Implementation of school-based curriculum in secondary school

Introduction

School-based curriculum (SBC) is one aspect of the new curriculum reform, *Learning to learn - the Way Forward in Curriculum*, carried out in Hong Kong in 2002. Discussions and researches about its practical application and implementation in real life teaching practice have been conducted both in oversea countries and in Hong Kong. This essay consists of three parts: a critical literature review on SBC, a discussion on the real life application and implementation of SBC and a recommendation on how SBC can be applied in schools. Different aspects, including the characteristics of SBC, teachers' roles and responsibilities under the new teaching concept and the challenges and difficulties in implementation, will be covered in the literature review and discussion. The discussion will be based on my observation and experience of the designed Chinese, English and Mathematics curricula in my secondary school and my imagination towards the process in which SBC is planned and designed. By the end of the paper, I will state that the implementation of SBC should be recommended in schools as long as curriculum design leaders are developed and more support are provided to schools in each developing stage.

Critical Literature Review

The new concept, school-based curriculum (SBC), influences teachers' traditional way of thinking about education as it breaks the "top-down" model in which teachers and schools only follow the central curriculum designed by the Education Bureau. Instead, it brings about a new perception in which schools and teachers are encouraged to adapt the central curriculum and to prepare new materials based on school culture and the ability of its teachers' and students' (CDC, 2001). Skilbeck (1998) defines SBC as "major decisions about the design, content, organization and presentation of the curriculum, about pedagogy and about assessment of learning will be taken at the school level" (p. 130). The advantages brought about from SBC are that it benefits students' learning in the way that students' potential are fully realized (Wong, 2007) and the effectiveness of teaching and learning can be enhanced through catering for students' interests and needs (CDC, 2001). It is believed that the reason of implementation of SBC is that it allows more flexibility, freedom and opportunity in determining and directing educational affairs, which helps to develop teachers' sense of motivation and achievement (Marsh, Day, Hannay and McCutcheon, 1990).

Besides its definitions, advantages and reasons for implementation, when put into real

life practice, SBC requires teachers to be more responsible and collaborative. On one hand, as far as teachers' responsibility is concerned, they should be more reflective about the current teaching practice in their classes. Issues, including the further needs of their students which cannot be fulfilled by the central curriculum, problems existing inside the central curriculum and their own teaching philosophies should be considered (Bolstad, 2005). When teachers design the new SBC, they need to be able to reflect the issues mentioned above and seek ways to improve the current situation. On the other hand, collaboration among teachers should be stimulated as it is suggested by Bolstad (2005) that SBC should not be regarded as individual efforts of teachers', but as a collaborative effort. One example of the collaboration can be the CDGs ("curriculum development groups") suggested by Curriculum Development Council, which consist of "teachers within the same KLA at the same level, or with other teachers across KLAs or across levels" (CDC, 2001, p. 72). Apart from the collaboration among teachers within one particular school, cooperation should also be established between teachers and external curriculum-design professionals (CDC, 2001) for professional development for teachers.

Various problems and challenges will appear when schools and teachers put SBC into real life application. For example, teachers will have much heavier workload than before as Wong (2007) states that teachers need to have more daily meetings when

discussing what should be designed in the SBC. He (2007) also argues that some teachers can hardly handle their heavy workload because they have other teaching affairs to work on besides the design and preparation of SBC. In addition, although teachers' autonomy in decision-making are enhanced with the help of SBC (Bolstad, 2005), they find themselves not qualified in designing the whole curriculum as many issues like curriculum orientation, materials and goals of each stage should be taken into deep consideration. Professional support on curriculum development and resources for them are not adequate at this stage. What is more, since teachers have made great efforts into SBC, the newly-designed activities interest their students to a large extent. Students feel much excited in classrooms, which results in more classroom misbehaviors for teachers to handle (Wong, 2007). Last but not least, the different perspectives towards certain education issues held by teachers may disable the smooth operation of the collaboration among them.

Discussion

In this part, my observation and understanding towards SBC will be mainly based on the SBC designed by my secondary school, No.2 Middle School of East China Normal University. The subjects on which the curricula are designed are Chinese, English and Mathematics. The discussion will be divided into three parts, with the

first one introducing the implementation of SBC and its practical functions, the second one talking about the collaboration among teachers and the last one illustrating the substantial challenges in preparing the SBC in my school from my imagination.

The application of SBC in my secondary school both benefits students learning and stimulates their learning interests and motivation to a large extent. Since the No.2 Middle School of East China Normal University is one of the top three secondary schools in Shanghai, its students are relatively more intellectual and creative than those in other schools. The school culture is to provide students with more freedom in researching their own interested topics. As mentioned above in the literature review, SBC should be designed to be related to school culture, to cater for the students' ability and to help realize their potential. In this way, to better fulfill the students' needs of not only learning the basic concepts in the central curriculum, the SBC designed in my school consists of both the basic concepts that appear in the central curriculum and those more complicated ones that are not included in it. In addition, the order of learning content has been changed to give the students a better overview towards the whole picture of the subject. The Chinese curriculum can be taken as an example. Instead of only having two articles written by *Han Yu*, who is a very famous writer in the Tang Dynasty, separately in two semesters in the central Chinese curriculum, the SBC one contains an independent module, which consists of about ten

articles of his for students to learn. The module will be taught as a whole in two weeks. In this way, in actual Chinese classes, students immerse in the beauty of Chinese literature more and feel more interested in reading articles in classical Chinese. As a result, they conduct more researches on comparison between the writing styles of other writers of the same age and that of *Han Yu*.

The collaboration among teachers does not seem to be working smoothly in real life. As illustrated in the second paragraph of the literature review, SBC development requires more collaboration among teachers within the same level. In real life teaching practice, instead of applying CDGs, my school divides the whole workload of designing the curricula and assigns it to different groups of teachers (See Appendix I). For example, in the mathematics SBC, *Wang Ping* and *Wang Hai Xia*, who are two of the Mathematics teachers in my school, are responsible for designing Analytic Geometry and Vector while *Liu Chu Xi*, another Mathematics teacher, is responsible for Set. As a result, teachers' overall workload is lessened while the communication among different groups of teachers is not adequate. In relation to this, sometimes my mathematics teacher ignored the textbook and used his own materials for us because he did not understand the rationale of some of the materials designed by other teachers. This case serves well as an example of the last challenge mentioned in the literature review, which argues that teachers' various points of view prevent the SBC from its smooth operation. More communication among different groups of teachers

should be stimulated for better understanding of both sides.

The challenges and difficulties that the teachers are faced with in SBC development may be the adaption of relationship between the SBC and the central curriculum and teachers' skills in designing a whole curriculum. As for the relationship between the SBC and the central curriculum, it is figured out that sometimes the topics and materials prepared for the SBC in my school are a bit far away from the central ones which are assessed in public examinations. Keeping the idea of both introducing the basic concepts and improving students' skills, teachers find it quite hard to find a balance between the two in designing the curriculum, which may result in too difficult learning content for students. Also, if the learning content is designed to be too far away from the central curriculum, the designed SBC will not benefit students, especially in the public examinations. In addition, it may be quite challenging for teachers to translate their understanding towards certain topics into the language which can be easily understood by the students. Teachers may apply some university knowledge, which is not learned by the students, in the textbook. In this way, more professional support on classroom and textbook language should be offered to the teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the above two parts, literature review and discussion of my observation and imagination, I recommend SBC to be introduced to the schools for the sake of more effective and efficient learning and teaching. It is clearly stated in literature and can be observed in my learning experience that the function of SBC is quite obvious in the way that students feel more interested and motivated in learning and the materials designed in SBC serve well in handling their weaknesses and building on their strengths. Also, as mentioned above, from the side of schools and teachers, they acquire more space and flexibility in designing their lessons as they can spend less time than required in central curriculum on some points that can be easily absorbed by their students while the time can be saved for more challenging terms.

To make SBC work, I will recommend schools to develop a curriculum design leader for each subject and more external support to be provided for them. As for the curriculum design leader, the role of the leader is to make the whole textbook coherent when modifying the difficulties of each chapter, combining the works from different teachers and finalizing the textbook edition. He / She also possesses the job of replacing old-fashioned social affairs with more currently happened ones to make the textbooks up-to-date from time to time. In addition, as the

teachers' autonomy in preparing curriculum is largely enhanced with the help of SBC, they will need more professional support to deal with the new task. The support should be offered according to different schools' needs. As far as my school is concerned, the support is suggested to focus on developing teachers' language skills. As for those schools which are in the primary stage of developing SBC, the support needs to focus on resources of materials and some basic concepts of curriculum, like orientation, purposes and organizations.

Conclusion

This paper provides both a critical literature review on the characteristics of SBC and a discussion on its practical application in my secondary school. SBC should be appropriately developed because of its influence and advantages in catering for students' needs. However, in developing SBC, teachers and schools will be faced with problems in collaboration among teachers and lack of professional skills in designing a whole curriculum. To recommend the policy in real life practice, it is highly suggested that schools ask for external supports and take their own pace in preparing for SBC according to the school's backgrounds and levels of their teachers and students. Also, a curriculum leader is suggested to have for each subject to help maintain coherence and conduct change. Furthermore, schools and

teachers should be well aware of the fact that both the central curriculum and SBC are dynamic. They should be prepared to modify the purposes, functions and approaches of their curricula from time to time according to the needs of their students and the society.

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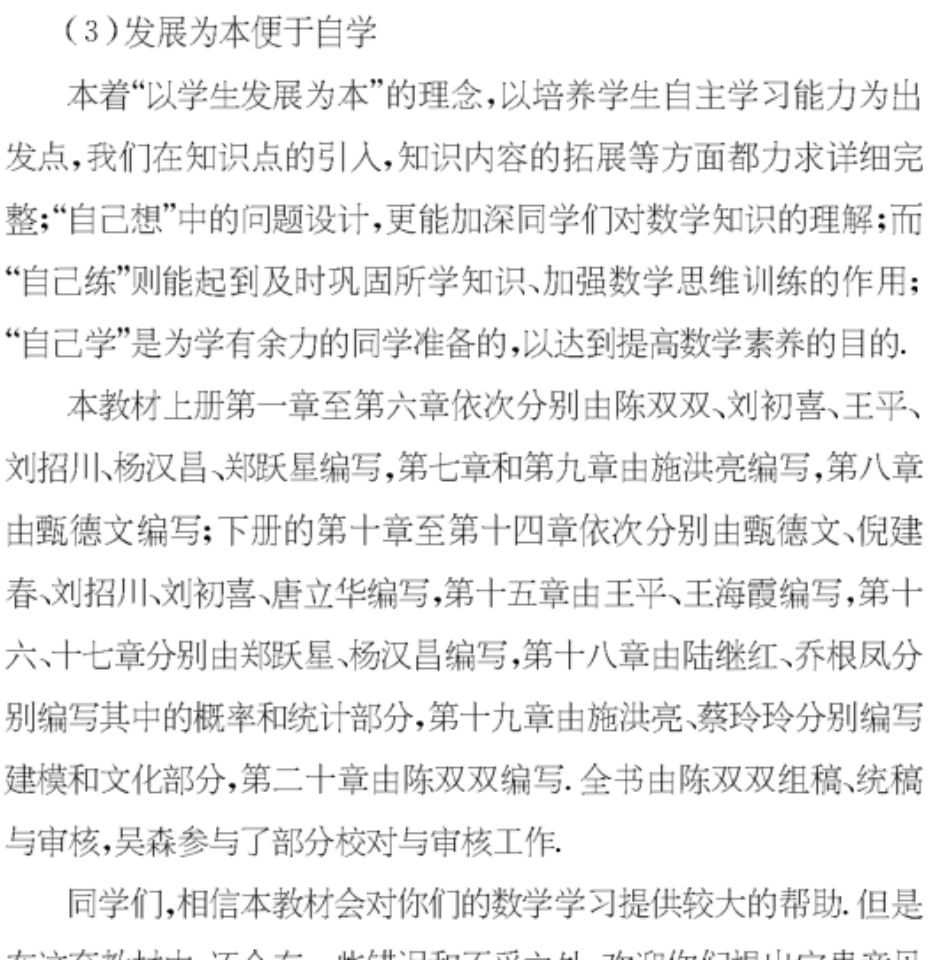
Appendix I



（3）发展为本便于自学

本着“以学生发展为本”的理念，以培养学生自主学习能力为出发点，我们在知识点的引入，知识内容的拓展等方面都力求详细完整；“自己想”中的问题设计，更能加深同学们对数学知识的理解；而“自己练”则能起到及时巩固所学知识、加强数学思维训练的作用；“自己学”是为学有余力的同学准备的，以达到提高数学素养的目的.

本教材上册第一章至第六章依次分别由陈双双、刘初喜、王平、刘招川、杨汉昌、郑跃星编写，第七章和第九章由施洪亮编写，第八章由甄德文编写；下册的第十章至第十四章依次分别由甄德文、倪建春、刘招川、刘初喜、唐立华编写，第十五章由王平、王海霞编写，第十六、十七章分别由郑跃星、杨汉昌编写，第十八章由陆继红、乔根凤分别编写其中的概率和统计部分，第十九章由施洪亮、蔡玲玲分别编写建模和文化部分，第二十章由陈双双编写. 全书由陈双双组稿、统稿与审核，吴森参与了部分校对与审核工作.

同学们，相信本教材会对你们的数学学习提供较大的帮助. 但是

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p. 5

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