development of China's curriculum research resembles the development of economic and political globalization. Traditionally, China does not have a sense of contemporary Western academic curriculum research. With the introduction of Western theories into the country, Chinese curriculum research has come to be regarded as "alien" rather than native. The introduction of Western curriculum research inspired Chinese academics to establish their own system and method of curriculum research. For instance, Chinese researchers learned the basic approach, content, and conclusions of curriculum research in Western countries by translating and publishing foreign works, such as *Course and Design Organization on the Primary School Curriculum*. These works fascinated the Chinese academics and served as the foundation of the country's curriculum research. Other Chinese works are compilations of translated works, including *Introduction to the Primary School Curriculum*, *Principles and Methods of Curriculum Development*, *History of China's School Curriculum*, *Of the Primary School Curriculum*, *Principles of Curriculum Development*, *Evolution of the Primary School Curriculum*, *Comprehensive Course on the Lower Primary*, and *The Evolution of Modern Chinese Primary School Curriculum*. The basic framework of Western curriculum research was introduced through compilations and then integrated with the actual social conditions in China. In-depth discussions on these works gave the Chinese academics opportunities to examine the problems in their respective curricula.

The history of curriculum research also belongs to studies that borrow the framework of the Western curriculum analysis. The teaching materials in China in the early 20th century are additional areas of curriculum research, which are mostly about the convenience of teaching, such as *On Teaching Material of Primary School*, and *The New Research on Teaching Material of Primary School*. The peak of China's curriculum research was from the early 20th century to the mid-20th century. During this period the discussions on the theories of curriculum reform were also published aside from the various works on curriculum research.

Curriculum research during that period was also seen as the initial phase of globalizing curriculum research. That period can be divided into three stages. First, it began with the introduction of Western curriculum research, which encouraged the Chinese to conduct curriculum research. Second, China's objective reality was described and explained through the imitation of foreign theory. Finally, foreign theory was used selectively in accordance with China's own tradition and deep understanding of the country's situation at that time. Globalization requires people to look into the world; thus, curriculum research inevitably includes a study of the experiences of foreign countries.

From 1949 to 1978, curriculum research in Mainland China was influenced by the pedagogical thinking of the Soviet Union. At that time, curriculum research was not

LIU

considered as a major field of study. However, due to the succession and imitation of Soviet Union's curriculum and teaching ideas, China aimed at achieving similar success in its curriculum research.

The revival of China's educational research, particularly research on its curriculum theory, ushered a new era of development. Upon establishing the importance of curriculum research, it has become the main focus of published papers and monographs in the field of educational research. This also paved the way for the emergence of the problem domain of curriculum research. Such issues as curriculum design, curriculum development, and the history of development became the important topics of curriculum research at that time. Finally, foreign representative works were translated and published, such as *Curriculum Research Series*, which included *Theory and Practice of Curriculum Research*, *School Science Curriculum*, *Curriculum theory*, and *The Theoretical Basis of General Secondary Education Content*. Similarly, two writings of Chinese scholars, namely, *Curriculum Theory* and *History of Modern Chinese Curriculum* were also published. Apart from these, *Curriculum Introduction* and a large number of foreign works were also translated and published in the recent decade. Recently, when China's basic education curriculum reform program was implemented in the whole country, translating and publishing foreign works on curriculum theory became an obsession among academics. During that period, the typical curriculum research still featured foreign curriculum treatises. However, a large number of studies based on China's curriculum practice quenched the Chinese scholar's thirst to catch up with the trends in the world's curriculum research.

From the brief description of Chinese curriculum research, its globalization course primarily reflects an introduction to Western curriculum research. The establishment of a system for curriculum research satisfied the criteria of Western academics. In this respect, Chinese researchers started their curriculum exploration based on domestic facts and practices, aiming to achieve two goals: (1) obtaining cutting-edge results similar to those attained globally in the field of curriculum research, and (2) advocating contemporary thoughts on China's curricula in an international forum.

Curriculum Research: A Course on Localization

China's initiation of curriculum research system was inspired by the very arrival of Western curriculum theory in the country. The underlying logic is that Western curriculum theory is advanced. However, research conducted in the West cannot essentially offer an effective explanation and guidance to curriculum practices in China owing to the different political, economic, and socio-cultural backgrounds. Hence, creating a curriculum with Chinese characteristics has become the primary essence of localizing curriculum research.

Localization of Chinese Curriculum Research

“Self-localization” Huntington states that self-localization is launched by leaders endowed with capability, perspicacity, and adaptability. He asserts that the process of localization within any country is primarily staged by those who have the experience, especially those who obtained their education overseas, so that they could instill self-localization into the national consciousness.

In China, self-localization was initiated by some insightful pioneers who had strong national consciousness and had full understanding of the Western countries. They shared a basic trait, which is promoting “Western” research in certain fields. Therefore, their goal was to introduce Western academic thoughts in terms of research objects, methods, frameworks, and so on. In other words, a wealth of Western academic works were translated and subsequently published in China.² Considering the foreign curriculum theories localized in China, they experienced the same stages from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century; they also witnessed the emergence of various versions of pedagogy, primarily, the translated works of Japanese pedagogy. Later on, many Chinese studying in American and European countries started to come back to China and began to translate a group of Western pedagogical works. From this phenomenon, the primary condition for the localization of Chinese curriculum research was drawn from the needs of the people who had enough knowledge of the curriculum in Western countries (Japan included). They then chose which among the Western works should be introduced based on their integrative grasp of Western academic research.

The localization of the curriculum theories can be called “self-localization,” but if understood merely through this concept, it could turn into a mire of simplification. Thus, we need to probe into this very stage.

The presupposition for localization is the superiority of Western academic research over that of China. This notion also pervades many other social sciences in China. Only when this supposition is adopted can there be any possibility and necessity to introduce Western academic research. This preconception that some people with certain amount of overseas experience and research capabilities started localization research in China is of great significance to Chinese academic research.

However, one of the goals of self-localization is Westernization, which in terms of the stages of social development, is the Westernized process of promoting modernization. The academics’ main intention is to take Western social or academic development as a basic model for domestic development. Western academic research methods are regarded as standards or models in conducting domestic research. Their initial judgment, which is social and cultural upgrading in the East, is weak. This weakness naturally causes all sorts of shocks from the West. To accept or reject the mainstream culture in the modern West has become an issue of global influence, and is related to the crucial options for national prosperity and well-being. Hence, what should be considered is the process of importing Western culture to China, which has also been a target of debate and research since the first appropriation of Western academic thoughts.

Localization of the Second Generation of Elites

The so-called “localization of the second generation of elite” refers to the tendency and attitude of the young generation of intellectual elites toward Western theories and domestic traditions. Their basic traits are as follows. First, the young intellectuals in their thirties differ much from their former generation in terms of thoughts, knowledge, and attitudes. Second, they have a more positive recognition of domestic civilization and present a passion for domestic classics, whereas their predecessors regarded Westernization as the major option. In other words, because of their distinct attitude, they do not only care about using Western theories but also affirm the significance of domestic and traditional academics and theories; thus, they integrated and combined Western and Chinese ideas.

The typical marks of “localization of the second generation of elite” are “de-Westernization” and assertion of an “indigenous culture.” The former stands for the tendency of cultural development demonstrated when battling against the occupation or control from Western cultures or theories. This is characterized by the use of emotional appeal to develop and construct its own framework as the basis for cultural research and rational exploration. Meanwhile, assertion of an “indigenous culture” represents the reexamination of domestic traditional culture, and provides due emphasis and fresh judgment upon cultural heritage in order to contribute to the extant body of research on contemporary theories. In view of this aim, any behavior that denigrates the value of traditional culture signifies the researchers’ lack of cultivation.

The emergence of the “localization of the second generation of elite” results from two interactive elements: (1) the remarkable achievements in the sphere of Western theories or academic research, and (2) the application of domestic theories that can eventually bring about diverse and in-depth domestic research. Moreover, localization could stimulate the researchers’ confidence and pride in indigenous culture. With their increasing identification with domestic culture, they can eliminate the control from the West and gain greater independence, thus forming a trend of “de-Westernization.” The course of Westernization is undoubtedly accompanied by alienation and disorder. Fierce Westernization can lead to a kind of disconnect between traditions and research status quo as well as to dissatisfaction among researchers. In turn, these could give rise to anomie and identification crises that could, in turn, contribute to the rejuvenation of domestic culture. These two factors can then encourage people to examine all dimensions of Western culture and carry out local research at a higher level. The “localization of the second generation of elite” arrives and progresses rightly due to this new generation’s awareness of the flaws of Western culture, their full understanding of its culture, and their strong identification with domestic traditional culture.

*The Expression of Curriculum Research Localization in China:
The Conditions of Addition*

For the localization of curriculum theories, it is necessary to add some conditions to foreign curriculum theories to promote its growth in our own country.

Whether or not a theory can emerge in another country depends on the level of similarities between its cultural background and that of the foreign country. At the same time, it depends on whether or not the researchers can adapt the theory to the native customs and the conventional mores of the country. Hence, adding some conditions is an important issue that researchers should focus on in the localization of curriculum theories.

Adding conditions to achieve the localization of curriculum theories is represented below.

The first one is strengthening some foreign theories by following the practice of emphasizing learning from or converting foreign curriculum theories on the basis of specific Chinese curriculum practice in China. This is apparent in the New Curriculum Reform movement. The school-based curriculum theory exemplifies the value of the New Curriculum Reform mainly because schools and teachers are marginalized, and they do not play their roles to the fullest. This requirement of practice just corresponds with the related school-based curriculum theory. Schools are required to launch related research only because this is one of the curriculum policies of the country. At present, the school-based curriculum is one of the important issues that these schools integrate in their studies. Originally, the school-based curriculum is a basic system of the national curriculum. The essential problem it needs to solve is how to show the power of the curriculum such that the teachers and schools can be encouraged to play their own roles. The introduction of this theory is obviously important to the Chinese Curriculum Reform and its practice. However, what is worth considering is that the school-based curricula of Western countries have formed systems that have gained the support of schools and teachers. In comparison, the function of schools and teachers as curriculum leaders is traditionally not well-understood in China. In other words, due to the differences among national traditions, school-based curriculum is only good in theory but not effective in practice, because this is advocated but not practiced by schools and teachers. Learning from the practice of Chinese Curriculum Reform, some elementary and secondary schools have taken school-based curricula as their own research subjects and practice school-based curricula theories. However, the fact is that some research just borrowed from foreign school-based curriculum theories, including the design of the research processing, the selection of research methods, and even the research results. Moreover, these academics have developed hundreds of school-based curriculum theories in three years. The problem is that school leaders do not comprehend the significance of school-based curricula to the schools' development. In addition, teachers do not have a comprehensive understanding of the function of school-based curricula as teaching tools; thus, the development of these curricula has become but a formality. In this way, "practical application" has become an excuse to introduce foreign curriculum theories in the local setting.

Second, curriculum theories borrowed from foreign sources and then introduced in China hardly develop, because the researchers lack sufficient background knowledge of the foreign theories. This is also one of the important reasons why curriculum theories should be localized. Throughout the history of the introduction

of curriculum theories in China, we find that most researchers do not analyze the primary texts, in terms of the background of theories, the social conditions of the time, and the cultural research tradition of other countries. Moreover, foreign theories are often introduced blindly and completely. The introduction of Taylor's course principles exemplifies this phenomenon. Nearly all works mention the course principles of Taylor and see them as the milestone of modern curriculum theories. Most studies identified four basic curriculum problems, namely, determining educational objectives, selecting learning experience, organizing learning experience, and making curriculum evaluation. Based on this finding, Chinese researchers began to evaluate the Taylor Principles in relation to Chinese curriculum research. What they did not consider were the background and the difference between foreign and Chinese cultural traditions, among others, making the direct introduction of foreign curriculum theories endemic. The deficiency lies in the creation of Taylor's evaluation theories, its meaning in education reform, and its causes, such as the Eight-Year Study and the connection between middle schools and universities. Most of the local research centered only on the meaning of the theories; thus, the Chinese evaluation and understanding of Taylor Principles focused only on the theories, ignoring the difference between its background and Chinese facts. Whatever was different about the research tradition between America and China was not accorded enough importance. America considers curriculum as the research tradition, whereas China considers teaching as the research tradition. Consequently, the analysis of the difference between the two bodies of academic research became a tradition.

Third, the Chinese Basic Education Reform in 2001 was based on the diversity of theories. The researchers thought that the diversity of theories could make up for the inadequacy of one theory only to realize that a complementary relationship must exist among these theories. However, both the prevalence of a research theory and the translation and evolution of theories did not show the complementary relationships of curriculum theories. In terms of the reform and practice of curricula, the emergence of the same pendulum phenomenon means that the complementary relationship of curriculum theories in research is merely an ideal condition or a spirit we need to pursue. In fact, it affirms that the application of a single theory is bound to produce new problems. Hence, many researchers and curriculum reform advocates apply various kinds of theories to curriculum reform and practice although the mixture does not guarantee the solution of practical problems in the curriculum.

Politicalization. The localization of the educational curriculum in China, similar to the localization of other subjects, started from the country's political program and economy including the national power of these current social systems. This finding means that when doing research on the basic problems in the curriculum, we often take ideology as the basis and orientation of the research, thereby making national politics the purpose of the research. The research process thus became formalized and mono-cultural, because the thoughts espoused by Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong served as the bases and the basic problems of the research.

During the first half of the 20th century, what saved and strengthened China's political program, economy, and national power was research on history. This fact suggests that when conducting research on curriculum localization, improving the national basic power through curriculum reform must be emphasized. The setting and the implementation of curriculum reform should also focus on how to fulfill the national aim, principle, and policy of education in order to inculcate among the students the spirit of the San-min Doctrine – a political philosophy developed by Sun Yat-sen. Through this, we can combine the ideas in the foreign curriculum with the specific practices of our country. After the liberation, the success of curriculum localization was manifested in the shift from overall Westernization to “the Soviet Union.” The courses were about the Soviet Union and its system, which were copied to correspond to Chinese practices. However, because the Soviet Union at that time had not yet begun the tradition of curriculum research, China's curriculum research was neglected; in fact, it even stagnated. The original performance was still a serious political tendency, because they have just begun instituting reform and opening up. As we study the course of the phenomenon of political reflection and criticism, the tendency of turning to politics has unfortunately gone to the extreme, that is, Western theory has become the research orientation. Western theory on school curricula has come to be regarded as the highest and most advanced weapon.

The Chinese curriculum practice, since the liberation in 1949, signified ideological involvement; this resulted in the creation of curriculum policy, including the control and management of the school curriculum that embodied the powers of the national will. In general, ideology affects curriculum policy and curriculum practices mainly through the following ways. First, ideology as a belief system has confirmed the current curriculum policy in line with moral principles, because it can recognize and unite people. In a class society, the ideology often has a politicized feature. In order to implement and issue the policy of legality and legitimacy of its defense, the ruling group thus uses the set policy for the marked line with its own brand of ideology.

“In political life, no political group takes collective action blindly or unconsciously, but guided by a specific ideology. Ideology can provide political action with rationality, such as for members of the group that ideology can make them believe that a particular political group [or] political action is not without reason, is legitimate [and] reasonable, so that they can win public sympathy, and even [public] recognition and support”

In curriculum practice in China, ideological performance mainly values the curriculum design, curriculum formulation of goals, choices of curriculum content, curriculum evaluation, and so on. Second, the ruling party possesses the political policy-making capacity, choice, and the power to make decisions. Introducing a curriculum policy is by no means an automatic, natural process but a man-made selective process. In terms of curriculum reform, the goals achieved, the kind of curriculum development policies to be adopted, the process of distributing curriculum

resources, and so on, are manipulated mainly by state authority, which determines the course of the reform, as the country's organ of authority.

Superficialization. In the process of localizing curriculum theory, the course of the superficial theory is manifested in the analysis or theory of the foreign copy without any modification or digestion. This is also manifested by the fact that curriculum theory is supplied in a variety of casual occasions. Curriculum practice is particularly apparent in the course of previous research. Many researchers have conducted studies on curriculum implementation. Curriculum research in constructivist theory is the theoretical foundation, in which the whole constructivist course (or teaching) introduces the theory. However, in these studies, in-depth research was not conducted on the introduction of constructivism curriculum theory. The researchers only repeated the basic ideas of constructivism without grasping the essence of constructivism. These studies did not use the constructivist theory to explain the basic teaching behavior. Instead, they only focused on explaining the tendency to teach and how effective it is. The lack of applications of constructivist theory explains why this is feasible.

In terms of curriculum theory research, the theory of reference for other subjects is also superficial. This superficiality is based mainly on the lack of understanding or analysis of the background, scope, and function of this theory. Thus, the researchers have failed to fully demonstrate the function of curriculum theory.

Operationalization. This is the process of converting the assumptions and concepts into empirical observation with reliability and validity. The initial meaning of the term is associated with direct physical measurements. To date, it is used mainly for quantitative studies aimed at designing a satisfactory experience category by bridging the gap between concepts and indicators. Theoretical, abstract entities are better explained through these categories of measurement. In other words, operationalization is a theory with a higher level of abstraction shown in an operational way. The manifestation of the theory is a set of narratives consisting of the concept, scope, assumptions, and so on. Therefore, if the theory could guide the practice, a conversion is needed to teach people who work in the frontlines how to properly apply the theory.

Some people think that any theory should play a role in practice. This viewpoint has become the basic orientation in the development and construction of contemporary curriculum theory. However, not all theories guide the practice. Thus, the debate on the nature of curriculum theory has emerged in China in recent years. In fact, the debate on the nature of academic disciplines within curriculum theory is the essence of the controversy on the function of the latter. In other words, whether or not emphasis should be given to the function of curriculum theory to guide practice has become a basic point of contention. Through this debate, the understanding of the nature of curriculum theory is linked to the understanding of curriculum theory and practice. This debate is caused by the varying recognitions of the status of curriculum theory in practice. Curriculum theory can interpret and guide curriculum practice. However, not all aspects of such theory are practice-oriented or have the

responsibility to guide practice. If these recognitions are established, curriculum theory should include some theories with the task of theoretical construction.

Many academics believe that curriculum theory should guide curriculum practice, and thus the latter is regarded as an important theoretical point for the construction of the former, leading to theoretical research being divided between theory and practice. However, theory eventually loses its essential characteristics and functions.

Operationalization is a basic orientation in curriculum theory, and the basic characteristics of this theory guide curriculum practice. The basic approach to guide practice is the operation of theory. However, the nature of theory itself decides whether or not curriculum theory could be operationalized. As mentioned above, curriculum theory is still controversial; some insist on the theoretical nature of curriculum, while others support the disciplinary nature of the application nature or the practice of curriculum. If we adhere to the theoretical nature of curriculum theory, the basic purpose of theory construction would not be that this theory guides practice. However, the main orientation of the development of such theory should be that it guides practice. Even if curriculum theory is regarded as a discipline-guiding practice, the discipline of curriculum theory can also be subject to division. A considerable part of curriculum theory cannot guide practice. Moreover, this kind of recognition is guided by the universal idea that the basic requirement of Western curriculum theory development in China is its operation. The fundamental viewpoint of that kind of recognition is that curriculum theory in certain forms of operation could be applied in other regions or countries. The background, the method of explaining the problem, and the narrative processes of curriculum theory are often subject to the differences in terms of tradition, history, and reality. Thus, one theory may not be applicable in another country or region. The application of curriculum theory depends primarily on whether or not these related theories can emerge in a simple or an operational way. Finally, operationalization is a program or mode in which curriculum theory can be restored to be operated in practice; furthermore, the idea implied in theory can be presented using operational steps. However, in the research on curriculum theory localization, the operationalization of curriculum theory is usually presented as *simplification*. When a certain foreign curriculum theory possesses its own operational procedures or steps, these steps cannot be changed in practice as an "imperial edict." Therefore, all those steps are copied without the slightest change, whether in their introduction or in the specific curriculum practice. As a result, curriculum research in China has become merely a validation study of foreign curriculum theory.

Variability. Research has not been done on the basic process of operation but has been done on the interpretation of theory; meanwhile some curriculum researchers in China often derive some operating procedures from the essence of theory and call it "creation." In a sense, this derivation is a "creation" process. However, many researchers ignore the fact that foreign curriculum theory is "pure theory," making transition to practice impossible. Thus, deriving the operating procedures from the existing theory is a misunderstanding of theory itself.

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The application of foreign curriculum theory in the curriculum localization theory in China often emphasizes only the operability of theory and lack of concern regarding the concepts implied by these curriculum theories. As a result, the practice of curriculum theory focuses only on the use of some core vocabularies and operating procedures of such theories. From the perspective of localization, curriculum theory is the origin of universalism.

The localization of curriculum theory in China shows that we need more analysis and research on foreign curriculum theory with a methodology dissecting the latter, including analysis of the spiritual background, research methods, and reality of practice characteristics in the operation procedures of foreign curriculum theory. This research direction neither praises nor belittles research attitude toward foreign curriculum theory, and as such, it can help form an objective evaluation of foreign curriculum theory. Simultaneously, localization requires the preservation of Chinese tradition and contemporary practice. Localization seeks the best relevant balance between foreign curriculum theory and Chinese traditional and contemporary practice. However, traditional inheritance requires construction of a contemporary curriculum theory in order to determine the reasonable elements in traditional curriculum theory and practice, thus marking contemporary curriculum practice as the starting point.

The Development of Local Curriculum Research

In China, curriculum has been studied for approximately ten decades. In the past, Chinese curriculum did not automatically adopt Western curriculum theories but conducted some verification research. These include the establishment of Dewey's experimental school and the application of Dewey thought in the 1920s or 1930s, the experimental practice of Bruner's curriculum theory in the 1980s, and the practice on Su Baer thought as well as a variety of constructivist curricula, which belong to paradigms with the introduction and application of Western curriculum. In the study of curriculum localization, Chinese characteristics experience greater growth in terms of localization on Chinese curriculum studies. This local growth can simply be treated as curriculum theory construction with Chinese characteristics, and these theories are totally different from the study of Western curriculum.

Historically, Tao Xingzhi's educational theory and practice is credited for the development of localization in Chinese education research. Its education and teaching goals are typically bound to local characteristics. After this nascent stage, the priority of the curriculum experts in China became the construction of the local curriculum and its system.

According to curriculum theory, more curriculum research questions have been formed that are different from those of the West. For example, regarding the disciplinary nature of curriculum theory, when the course is in its infancy, Chinese scholars conduct research on its disciplinary nature, and the starting point is largely determined by the nature of the subject. Thus, we can recognize the course construction target (only for the theoretical construction or for the practice service), the basic content, and its

method. The discipline of curriculum theory is one important problem to study, and thus, many studies have focused on this issue and generally formed the following three points. First is “the application of practical subject,” that is, the curriculum should be a very strong practical discipline rather than a purely theoretical discipline. Second is “the theory of subject,” which means that the curriculum should not be limited to the descriptive or empirical range but also reflect the nature of the theoretical discipline. Third is “the combination of subject,” which posits that curriculum theory is not only a theoretical subject but also an application subject. Thus, we shall pay attention to its practice and theoretical speculation. In reality, most Chinese scholars hold this view because a purely theoretical subject or application subject is too extreme.

As regards the disciplinary nature of curriculum theory in China, some problems are different from those of the West, such as the nature of the course and the construction of subject system. In these aspects, Chinese characteristics are seen in local curriculum theory, and diverse research conclusions have been formed.

The practice is mainly embodied in the curriculum reform and practice in Chinese schools. In the 1980s, the concepts of “happy teaching,” “subjective teaching,” “experimental teaching,” and so on, have been implemented; these are based on the problems of Chinese contemporary curriculum in practice and teaching research. To date, the representatives of Dulangkou Middle School, Yangsi Middle School, and Donglu Middle School are regarded as pioneers of the “learning first” curriculum experiment. These schools provide evidence for the growth of local modern curriculum theory, which focuses on the subjective development of students and targets lack of initial problems of students in the learning process. Therefore, the main channel in the experiment is to activate learning and to free the minds of students by setting the learning objectives and content in the teaching process. In the classroom, students should first engage in auto-learning and then exhibit the problems of self-learning through group cooperation and exchange. Afterwards, team members help them solve it, and if they are not successful, teachers would solve it. As a result, we propose “learning first.” In fact, in present-day China, “learning first” has greatly affected our teaching and curriculum theory based on the quality of teachers in the practice and learning situation of the students.

Thus, the development of local curriculum research is a requirement of curriculum localization and its main objectives.

THEORY STUDIES' VIEWS ON LOCALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION

The brief analysis above provides us with a simple framework, but we still need more in-depth theoretical research. Thus, the following issues should be analyzed.

The Globalization of Curriculum Research

Based on curriculum research, developing countries (i.e., those that are mostly non-Western countries) prefer to establish their national curriculum using Western

curriculum theory as foundation. The value of Western curriculum theory is based on universal knowledge that, in turn, is built on the basis of universal value. Basically, universal values are those that are shared in most places and situations, regardless of whether they are demonstrated in all behavior. Guided by curriculum knowledge, when Western knowledge is introduced into our country, it is seen as a universal value with universal knowledge. Thus, our curriculum would be developed and put it into practice according to Western curriculum theory.

Globalization occurs in such a background. Thus, we should introduce our curriculum knowledge and apply it to gain curriculum knowledge with a sense of universal knowledge and our own characteristics through the study of our curriculum issues. If we disseminate this knowledge to the West, it will be identified, and our curriculum would spread throughout the world.

Curriculum globalization is based on the judgment and recognition of universal knowledge. The study of curriculum globalization shows two aspects that are simultaneously contradictory and interdependent. On one hand, the introduction and application of Western knowledge are regarded as parts of universal knowledge; on the other hand, we disseminate our results to the world in order to gain recognition. However, there are some problems worth pondering as discussed below.

Based on the introduction of curriculum knowledge to the non-Western countries, the kind of curriculum knowledge is not only related to the knowledge of the course itself and its appropriateness in our nation, but is also associated with our traditional culture, current research, and methods of application. We should consider the appropriateness of the Western curriculum knowledge to our own curriculum development; otherwise, advanced knowledge of curriculum would not be effectively applied in new climate. The introduction of curriculum knowledge should be thoroughly analyzed; moreover, the background, scope of application, and basis of practice should also be investigated.

Based on the production of curriculum knowledge in the non-Western countries, gaining worldwide recognition and forming some kind of universal knowledge has become a primary task. Researchers often hold that on one hand, the premise of Western academic standards makes our research correspond to Western studies in the mode of discourse, paradigm, and value orientation, ensuring that our research results can be understood by the rest of the world. On the other hand, under the influence of idea that "nationality is the world," an increasing number of researchers emphasize that our results need to be accepted in the world. The issues of nationality need to be studied when we do research on curriculum. By revealing the real problems encountered in practice and solving them in practice, we can construct our curriculum theory and knowledge as well as obtain international understanding and recognition. Therefore, the criticism-oriented or field research method has become an important aspect of our research.

In the study of curriculum globalization, our research focuses on the introduction of Western curriculum in theory research, in the curriculum reform, and even in the curriculum practice of teachers (e.g., interaction experience, construction,

and so on). Western discourse is popular in China. Moreover, many experimental studies are based on Western curriculum theories. In the study of curriculum, China seems unable to be a major player in the discourse. The reason is that research on contemporary curriculum – be it in terms of research framework, paradigm, methods, or even issues – is limited to the range of the Western research, involving no more breakthroughs.

In short, our research on curriculum globalization is conducted at the expense of our traditional academy and the curriculum areas for testing Western curriculum, and cannot be identified by the boundaries of the academe in the West.

Research on Curriculum Localization

Do curriculum localization and globalization belong to opposite ends of a spectrum? Globalization does not depend on localization; in other words, the former is not a premise in the development of the latter nor is it based on the scarification of the latter. At this point, globalization and localization have their own operation mechanisms and methods of development. As for the research on curriculum localization, we solve the following main problems: (1) the absorption of the advanced curriculum, (2) the conformity to traditional curriculum research, and (3) the solution to the problem in the national curriculum practice.

As for the research on curriculum localization, the following problems are worthy of discussion.

The perspective of localization. This section proposes to the process of solving the three basic factors and relations to be discussed by studies on curriculum localization. The section is about elements and relations among the Western curriculum theories, the traditional curriculum, and the application of contemporary curriculum. In China, we usually regard curriculum localization as Western curriculum rooted in our nation, but the foundation we emphasize is based on the inheritance and innovation toward the traditional curriculum ideas. In this problem, what we emphasize is the introduction of Western curriculum research, combination of traditional thoughts, or identification of the consistency between the Western curriculum and traditional ideas. Thus, traditional thoughts can be developed in reforming and practicing curriculum. At this point, the curriculum reform in China at the beginning of the 21st century – regardless of the curriculum target, curriculum content, and teaching material – has retained many traditional curriculum ideas. In addition, if the research results of Western curriculum are to be practiced widely in China, Chinese contemporary curriculum practice needs to be studied as well. This means that only when the Western curriculum theories can be effectively practiced in Chinese school reform can the research value of Western curriculum be truly reflected in the local context. The applications of many school reforms, such as the curriculum thought of Dewey, the structuralism curriculum view of Bruner, have been widely successful at producing some positive effects in Chinese school reforms.

The perspective of curriculum research localization is manifested as the interactive contact between Western curriculum study and tradition and contemporary curriculum reform in China, especially in terms of school reform. Those three basic elements also constitute the basic perspective of exploring the localization of curriculum study in China, thus building a framework that functions as the basic standard to determine whether or not exploring the localization of curriculum study is a success or failure.

The Problem Domain of Localization in Curriculum Study. Localization of curriculum study is the goal of most non-Western countries. Localization, which cannot be attained solely via propaganda, requires identifying the basic problem domain according to the local situation and conducting in-depth research to obtain better development of curriculum theory and practice. The problem domain of localization in curriculum study includes the issues discussed below.

Formation of local research problems. Local issues generally refer to all issues of curriculum study pointing to the local community. These issues belong to problems related to curriculum theory and practice in China. From the view of the West, these issues can be derived from the West, but local problems, especially the issues arising from local curriculum study and practice, must also be included.

Formation of the methods of local curriculum research. In terms of the research method, curriculum study in China in recent years tends to follow the Western curriculum research and use Western methods to solve related problems concerning the curriculum in China. This phenomenon can be divided into three aspects. First, the individual methods of curriculum researchers exhibit “convergence,” thus showing a lack of distinct style. Second, the methodology of researcher-groups exhibits “disorder” and does not sufficiently impact schools. Third, the methodology of researchers is “obsolete,” which means that it is not modernized. Thus, the curriculum study in China always acquires its own methods from other subjects or education science, but does not examine the appropriateness of the method to the research questions.

Formation of a unique mode of discourse. Discourse of any subject is the manifestation of thinking of this subject; thus, the language goes beyond its literal meaning, belonging to the broad practice of an ideology. Before the mid-1980s, the research mode led by the Soviet Union only focused on teaching content and the forms of its manifestation. The major or even sole contents of curriculum study were teaching plans, teaching programs, and textbooks. From the view of discourse, these contents possessed the typical style of the Soviet Union teaching theory. After 80 years, a number of monographs and papers about curriculum theory China were discovered. These papers and monographs became popular, comprising a field of study; thus, another kind of trend, the invasion of discourse of Western curriculum theory research, is formed. In this trend, the basic content of curriculum,

including curriculum development, curriculum orientation, curriculum design and curriculum implementation, among others, has become an important part of curriculum study, constituting the most central concept of curriculum theory. In the practice of curriculum, interaction, cooperation, and exploration have become the basic concepts of curriculum study, and the goal that teachers pursue in classroom behavior. The Westernization of the discourse method provides the possibility for China to communicate with the world. Nevertheless, the recognition of localization is difficult to obtain. With the provisions of the problem domain of the localization of curriculum study, China has thus discovered the basic path of localization and established its own curriculum objectives.

The objectives of localization of curriculum study. Chinese curriculum researchers have focused on an important issue, the purpose of localization of curriculum study. Some researchers suggest that the goal of curriculum study is original and autonomous. In the research on curriculum theory, “originality” requires the following: “to contribute something which has never [been introduced] before and even has no names to the scientific community”. However, original research is defined as “the research which initially interprets the elements and development law of specific research object and firstly proposes the idea or method and model of solving the specific problem”.

This explanation shows that originality actually refers to the comprehension of originality and creativity. Originality guarantees that the questions, methods, and conclusions of any research are novel, while creativity refers to the expansion of research ideas and research approach. Therefore, originality is not equivalent to novelty, because novelty can be a continuation of the research of others but may be a new area of study that can lead to the creation of new problems. However, in China, the prototypes of both research questions or research methods and conclusions are based on Tyler’s curriculum theory. With the Western improvement and transformation of such theory, some studies with different approaches have been conducted. However, generally speaking, the current system and methods of curriculum study in China possess evident influence of the West.

Autonomy of curriculum study is the conclusion of an inspection, in which curriculum theory is treated as a subject. This problem comes mainly from the ideology of curriculum research in China and the lack of independent personality of intellectuals since the liberation. Solving the ideology of curriculum study is a problem related to the construction of curriculum theory as a subject, that is, the restoration of subjects and the academic institution of curriculum theory to free China’s curriculum theory from the shackles of rigid ideology. The investigation of the character of intellectuals attempts to awaken the independent spirit and their personalities through the review of the ancient state of mind “into the world” of Chinese intellectuals. Autonomy means that Chinese curriculum researchers should get rid of political ideology and dependence on the Western curriculum research from the perspective of localization. They should discover and analyze the issues

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of curriculum theory in China and practice independently, and then use the unique research methods of China to summarize the conclusions that can be used to solve the problems of China.

Autonomy and originality of the localization of curriculum research are two important factors that are absent in the localization of curriculum research in China. Therefore, if these two aspects are emphasized, the localization of curriculum study in China can be realized.

Relationship between Curriculum Research Localization and Globalization

Previously, we have covered the two important aspects of curriculum research, localization and globalization, and have stressed that they are two interactive parts that are dependent on each other. However, the relationship between the two is not made clear enough. Thus, the following discussions about the relationship are necessary.

The discussions are conducted under the condition of universal knowledge. Globalization with emphasis on certain curriculum knowledge embodying universal sense can be employed in any country. Thus, Western countries intend to promote and share this kind of knowledge globally. Conversely, localization asserts that non-Western countries can build knowledge of their national characteristics, which can be adopted into the global system. Does universal knowledge really exist? Which among the studies on curriculum constitutes this type of knowledge is still uncertain. Theoretically, consensus cannot be easily reached regarding universal knowledge.

Do globalization and localization exist as facts or theories? In discussing globalization, the fact that we observe is a nod to the distinct process of the non-Western countries. In the curriculum studies, on one hand, Westernization is reflected by introduction of Western curriculum to the domestic context; on the other hand, the curriculum research system built upon the Western academic criteria poses a phenomenon of global assimilation of curriculum research, but is it real globalization? Theoretically, this globalization evolves on the basis of negating the domestic traditions, while the traditional curriculum studies cannot be fractured instantly. Thus, globalization will surely invoke ferocious resistance from non-Western countries.

Another factor to be considered is the fact that most non-Western countries have conducted curriculum research concerning local issues while maintaining the Western standards and attempted to gain recognition worldwide. However, the Western countries possess hegemony over the curriculum and usually ignore those from the other countries. These facts should have some theoretical explanations, but the studies lack reasonable theoretic framework and related analysis.

The ultimate goal of curriculum localization research is to conduct a “dialogue” with Western countries. This kind of dialogue must be based on universal knowledge and surrounded by different aspects of curriculum research. Nevertheless, the two

parties in the dialogue can hardly share an equal stance, a common ideology, and a common topic due to differences in research history and various research patterns. Therefore, to make such a dialogue possible, Western countries should abandon the attitude of superiority and identify the kinds of research problems faced by the non-Western countries as well as the level of the former's research achievement.

Globalization and localization of curriculum research are global issues. Generally, Western countries emphasize globalization as a result of their preference of ideology, while non-Western countries attach importance to localization because of their urgent need to remove Western control. Both aspects are main issues of Chinese curriculum research and should be studied further.

NOTES

- * This chapter was written on the basis of the author's personal experiences and observations in his research work in schools in Mainland China.

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