

Chapter 7

Achievements, Challenges, and Prospects of School-Based Curriculum in China



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From relative early obscurity to today's widespread acceptance, over 20 years, China's school-based curriculum has grown from a concept, a policy, and pilot exploration to practice in every school. These 20 years are by no means merely a description of time; it is difficult to easily define this time period through simplified ideas such as smooth progress or challenges. For everyone who joins the development of school-based curriculum in China, including policymakers, curriculum experts, school administrators, teachers, and parents, it is a journey through the jungle that has its own set of confusion and surprises. There are also difficulties, challenges, and rewards. Today, China's school-based curriculum is standing at a new starting point; further expansion of the process faces new challenges. The future development of school-based curriculum in China is promised from a thorough review of the path and existing status.

7.1 Achievements of School-Based Curriculum in China

From 2001, when Chinese school-based curriculum gained its legal position, to today, the 18-year period has seen school-based curriculum achieve breakthrough results in China. First, the concepts and policies of the school-based curriculum have received wide recognition. Second, the quality of school-based curriculum has generally improved. Third, a number of typical local examples were developed nationwide. More importantly, in this process, the universally recognized school-based curriculum concept, the curriculum leadership composed of principals, and the

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curriculum development and implementation of skills developed by teachers have promoted the overall implementation of the school curriculum.

7.1.1 Widely Recognized Concepts and Policies of the School-Based Curriculum

Traditions are very difficult to change. School-based curriculum in China was established in order to break out of the traditional “unified” curriculum management system and break away from past practices; the same can be said for the national curriculum. What is even more impressive is that this is a basic policy of top-down national-level basic education curriculum reform. *The Guidelines for Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (Trial)* clearly states “change the situation wherein the curriculum management is too concentrated and implement curriculum management at the national, local, and school level to enhance the adaptability of the curriculum to the locality, school, and students” (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2001a).

Over the past 18 years, the concepts and policies of school-based curriculum have been widely recognized. Among the websites and self-introduction materials of many primary and secondary schools, school-based curriculum has become the highlight and main characteristic of the schools. In some areas, the construction of school-based curriculum has become an essential part of the regionally promoted curriculum construction. Additionally, many parents and community members are very supportive and involved in the construction of school-based curriculum.

An empirical study of ours also shows that the concepts and policies of school-based curriculum are widely recognized. We used the junior high school in Z city, a provincial capital city in Central China, as a sample source. According to the basis points sampling principle, we drew from a total of 53 junior high schools from four districts of the city. Among them, 44 were public schools and nine were private schools. Of the 53 sample schools, 28 schools submitted school-based curriculum plans. We used the school-based curriculum quality assessment tool developed in Chap. 3, and had three experts with a consistent understanding of the assessment tool score each program’s text independently. We then used the Winsteps software to analyze the scored data to generate the Wright Map (see Fig. 7.1). The straight line in the figure is a fixed-scale ruler with markings for the average value of two distributions (M), one standard unit deviation (S), and the standard deviation of two units (T). The left side of the scale shows the distribution of the school-based curriculum program plan quality of the 28 schools with the schools represented by numerical codes and the quality of the program text represented from top to bottom in a decreasing manner. The right side of the scale shows the distribution of the scores of the 18 assessment items, which are represented by numerical codes with the scores represented from top to bottom in an increasing manner. As seen from the assessment data, the school-based curriculum planning program has been executed

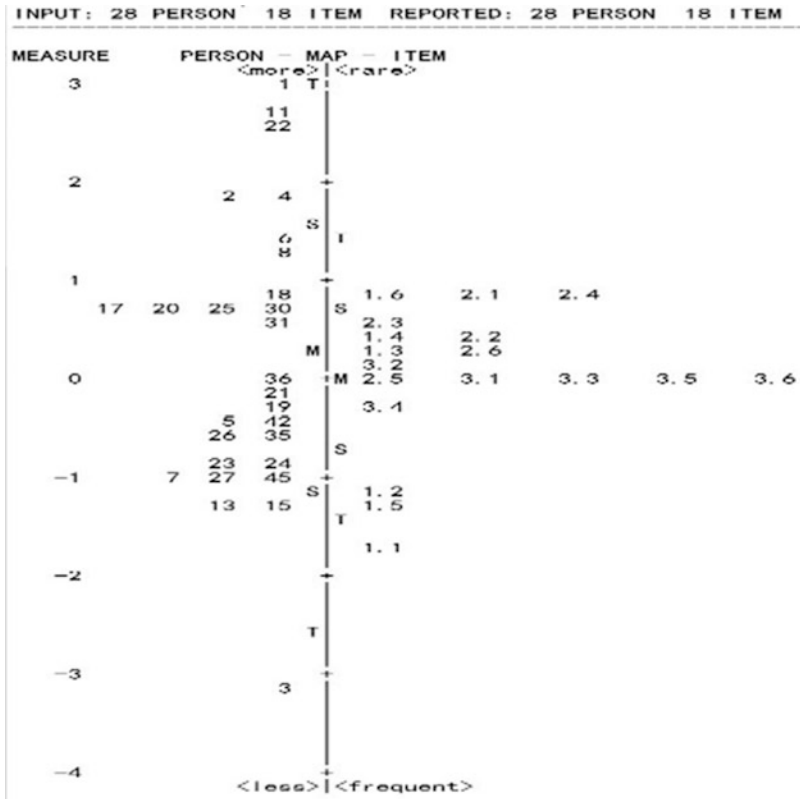


Fig. 7.1 Wright Map of school-based curriculum planning program quality

well in the following three areas: compliance with the concept of national or provincial curriculum program or the spirit of quality education (assessment item 1.1, eigenvalues -1.77 logit), clear proposed school-based curriculum direction objectives (assessment item 1.5, -1.32 logit), and content includes planning basis, school-based curriculum structure, and implementation and safeguards (assessment item 1.2, -1.15 logit). It can thus be seen that the concepts and policies of the school-based curriculum have been widely recognized and are fully reflected in the school-based curriculum planning program.

School-based curriculum has become a norm in school curriculum practice as part of the curriculum. It is designed to promote the development of students' individuality and has formed a consensus on the differences in the students' interests and needs. School-based curriculum is determined by the school and reflects the characteristics or showcase of the identity of the school. More gratifying, in this process, the school-based curriculum concept, which has received widespread recognition, along with the curriculum development and implementation skills developed by teachers through school-based curriculum development practices, have promoted the

overall implementation of the school curriculum. At the same time that the concept of new curriculum reform was widely received, locations such as Shanghai and Zhejiang have additionally expanded the autonomy of school curriculum management, thereby further enhancing students’ capacity to select courses, promoting the students’ personalized development, and improving the curriculum adaptability.

7.1.2 Improved Quality of School-Based Courses

At the school level, China’s basic education has long faced the problem of how to motivate schools so that they can meet both the needs of their students and those of local social development to the greatest extent possible. The implementation of the school-based curriculum will undoubtedly provide practical solutions to this challenge.

As we have seen, in recent years, many primary and secondary schools in China have developed their own school-based curriculum development and implementation programs. Successful schools usually have established a sustainable school-based curriculum development mechanism from systems and assessment. Such mechanism in turn enabled the internal curriculum development capacity and thus built into their long-term educational effectiveness.

In the above-mentioned empirical study on the quality of school-based curricula, we mapped the average scores assigned by the three experts for the 28 programs of school-based curriculum planning that were submitted (as shown in Fig. 7.2).

Based on the comprehensive scores and on the basis of the dimensions of “purpose,” “consistency,” and “usefulness,” we combined the scoring tool used above with the specific texts to distinguish and summarize four levels of the school-based curriculum planning program texts according to their characteristics (see Table 7.1).

By combining Fig. 7.2 with Table 7.1, we can see that, in general, schools have an overall planning awareness of the school-based curriculum. The project team

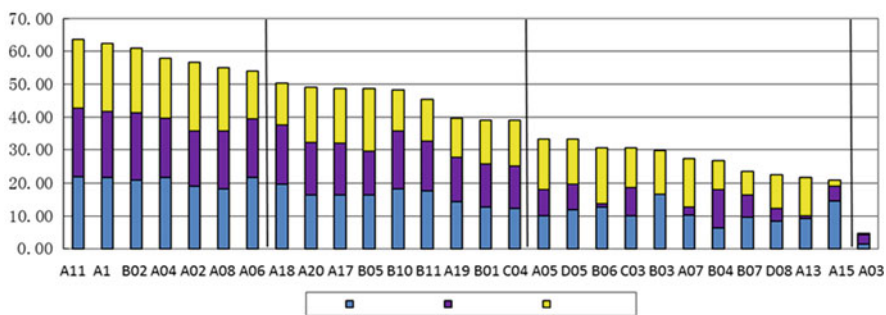


Fig. 7.2 Quality assessment scores of the school-based curriculum planning programs (Blue: purpose; purple: consistency; yellow: usefulness)

Table 7.1 Overview of the four levels school-based curriculum planning programs

Level	Score interval	Proportion %	Criteria
4	(54,72)	25.00	<p>The text of the program is complete in structure and reflects the advanced educational concept</p> <p>It forms clear curricular objectives based on comprehensive consideration of national and provincial curriculum programs, the school educational philosophy, and student needs</p> <p>There is consistency between the various parts of the program</p> <p>The school-based curriculum structure has a clear logic</p> <p>The curriculum implementation section makes full use of resources, and has detailed descriptions of the complete implementation process, targeted recommendations for key points, and information on quality assurance measures to be implemented</p>
3	(36,54)	32.14	<p>The text of the program is complete in structure and reflects the advanced educational concept</p> <p>The school-based curriculum objectives have overall considerations, but the descriptions are not complete or clear enough</p> <p>There is a slight lack of consistency between the various parts of the program, and there is a vague logical relationship between the various components</p> <p>The curriculum implementation section describes key points and establishes relatively complete quality assurance measures, but individual sections lack specificity</p>
2	(18,36)	39.29	<p>The text of the program presents a certain structure, but the description of individual portions of the structure tends to be general</p> <p>There is a lack of consistency between the components, and some of the content strays away from the overall logic</p> <p>The curriculum implementation lacks some key links, and the quality assurance measures are relatively vague</p>
1	(0,18)	3.57	<p>The structure of the text is incomplete</p> <p>There is no overall logic between the various components</p> <p>The implementation measures are not instructive and operative</p> <p>The quality assurance measures are not specific</p>

received the school-based curriculum planning programs from 28 schools, accounting for 52.83% of the total number of sample schools. This is a significant breakthrough for the curriculum implementation system of the “only one national syllabus” and “A Thousand Schools Only Have One Book” programs. The overall planning of the school-based curriculum of the school also reflects the strong leadership of the principal.

In addition, the overall quality of the program of school-based curriculum planning, as well as that of the 28 school-based curriculum planning, is relatively good. Among the 28 program texts, there are 16 schools with scores at the fourth level (between 54 and 72 points) and the third level (between 37 and 53 points), accounting for 57.14% of the total. There is only one school whose program of school-based curriculum planning scored at the lowest level. The achievement of

such results, after starting from scratch, fully reflects the speed of school-based curriculum development in schools.

From the teachers' perspective, with the advancement of the school-based curriculum, the teachers' curriculum development capability and the quality of the school-based curriculum have been continuously improved. In the past, curriculum development was undertaken by experts who were commissioned by the State. Teachers rarely took the initiatives to consider curriculum issues, which in turn led to a lack of contributions by frontline teachers in the basic education reform. Those teachers who wanted to improve basic education from a curriculum perspective had a difficult time exerting their creativity "legitimately." Since the implementation of the school-based curriculum, teachers' curriculum awareness and development abilities have been improved, and those teachers who want to have creative input have the "right" to display their own curricular thinking and development abilities. This can be said to be one of the most significant achievements since the official implementation of school-based curriculum in China (Cui & He, 2010).

The Institute of Curriculum and Instruction in East China Normal University cooperated with the Shanghai Adream Charitable Foundation to hold the biennial "True Love Dream Cup" starting in 2011, which is a national school-based curriculum competition. We asked the participating teachers to submit their "semester curriculum syllabus" and "teaching period lesson plan." Experts were invited to rate each of the curriculum design programs according to the school-based curriculum syllabus assessment tool shown in Chap. 3.

Taking the third biennial competition as an example, we received more than 2400 curriculum design programs from all over the country. These programs cover 32 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities under the Central Government, which reflect the general characteristics of school-based curriculum development in China. One of the researchers on our team analyzed the quality of the curriculum designs submitted by teachers to gauge the quality of school-based curriculum development in China (Liu, 2016a). Based on the scores of the curriculum programs, the quality of the school-based curriculum design program can be divided into four levels: the professional level, the preliminary professional level, the quasi-professional level, and the specialization level. About 37% of school-based curriculum design programs are at the quasi-professional level, 11% have reached the specialization level. This shows that the three-level curriculum management concept has taken root in practice and produced certain results.

The programs at the professional level can meet the advanced nature of the concept, be innovative in design, fundamentally satisfy internal consistency needs, and express normality. Although there may be problems in the design of the structure, module stacking, lack of depth, or other such features, these programs can correspond to curriculum objectives. Essentially, the programs are in alignment with the requirements of each element (curriculum objective, curriculum content, curriculum implementation, and curriculum assessment), the curriculum implementation is vibrant, and necessary requirements of diversity and relevance are reflected in the curriculum.

The programs at the quasi-professional level can reflect the development needs of children and comply with the relevant provisions of the national curriculum policy. The elements are complete, written scientifically, and standard, but not satisfactorily “consistent.” Although the curriculum structure essentially matches the curriculum objectives, the logic is poor and inadequate to unify the children’s psychological logic and the logic of the disciplines, the excessive pursuit of psychological logic and the emergence of the unvarying level of repetition cannot promote high-level cognitive development, or the excessive focus on the logic of the disciplines ignores the children’s interests and needs. The learning style is diversified but not strongly relevant, and the excessive pursuit of activity diversity does not adequately contribute to the children deep learning. The assessment design is specific to the operational level, but the assessment subject is incomplete; it is mostly limited to the assessment of learning results and lacks assessment of the program itself. The developers of this type of curriculum adhere to the children-first concept. The curriculum elements are complete and substantially meet the requirements in construction and expression, thereby reflecting a certain level of professionalism.

It can be seen that after more than 10 years of intensive cultivation, school-based curriculum development has moved from initial germination to basic popularization to professionalization in China, and the development of school-based curriculum design has become part of the daily work of teachers (Liu, 2016b). The curriculum abilities developed by teachers in the development and implementation of school-based curriculum has further promoted the implementation of the national curriculum.

7.1.3 Formation of Exemplary Local Experiences

With the promulgation of relevant policies such as the *Guidelines for Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (Trial)*, the *Compulsory Education Curriculum Design Experimental Scheme*, and the *Regular Senior Secondary School Curriculum Program (Experiment)* (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2001a, 2001b, 2003), school-based curricula have been incorporated into the framework of the national curriculum, forming a curriculum management model that combines “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches. These publications also provide implementation guidance for the development and management of school-based curriculum. Thus, the school-based curriculum as a national curriculum began to enter an era of development. At this stage, the academic community has conducted more in-depth and comprehensive research on the school-based curriculum, introduced successful implementation experiences from abroad, and begun to try to solve specific problems in the development of school-based curriculum in China.

The majority of primary and secondary schools adhere to the school-based curriculum with a foundation in the excellent tradition of school reform. Under the guidance of national policies and professionals, they have thoroughly solved their problems in the process of promoting school-based curricula at the school level.

Exemplary cases in the development of school-based curriculum have been continuously emerging, and have generated impactful local experiences.

7.1.3.1 Fully Utilizing the School's Curriculum Resources

A group of innovative principals, under the three-level curriculum management system, established a school curriculum committee, lead school teachers to explore school resources, thoroughly studied the needs of students, and built a school-based curriculum system that is directed toward the school's educational goals and coordinated with the national curriculum. The second part of this book is composed of case studies of a single school-based course, a category of school-based courses, and the entire school-based curriculum of Maiyuqiao Primary School in Hangzhou, Xishan Senior High School in Jiangsu Province, and Gongcheng Middle School in Hangzhou, respectively. The book presents the experience of how these three administrations tapped into their respective school's resources to build a school-based curriculum. There are still many such experiences. The "China School-based Curriculum Development Case Series" (Cui, 2006–2011), edited by Professor Yunhuo Cui, has collected more than 100 school-based curriculum development cases from all over the country, including those from elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, course experiences, and cases from Shanghai, among others. These excellent and typical experiences provide a reference for the construction of school-based curriculum in other schools.

7.1.3.2 Inter-School Sharing of Curriculum Resources and Development Experiences

School-based curriculum development, as the name suggests, is curriculum development based on an individual school. However, taking into consideration the openness and cooperation of the philosophy, along with the fact that there is an uneven distribution of curriculum resources and differences in curriculum construction abilities among senior high schools in China, the new curriculum emphasizes the idea that schools should form alliances and cooperate; this should be done on the basis of a relative distribution of labor and, in the development of courses, a list of local school-based curriculum subjects that schools can choose from should be established. This can facilitate resource sharing, reduce wastage, and avoid "small and comprehensive" style curriculum developments. Inter-school collaboratively created courses usually develop in one of the following ways: at least two teachers from two schools jointly develop a course; at least two schools jointly commission or fund a third party to develop courses, and the results are shared; at least two schools form an alliance, and the products, teachers, facilities, and so on are shared within the alliance; and a model school supports the curriculum of ordinary or weaker schools.

7.1.3.3 Regional Coordination Matters

In order to improve the quality of school-based curriculum across an entire region, many regional education administrative departments and educational research departments have set up school-based curriculum management departments for school-based curriculum teaching as well as research positions to provide guidance for the promotion of suggestions and for school-based curriculum construction throughout the region. Some regions even cooperate with university researchers to carry out university-regional cooperation to promote school-based curriculum research and practice. The Xuhui District of Shanghai is a typical case. The Education Bureau and the Institute of Curriculum and Teaching of East China Normal University cooperated in the Xuhui District Primary School Curriculum Construction Project. Through various efforts, a phased outcome has been formed as *Improving School Curriculum Leadership: Selected Cases of Primary School Curriculum Construction in Xuhui District, Shanghai* (Zhuang, 2017). As mentioned in the preface of this book, this document hopes to provide lessons for more basic-level schools to deepen curriculum and teaching reform, and introduce strategies, paths, and methods to solve problems in daily work. Through individualized curriculum construction, the coordinated development is realized. Thus, coordinated development has become the goal of promoting curriculum construction in some regions.

7.2 Challenges for School-Based Curriculum in China

With the continuous advancement of the new curriculum, outstanding cases and valuable experiences that have emerged everywhere have proved that the school-based curriculum has taken root in the fertile soil of Chinese education and has transformed local settings and creativity in its early phases. However, we should also note that, due to factors such as an insufficient understanding of policies and the profound influence of curriculum-centered courses and teaching culture, the further deepening of the school-based curriculum in China still faces many challenges.

7.2.1 *Misunderstandings of School-Based Curriculum*

The biggest obstacle to whether a school-based curriculum can be implemented with high quality in every region and every school is misunderstandings. These misunderstandings are summarized in the “five standards” created by Cui and Hong (2008).

7.2.1.1 Task Standards

“Isn’t it true that our superiors are checking to make sure we offer school-based courses? I see that the ‘chess’ course offered by our sister school is very special, so we should also offer the same course. Is that appropriate? Let’s just deal with that later. . .” Considering school-based curriculum as a task that must be dealt with will inevitably distort the value orientation of the school-based curriculum. The consequence of such a perspective is that the school-based curriculum ends up being composed of repetitive courses where schools simply copy each other. Whichever courses that happen to be unique and are offered by one school will be copied by others. In the end, the offerings among different schools will all be identical. What is the motivation for school-based curriculum? Curriculum construction is intended to be used to meet the students’ development needs, promote the professional development of teachers, and create unique school cultures; this is the value pursuit of the school-based curriculum. Therefore, the construction of a proper school-based curriculum must take into account the school’s educational philosophy, the actual needs of the students, and the conditions for offering courses. If the school-based curriculum construction is regarded only as a task to meet inspection requirements and has been hastily implemented, then the school-based curriculum is nothing more than a rushed decision without much contemplation behind it. Even if the curriculum includes a variety of courses and may seem complete, it has no soul.

7.2.1.2 Textbook Standards

“Our school has achieved fruitful results with school-based textbooks. Each teacher has used their own textbooks and students have their own books. . . .” For a long time, textbooks have been the main curriculum resource for school education, which is why, when people think about school-based curriculum development, they naturally think of compiling, printing, and distributing textbooks. They consider this to be an indispensable method as well as the results of school-based curriculum. As everyone knows, school-based curriculum is characterized by proximity to different regions, schools, and students. The problem with considering textbooks alone as school-based curriculum, to start, is that textbooks written by a few subject experts have difficulty taking into account individual differences due to the textbooks’ high degree of uniformity. The simple use of such textbooks is not suitable for the “school-based” spirit. However, mobilizing teachers to write their own textbooks seems to utilize the teachers’ subjectivity, but it in fact increases their workload outside of daily teaching. In such cases, the differences in resources and teachers between different schools do not allow each school to produce qualified textbooks. Even if they are completed and published, their scope of application is minimal.

Moreover, textbooks to be used in courses are strictly controlled by the state and must be approved by the relevant departments. Uncertified textbooks are not allowed to be distributed to students. In fact, school-based curriculum development

advocates for a perspective based on the diverse needs of student development, establishes the awareness of curriculum resources, breaks out of the misunderstanding of textbooks, and uses flexible materials such as course syllabus, teaching briefs, and thematic syllabi to integrate various static and dynamic resources.

7.2.1.3 Subject Standards

“The college entrance examination has increasing requirements for the comprehensive quality of students’ knowledge. I will just use the school-based curriculum to give students more test content that is not in the textbooks and deepen their understanding....” School-based curriculum should be understood within the framework of the national curriculum. Whether it is the establishment program of the compulsory education stage or the curriculum program of a regular senior high school, the relationship between the boundaries, scope, and time limit of the national and local curriculum are well defined. Therefore, the school is not allowed to freely change and increase the teaching content of subjects that will be part of the entrance examination, increase difficulty, or use the class periods allocated for school-based courses as times for subject tutoring or competition preparation under the guise of a school-based curriculum. To make such changes would cause the school-based curriculum to exist in name only and make it an extension of the national curriculum and a necessary condition for the examination subjects. The functional complementarity between the national curriculum and the local and school-based curriculum should be properly handled, and the relationship between the subjects in the both curricula should be correctly understood in order to truly realize the unique value of the school-based curriculum. Some of the courses in the school-based curriculum may be related to the existing subjects, but it may be that the topic is not part of the system; it is something that students are not required to take. These can be courses that are generated from the students’ interests rather than the teacher’s presupposition; they are student-interest-based rather than test-oriented.

7.2.1.4 Teacher Standards

“I think that Teacher Li is good at calligraphy, so let Teacher Li offer a ‘Pen Calligraphy’ school-based course for the first grade....” One of the misunderstandings toward school-based curriculum development is to believe that the school-based curriculum is a teacher-based curriculum. Teachers are the main body of school-based curriculum construction and the most important curriculum resources, but this does not mean that teachers can decide which school-based courses to develop at will. Instead, the development of a school-based curriculum must take into account whether a given course fits the overall curriculum program of the school. If a school-based curriculum only considers the abilities of the teachers, it can easily be separated from the school’s educational philosophy.

More importantly, the starting point of a school-based curriculum should be the students' interest. Many of the courses that teachers believe to be extremely important are not actually considered so by the students. Because these courses are offered due to a teacher's "strong-arming," they do not reflect the real interests of the students. For example, in the situation above, it is important to practice calligraphy, but for first-year students who are overwhelmed by the sheer number of books they are required to study, calligraphy does not necessarily stimulate their desire to learn. This misunderstanding behind the teacher-based curriculum lies in a misunderstanding of the curriculum philosophy; it does not reflect the democracy of the curriculum. Additionally, its positioning in reference to the school-based curriculum is incorrect, and it does not follow the general procedures for school-based curriculum development. The students' learning needs are not investigated in advance, which should be the basis for planning.

7.2.1.5 Activity Standards

"Isn't the school-based curriculum what used to be known as the activity class? Let students engage in activities. We will start activities for football, basketball, table tennis...." School-based curriculum has inherited the advantages of traditional activity classes and under the guidance of the teacher, it can satisfy the students' interests and needs through activities that are meaningful for their education and also form a close connection with the students' life experiences.

However, in some implementations of school-based curriculum, teaching activities is for the sake of having activities, that is, "activities alone without curriculum." In that case, the purpose of setting up activities has lost the original intention of the school-based curriculum. It does not reflect the characteristics of the locality and school and does not meet the students' developmental needs. This kind of activity has form but no meaning; it is nothing but a shell. Students do not meet the curriculum objective. School-based curriculum advocates students to actively participate, to be willing to explore, and to be diligent; this does not mean that teachers should simply provide activities without guidance. Because the school-based curriculum does not set a unified curriculum standard and curriculum content, its implementation requires the participation and professionalism of the teachers. Otherwise, the school-based curriculum would become an arbitrary curriculum whose function would not be worth mentioning. Therefore, activities in the school-based curriculum must be carefully planned, designed, organized, and assessed, as well as being closely linked to the students' interests, wishes, lives, and social developmental needs.

It can be seen from the above "five standards" that the current misunderstandings toward school-based curriculum development in China lie in focusing on the details but missing the big picture, emphasizing individual factors such as tasks, textbooks, subjects, teachers, and activities, which lacks a systematic, holistic curriculum awareness.

7.2.2 Under-Addressed Value of School-Based Curriculum

School-based curriculum is a type of curriculum that juxtaposes the national and local curricula and has important independent values. However, in the implementation of the curriculum, the value of the school-based curriculum has not received the attention it deserves. The following examples are ways in which school-based curriculum may not be fully recognized, presenting a challenge to its implementation.

7.2.2.1 Ignoring the Value of School-Based Curriculum to Meet the Needs and Interests of Students

The misunderstandings detailed in the “five standards” above embody a neglect of the value of the school-based curriculum for meeting the needs and interests of students. In truth, curriculum exists for students, and school-based curriculum exists because of the needs, interests, and personality development of the students. However, the design and implementation of the school-based curriculum at the school level and classroom level do not adequately attend to the students’ needs and interests.

For example, curriculum decision makers lack an awareness of the students’ perspectives. When schools arrange and plan for a school-based curriculum, they often do not start from the viewpoint of their students. Instead, in many situations, schools start by temporarily developing courses because their superiors are coming for an inspection. Here, both teachers who have insufficient teaching hours according to their performance appraisal and those with exceptional skills are told to open school-based courses. We have seen that the planning of many school-level curriculum programs have no trace of the students. When designing a school-based curriculum program, teachers often take a teacher-based approach, only ask the teacher, and take the teachers’ point of view into account. They turn the school-based curriculum program into a teacher’s work plan, which disregards the students and their learning as the center of the design.

In another type of situation, the curriculum decision makers consider the students but do not give them the opportunity to provide feedback. Some schools and teachers consider students when designing and implementing school-based courses, but are focused on the students’ external development that is directly related to their curriculum needs; there is no real inquiry and collection of students’ feedback. In fact, none of the society, country, school, teachers or parents can be considered to speak for the students. We must listen carefully to the real needs of the students to know what their interests. However, when many schools are planning their school-based curriculum, they use the “thoughts” of the school leaders to reflect the needs of the students and often regard the ideas they had when they were students as the supposed thinking of the current students. When teachers design school-based

courses, they frequently believe that the course is very valuable, and so as long as student attend this course, they will gain experience or reap benefits.

It is for this reason that teacher-designed school-based curriculum programs often have similar descriptions: “The art of printmaking... not only enriches children’s lives, but also promotes their brain development, enlightens their thinking, and improves their physical coordination. It is an esthetic education activity that cannot be replaced by other courses. The positive educational value of printmaking education is also the pursuit of a school-based curriculum. Let children understand the characteristics of printmaking, the diversity of printmaking, and the unique contribution of printmaking to social life in a wide range of cultural contexts” (Cen, 2017). Discussing the overall meaning of the art of printmaking only through the perspective of the course can result in positive meaning for the students’ development. Discussing the printmaking course can, in a general sense, meet the curriculum needs of the students. However, whether the actual needs of the students are met is not of concern.

Again, students have a chance to speak, but their needs are not valued and satisfied. Some schools have collected student input through means such as questionnaires and interviews, but measures to meet those needs were not implemented. The lack of response is mainly manifested on two levels: The first level is that there is no clear understanding of the needs of the students. The second level is that although the analysis uncovered the students’ needs from the school-based curriculum, the objectives do not reflect these needs. For example, some schools may mention “meeting (or considering) students’ interests (or needs, characteristics)” in the program of school-based curriculum planning but there is no further explicit content about “what the students’ interests (or needs, characteristics) are.” Some schools present the content of student needs in the plan, such as is the case with school: “The survey results show that the development needs of our students have certain commonalities: a need for healthy living and guidance for happy learning,” but the subsequent objectives and curriculum arrangement do not specify how to enable students to experience healthy living or guide students toward happy learning. No specific measures respond to the students’ needs (Cui, Zhou, Cen, & Yang, 2016).

7.2.2.2 Ignoring the Opportunity for the School-Based Curriculum to Promote the Development of Teachers’ Curriculum Capability

“Because principals and teachers have long solely implemented mandatory curriculum plans, it has been impossible and unnecessary for teachers to have many curriculum capabilities. This makes the working style of the principals and teachers too dependent and focused on taking orders. Their enthusiasm and creativity when it comes to independent judgment and creativity have greatly shrunk” (Wu, 2000). This may also be due to the influence of the prescriptive curriculum plan, such as the school-based curriculum, which gives the school and teachers autonomous space to develop; however, they may not know what to do with this newfound autonomy. In

general, most teachers or schools approach the school-based curriculum as a task or a job; they do not fully understand or explore the value of the school-based curriculum in enhancing the teachers' curriculum ability.

We often hear school leaders say, "The teachers in our school do not have the ability to execute even the national curriculum well. How can they have the ability to develop the school-based curriculum?", "Under the current situation, which primarily focuses on the graduation rate, it is not necessary for teachers to spend so much time creating school-based courses," "Let the teachers in the major classes do their work and have the deputy teachers do the school-based curriculum work," and so on. From these arguments, we can see that school leaders are concerned with the fact that the school-based curriculum takes up manpower and time. They do not consider or plan how this curriculum policy space can be used to develop the teachers' curricular abilities. In fact, teacher participation in school-based curriculum construction enables teachers to have certain curricular decision-making powers, which is conducive to their transformation away from their traditional functions of "preaching, teaching, and clearing up confusion" and role of being "mere teachers." Teacher participation in school-based curriculum construction can help teachers to gradually realize that they "are not only curriculum implementers, but also curriculum researchers, designers, and assessors" (Jin, 2001). Importantly, in this process, the teachers' curriculum ability is improved.

From the perspective of the teachers themselves, it may be because of the influence of teaching traditions and their environment that they are not fully aware of the value that school-based curriculum brings to them. "The school will let me open a school-based course this semester. If you have any relevant materials, please send me a copy," "The Internet is very convenient now. Any school-based course can be found online. I can just download one and be done with it," "In any case, the school-based courses are not part of the exams, so the only goal is to make the students happy," and so on. Perhaps the teachers do not know how to design and implement school-based courses, but a current common phenomenon is that teachers do not fully realize that they can enhance their curriculum ability by developing school-based courses on their own.

7.2.2.3 Ignoring the Effects of School-Based Curriculum on School Curriculum and Its Cultural Construction

Associated with the "task standard" and the "lack of student position," many schools do not use the school-based curriculum as an integral part of the school's overall curriculum. In these situations, the school-based curriculum is often seen as a dispensable presence outside the national curriculum. In many schools, school-based courses exist in silos, there is no structure, and there is no coordinating relationship between national courses and local courses. Similarly, we have seen that many schools' curriculum planning program do not have clear educational objectives; while some describe educational objectives, it is difficult to find a relationship between the school-based curriculum and those educational objectives.

These phenomena all indicate that the school does not recognize the role of school-based curriculum in the overall curriculum construction of the school.

It goes without saying that school-based curriculum construction should be an integral part of the overall curriculum of the school; in addition, the school-based curriculum also advocates the needs of students as the starting point, emphasizes the unique characteristics of interests, activities, and practices, and promotes the transformation and construction of the school curriculum culture. The head of the teacher development department of a senior high school once said that their school's student development, teacher professional development, and overall school curriculum development benefited from the school-based curriculum. In the process of planning, teachers mastered the ability of school-based curriculum development and paid more attention to the students' needs in their teaching. They then applied these curricular abilities to the implementation of the national curriculum in a school-based manner. It became obvious that the effectiveness of the national curriculum was greatly improved and the students' scores in the national curriculum increased. The school's performance regarding independent university enrollment has also improved. These results were all due to the school-based curriculum satisfying the teachers' needs and improving their abilities. Unfortunately, such examples are still rare.

In addition, the prominence of the "school-based" element in the school-based curriculum distinguishes "the school itself" from the national and local curriculum. However, there are not many schools that have been able to distinguish the characteristics of the school, and highlight such characteristics, through a school-based curriculum. Many schools do not have a good sense of their own school culture. They tap into their own resources but neglect the role of school-based curriculum in the construction of the school culture. They develop what is popular and disregard the characteristics that make their schools unique.

7.2.3 Limited Curriculum Capacity

In China, the concept of the curriculum has been widely disseminated since the new round of basic education curriculum reform in the country. Previously, school administrators were mainly concern with the preparation of the curriculum and teachers mainly carried out their work according to the syllabus and teaching materials. In just over a decade, China's basic education curriculum reform has achieved positive results, but in general, the curriculum construction capability of schools and teachers is still limited (Cui et al., 2016).

7.2.3.1 Inadequate Curriculum Planning Capability in Schools

The philosophy of school education and educational objectives are the foundation of the school and also the main basis for the school-based curriculum. However, in reality, many schools lack an awareness or ability to form a clear educational

philosophy, and cannot clearly answer the following questions: What is the school's educational philosophy? What kind of person does the school seek to cultivate? What are the graduates going to be like? This is so much the case that the school's overall work has lost its soul.

Furthermore, many schools' curriculum construction has failed to pay sufficient attention to the students' curriculum needs. The biggest difference between the school-based curriculum and the national curriculum is that it is "school-based." Responding to the needs of students is the most important objective of a school-based curriculum. However, the reality is that current school-based curriculum construction falls short of their concerns and does not respond to the needs of students.

Again, the courses offered by some schools do not reflect a coherent or particular structure. All courses of a school should be educational, have clear objectives, and serve the educational philosophy of the school. When schools introduce their school-based curriculum construction experience, many are proud to say that their school has dozens or hundreds of school-based courses but ignore the purpose for offering these courses and the structure between the courses.

This problem is mainly reflected in three ways. First, the courses offered by the school are not coherent. For example, perhaps a school determined that its objectives are for students to "cherish life, learn to train, mental health...", but there are no courses relating to cherishing life or mental health. In another example, the school's school-based curriculum includes six categories of courses such as art cultivation and information technology, but the school-based curriculum objectives do not include the objectives of art cultivation courses and no information technology courses were arranged in the subsequent curriculum structure.

Second, the school has no structural awareness of the course categories in their school-based curriculum. In this case, the school has a large number of school-based courses but the relationship between these courses is unclear.

Third, some schools classify their own school-based courses but the classification logic varies, or there are crossovers and overlaps between the categories. For example, one senior high school divides its courses into the student-centric category, practical operation category, art and health category, traditional and modern culture category, and science and innovation category, which clearly do not follow a unified classification logic, thereby leading to a chaotic curriculum structure. Some schools divide the course categories according to the subject category where the teaching content belongs. An example is the classification of the school-based courses into categories such as "language and art," "humanities and society," and "sports and health"; this is a common classification method but in reality, "language and art" and "humanities and society" are intertwined.

7.2.3.2 Inadequate Curriculum Development Capability in Teachers

Many current teachers lack curriculum awareness. When the curriculum reform in the new century gives teachers space and power to develop their own courses, most

teachers find it difficult or unable to do so. The first issue that appears is their lack of curriculum awareness. They are used to a system of “syllabus–textbook–reference materials–teaching.” It is difficult for a teacher to move from a frame of thought revolving around “teach the textbook” to a curriculum-thinking frame of thought centered on “children’s learning.”

Because of this tradition, when teachers receive the task of developing a school-based course, they often begin by thinking about where they can find a textbook for the course and how to find materials to compile rather than studying the needs of the students, determining the positioning of the course within the overall school curriculum, setting up goals for the course, and other such issues. In short, due to the influence of traditional ideas about teaching, teachers have weak curriculum awareness, which significantly hinders the development and implementation of the school-based curriculum.

Thus, the skills of teachers in curriculum development and implementation need to be improved. The influence of traditional teaching and the current pre-employment training and on-the-job professional development for teachers lack courses related to teachers’ curriculum ability. When faced with the task of developing and implementing school-based curriculum, many teachers believe that they have no foundation. When teachers were asked to develop the curriculum program for a school-based course, not only did they not understand the significance of developing the curriculum program, they were also unclear about the four key questions that must be answered in the curriculum program. When it comes to the curriculum objectives, teachers are still accustomed to traditional ideas. The objectives are often written from the perspective of the teacher; the teachers are unable to write the objectives from the perspective of the students.

Moreover, in many cases, the curriculum objectives that the teachers have written are difficult to measure, the relationships between the separate objectives are unclear, and the relationships among knowledge and skills, processes, methods, and emotions, attitudes, and values perspectives are underdeveloped. The teachers perform relatively better when it comes to curriculum content and curriculum implementation; however, curriculum assessment is a weakness. Finally, the most prominent issue is the consistency between the various elements of the curriculum. Teachers are more focused on the choice of teaching materials and the development of classroom activities than on coherence. They lack the skills to consider the consistency between the curriculum content, curriculum implementation, curriculum assessment, and the curriculum objectives.

7.3 Prospects for School-Based Curriculum in China

After clarifying the challenges faced by the current school-based curriculum in China, we can start from the existing results and shortcomings to project the future development of school-based curriculum. Problem to be solved in the future is no longer a problem of “increasing quantity” but a problem of “quality improvement.”

Among the challenges, enhancing the value recognition of school-based curriculum, improving the curriculum capacity of schools and teachers, and establishing a deliberation mechanism for school-based curriculum are the prioritized tasks for promoting the future development of school-based curriculum.

7.3.1 Enhance the Value Recognition of School-Based Curriculum

Value recognition of school-based curriculum is a pressing issue. The traditional examination culture has limited the space of school-based curriculum. It is much needed to re-examine the value of school-based curriculum from the perspective of holistic and individualized growth. The following subsections show the values that need to be recognized in order to improve the quality of school-based curriculum.

7.3.1.1 A Clear Understanding of the Independent Value of the School-Based Curriculum

School-based curriculum is a type of curriculum that juxtaposes the national and local curricula, and upholds important independent values. In the Compulsory Education Curriculum Construction Experimental Program, the school-based curriculum was suggested to be a co-existing category with the national curriculum and local curriculum. The specific arrangement of the three types of courses in the curriculum plan embodies the idea of the three-level curriculum management, that is, the reasonable arrangement of who decides the children's curriculum so that the country, locality, and school will share different rights and be responsible for their own courses. The reason they are relatively independent is mainly due to "who" dominates curriculum development. The national curriculum refers to the parts of the curriculum commissioned by the central government to experts in, for example, the fields, subjects, and modules in the compulsory and elective credits in regular senior high schools. The local curriculum refers to the parts of the curriculum determined by the relevant curriculum policies to be commissioned to experts by the local (mainly provincial) level government. The school-based curriculum refers to the curriculum developed by school teachers or other people according to relevant policies. Due to the different subjects of development, all three types of curriculum have different functional orientations, but they are equally important for the development of students.

The school-based curriculum, as an independent type of curriculum, is not merely an extension of the national curriculum, a combination of specific subjects, or an accessory to examinations and competition. It has its own unique value.

While the national curriculum focuses on the common foundations and unified requirements, the school-based curriculum addresses the differences among students

and their interests. While the national curriculum is stipulated by the state and reflects the will of the nation, the school-based curriculum is determined by the school and reflects the characteristics of the school and the personalities of the students. While experts take charge in the development of the national/local curriculum, the development of the school-based curriculum is undertaken by teachers. While the national curriculum is mainly a formal curriculum, the school-based curriculum is an informal curriculum. Looking at class hours, the amount of time allocated for the school-based curriculum in the curriculum program is far less to that for the national curriculum. However, from the perspective of student development, the school-based curriculum is indispensable, irreplaceable, and increasingly important. In other words, the school-based curriculum is a vital part of the basic education program in China. School-based curriculum is to be understood in the specific context of the national curriculum, but not as an isolated curriculum that exists independent of the national curriculum program.

7.3.1.2 The Vitality of the School-Based Curriculum

The vitality of school-based curriculum lies in student interests. Its foundation is rooted in the school-based, teacher-focused curriculum designed to meet the diverse needs of students. Therefore, focusing on, researching, and satisfying the legitimate interests of students are the logical starting points, and destination, of a school-based curriculum.

The formation of interests has a lifelong impact on individual development. The purpose of education is to let children express their inherent interests; the curriculum gives students that opportunity. The school-based curriculum is a self-developed, self-selected curriculum that is designed to satisfy the interests of students. Schools must thoroughly study student interests and develop courses based on these interests.

In this process, first, schools should explore various channels for students to participate in the curriculum construction to ensure that they can make their own decisions. Second, various means (observation, interviews, questionnaires, etc.) should be used to gather, study, and assess the students' interests and clarify the scope, level, and type of interests to form a Program of School-based Curriculum Planning founded on the said interests. Third, schools should fully tap existing and available internal and external resources such as people, capital, materials, time, space, information to meet the multi-faceted needs of students to the greatest extent possible, so as to provide them with a variety of opportunities to express their interest. Finally, schools should fully consider the process of student interest development. During the curriculum implementation process, schools need to ensure that while protecting the students' right to select courses, they must ensure the applicability of goal setting, content arrangement, teaching methods, assessment methods, and management methods to more fully discover, maintain, and develop student interests.

7.3.1.3 Attending to the Significance of School-Based Curriculum in Promoting the Students' Growth As Individuals

Chinese education is gradually moving from mass-scale, universal development toward a quality-centered development. The starting point and foothold of the quality of education lie in promoting the growth of students. People's view of children, teachers and students, teaching, and curriculum emphasizes the value of school-based curriculum, which respects the different characteristics and needs of the students, provides high-quality curriculum and teaching resources, and promotes the full and proactive development of the students' individuality.

As far as school-based curriculum development is concerned, the initial consideration is to meet the diverse needs of different regions, schools, and students so that each school can develop specialized courses according to their own conditions and attributes. By doing so, every student will be able to choose courses that they are interested in according to their own characteristics, participate rightfully in curriculum decisions, and allow their individuality to be fully developed. In other words, the ultimate pursuit of a school-based curriculum is for students' individuality to be freely, thoroughly, and comprehensively developed, facilitating their development into unique individuals.

7.3.2 Strengthen the Capacity Building of School Curriculum

With the expansion of school curriculum autonomy, curriculum capacity building is extremely important. Inadequate curriculum-building capacity will lead to dangerous decentralization of the curriculum. It will directly affect the quality of education that students will receive. The curriculum reform is directed toward equipping teachers with the relevant professional qualities, appropriate knowledge and experience, and necessary curriculum capabilities to successfully implement this type of program.

7.3.2.1 Enhance the Teachers' Curriculum Awareness and Promote Their Professional Development

Teachers are essential to the school, as well as to school-based curriculum development. Any education reform without the active participation of teachers cannot be successful. From the perspective of the school-based curriculum, there is no curriculum development without teacher development. Therefore, the professional growth of teachers plays an important role in the development of the students, the school, and the curriculum itself. School-based curriculum development pursues a full and free development of the students' individuality, but the students' development does not happen naturally. Professional development of teachers is a prerequisite for the

formation of school characteristics and the inevitable guarantee for the development of the students' individuality. Therefore, the professional development of teachers is the inevitable pursuit of school-based curriculum development.

Especially in the context of the three-level curriculum management, part of the curriculum development is delegated to the schools, and teachers become one of the subjects of curriculum development. In this way, teachers are no longer just consumers and passive implementers of the curriculum, but to some extent, producers and active designers. This requires teachers, first, to have relevant professional qualities. As professionals, teachers must understand the concept of Liberal Arts education, and possess a professional attitude of openness and democracy, spirit, cooperation, and innovation in the face of challenges.

Second, teachers should possess the appropriate knowledge and experience. In particular, this includes some knowledge about concepts in curriculum development, some knowledge about child development, and some experience in curriculum development. Third, teachers should have the necessary curriculum skills. These curriculum skills include identifying the school's cultivation objectives, identifying the curriculum needs in the right context, knowing the curriculum skills and tasks of the school's partners, determining and presenting goals, selecting and organizing content, implementing skills and being innovative, using and improving assessment methods, using and developing on-site resources, making reasonable curriculum decisions, and having the necessary dialog and communication skills. Through the improvement of teacher education courses, teacher on-the-job training, school-based teaching research, and especially the enhancement of the curriculum skills of teachers in the school-based curriculum development process, teachers can move from a perspective of "compile school-based textbooks" to the design and implementation of curriculum programs based on the students' interests and the school's educational philosophy.

7.3.2.2 Motivating the Principal to Become a Professional Curriculum Leader

As one level in the three-level curriculum management framework, the principal, as the head of a school, is the first person responsible for the development and management of the school-level curriculum. The principal has the right to develop and manage the curriculum of the school in accordance with the relevant curriculum policies issued by the national or higher education authorities and therefore must also assume responsibility for the curriculum.

Principals play the following five roles. First, the principal should be an idealist of education, with a lofty and robust mission, and a willingness to construct a school that is just, fair, and humane so that children can become caring, responsible, and lifelong learners in a democratic society (Ou, 2003). Second, the principal should be a system reformer, adopt creative problem-solving methods, use professional enthusiasm, and desire to discover the meaning, purpose, and vision of both work and study. Third, the principal should be collaborative, establish a professional

community that works together, form a professional culture of care, creativity, criticality, and continued growth where viewpoints are shared through methods such as discussions, talks, exploration, debate, and questioning, and build a work environment with respect, tolerance, sensitivity, and mutual care. Fourth, the principal should be an open supporter who adheres to their moral belief, and who openly questions, challenges, and experiments with practical methods and idealistic hypotheses. Fifth, the principal should be a constructive seeker, actively creating meaning and forever pursuing the truth. The connotation of this type of curriculum leadership can be summarized in six aspects (Ou, 2003). The first is to clarify the philosophy of the school curriculum, the second is to design the school's curriculum program, the third is to implement the transformation of teaching, the fourth is to recreate the school structure and culture, the fifth is the formation and development of the educational community, and the sixth is to strengthen curriculum research (Ou, 2003).

7.3.2.3 Overall Improvement of School Curriculum Capacity

Improving the overall school curriculum development capacity is key to ensuring the quality of a school-based curriculum and to implementing the national curriculum program. The school curriculum capacity involves the ability of the school education community to develop all aspects of the school curriculum including its planning, design, implementation, assessment, and improvement.

In order to improve the curriculum capacity of the school education community, corresponding effective measures should be taken. First, we should establish a community cooperation mechanism for school curriculum construction. Through cooperation between teachers, departments, schools and communities, and parents, an effective school curriculum can be built. Second, the curriculum content of teacher education should strive not only to enable teachers to master the necessary curriculum and professional abilities but also to increase the corresponding content and to cultivate a high quality of research teachers' conduct with children and students. Third, in schools that meet the necessary conditions, the school curriculum committee, which is responsible for and regularly holds deliberation meetings or experiences cooperative meetings for the school-based curriculum program, should be established or improved upon. Finally, professional cooperation with university curriculum scholars should be strengthened so that the results of the school-based curriculum analysis, publication, and application will reach a relatively objective and professional level while at the same time enriching the professional cooperation experience of teachers.

Of course, the most important factor for improving the overall curriculum capacity of the school is the process of building a school curriculum using the school education community. At the school level, the first step in developing a school-based curriculum is that the school should take inventory of internal and external professional strengths to plan a comprehensive program of school-based curriculum within the framework of the national curriculum program, that is, develop a "Program of

School-based Curriculum Planning.” This program is not only part of the overall school curriculum implementation but also an all-purpose description of the general thinking about the school-based curriculum development, and is also an important document submitted by the school to the superior education authorities.

Although the final result is a program, the process of forming the program is the process of school curriculum construction itself. This first requires the school education community to clarify the educational philosophy of its school and to determine which kinds of people the school wants to cultivate. Next, the school must study the students’ interests and needs in a variety of ways; this is the starting point of school-based curriculum development. The two major issues above focus on the necessities for school-based curriculum development. At the same time, schools should study the possibility of satisfying the interests or needs of students according to the available resources of the school and community. In addition, schools need to strike a dynamic balance between what they want to do and what they can do, that is, to clarify the gap between reality and ideals, to clarify what should be done and can be done well but is not done well, and to determine how to improve current measures and the current level of knowledge and ability of the students.

Schools also need to understand whether the current curriculum structure is consistent with the actual situation of the school, whether it can stimulate the students’ learning motivation, and what kind of assessment and promotion mechanisms should be established. In short, the formation of the “Program of School-based Curriculum Planning” is a form of “system engineering” that comprehensively considers a wide range of factors; it is not a one-step process. It is a scientific, open, and democratic decision-making process of school-based curriculum development. The process involves the participation of principals, teachers, curriculum specialists, students, and parents and community members in the development, implementation, and evaluation of school-based curriculum programs. This process is one of improving the overall curriculum construction capacity of the school.

7.3.3 Establish a Two-Level Curriculum Deliberation Mechanism

“Focusing on development rather than on deliberation” was ongoing problem in the early days of the school-based curriculum. After solving the problem of “has it been developed,” the local administration and school should establish the corresponding school-based curriculum deliberation mechanism to answer the question of whether the development was rational or not. The rationality of school-based curriculum is not evidenced by “quality monitoring” by external institutions or personnel, as in the national curriculum, but by the two-level deliberation of the regional/school curriculum committee. To a large extent, the quality of a school-based curriculum is directly dependent on the quality of the deliberation. Therefore, the establishment of a school-based curriculum deliberation mechanism is key to its quality assurance.

Since the school-based curriculum program involves the two different levels of teachers and schools, the “Program of School-based Curriculum Planning” is composed of the “Course syllabus” written by teachers as well as the overall school-based curriculum plan developed by the school. Accordingly, the school-based curriculum deliberation system also requires two levels: deliberation at the school level and deliberation at the local level.

7.3.3.1 School-Level School-Based Curriculum Deliberation System

The school-based curriculum deliberation system at the school level refers to the collective deliberation performed by the curriculum committee (deliberation group) organized by the school on the course syllabi submitted by teachers. In accordance with the “Program of School-based Planning” developed by the school, the teacher independently or cooperatively develops a school-based course. The course description and syllabus must be submitted within the prescribed time. The course description is mainly used when students select courses, while the course syllabus embodies the various elements of the course. The school curriculum committee should deliberate on the school-based curriculum syllabi developed by teachers within a specified period and provide prompt feedback.

The school curriculum committee, generally composed of representatives of the school administrators, teachers, and students, parents and community members, scholars and experts, and so on, deliberates on the course syllabus prepared by the teacher. The basic process of deliberation established by this committee is (1) form a deliberation committee; (2) define the basic principles and the framework for deliberation; (3) democratically deliberate and record the results of the deliberation; (4) give feedback to the parties on the results of the deliberation.

The basic deliberation principles of the committee are mainly concerned with the consistency of the curriculum with regard to the school’s educational philosophy or the overall goal of the school-based curriculum, the consistency with the school-based curriculum master plan, the integrity of the curriculum elements and the consistency between the elements, and whether the description of the objectives, selection, and organization of content and the implementation and assessment recommendations are feasible. The committee determines whether the required conditions or resources are available, along with other such questions.

7.3.3.2 Local/Regional Level School-Based Curriculum Deliberation System

The school-based curriculum deliberation system at the local level refers to the collective deliberation performed by the local curriculum committee, organized by the education administrative department, on the “XX School Program of School-based Curriculum Planning” that was submitted by the school under its jurisdiction. On the basis of clarifying the philosophy of school education, assessing the needs of

students, and studying the available curriculum resources, the school forms the overall program for school-based curriculum planning. The content of the program must cover the necessity and possibility of school-based curriculum development, the overall school-based curriculum objectives, curriculum structure and categories, recommendations for its implementation and assessment, and safeguards. Schools must submit this program to the next higher-level education administrative department 3 months before the implementation of the curriculum. The education administration department should promptly establish a local curriculum committee to conduct the deliberations. Deliberation results must be provided within 1 month so that schools may revise or reorganize the implementation.

The membership of the local curriculum committee must include education professionals. If possible, student or parent representatives may also be invited to participate. The basic process of deliberation established by the local curriculum committee (deliberation group) is (1) form a deliberation committee; (2) define the basic principles and the framework for deliberation; (3) the committee democratically deliberates and records the results of the deliberation; (4) give feedback to the parties on the results of the deliberation.

The local curriculum committee deliberates on the “Program of School-based Curriculum Planning” submitted by schools under its jurisdiction. The basic principles of deliberation are mainly concerned with (1) Does the “Program of School-based Curriculum Planning” conform to the national curriculum plan and related policies regarding curriculum orientation, student academic burden, and teacher workload? Is it conducive to promoting quality education? Is it based on research on issues such as student needs? (2) Is the overall goal of the school-based curriculum scientific and reasonable? Is the description standardized? (3) Are the school-based curriculum structure and categories consistent with the curriculum objectives? Is the classification reasonable? (4) Is it conducive to changes in learning style or the diversification of learning methods? (5) Are the methods of course assessment diverse? Are they conducive to the development of students as well as teachers? (6) Has attention been paid to the full development and utilization of the curriculum resources at the school site? Are the necessary conditions present? (7) Has the issue of inter-school cooperation and resource sharing been considered? And so on.

The school-based curriculum deliberation system is a key to shape the quality of current school-based curriculum in China. At this system’s core is whether the composition of the deliberation is representative, whether the deliberation process or decision-making is democratic, and whether the basic principles and the standard framework are professional and to what extent consensus has been reached. Those mentioned mechanisms and institutions underscore the future development of school-based curriculum to unleash the school vitality in China.

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