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Analysis of the Implementation Practice of National English Curriculum Standards for Common Senior High School from the Perspective of Teacher Change

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Abstract: It has been five years since the Ministry of Education in People's Republic of China issued the National English Curriculum Standards for Common Senior High School, an educational policy that covers all provinces and cities in Mainland China. This paper, from the perspective of teacher change, conducts analysis in the implementation of this curriculum policy and discuss how to facilitate this educational change from school level and government level respectively.
Keywords: Teacher change; Teacher beliefs; Teaching behavior

The Ministry of Education in People's Republic of China issued the National English Curriculum Standards for Common Senior High School (hereinafter referred to as NECS) in 2017 and later a revised one in 2020 based on the three domains and a series of related indicators included in the 2016 Framework of Developing Key Competencies of Chinese Students. NECS is intended to alter the goal of current English education to improve the better development of teacher instruction and student learning; therefore in this way, it is a reform policy of high quality and social responsibility.

However, a curriculum change is a large-scale, complicated change calls for various provisions from teacher, principal, student, parent, district administrator, to school, community and government (Michael Fullan, 2001), each being an indispensable contributing unit. Therefore a good and complete curriculum change should focus on every specific step individuals and organizations go through, and depend on strategies and adjustments along in the dynamic implementation process.

1. Teachers in a multidimensional change practice

The process of teacher change is very complex as it is rooted in what the teachers believe about the subject and its teaching. Michael Fullan(2001) stresses that 1) altering the aspects of one's beliefs, 2) using new curricular materials and technologies, 3) employing new teaching strategies and learning diagnoses are all three aspects of components of implementation. The first dimension refers to a teacher's internal psychological state about the curricular change while the third one the external classroom behavior and actions. The second dimension usually comes first as relevant textbooks and exercise books always achieve nationwide spread-out as a result of unified planning and distribution by government. Teachers, however, have no other options but to adopt and use the designated new teaching materials in their classrooms.

2. Different views on teacher change

So given teacher change, researchers hold different views and perspectives as to the transactional relationship and influence of these dimensions.

In general, (Duke, 2004) the change in teacher beliefs is the premise that either precedes or occurs simultaneously with the change of teaching behavior. Hargreaves (1994) finds that a teacher's psychological state can make him or her more or less predisposed toward considering and acting on improvements. Guskey(1986), however, posited an alternative perspective as indicated in the following model: change in teachers' classroom practices→ change in student learning outcomes → changes in teacher's beliefs and attitudes. Barber and Phillips (2000) also supported this standpoint. Beliefs do not necessarily drive behaviors. More usually, it is the other way round—behaviors shape beliefs.

The question what one precedes another, practice or beliefs, is not entirely an empirical question. It is more imperative to find the ways teacher change is constructed from three dimensions.

3. Analysis of ways facilitating teacher change

Teachers, as a group of people most directly and obviously affected by curriculum change, are placed high demand and hope. Based on the three dimensions, the substantial curriculum reform needs substantial support for teachers; the support should be positive, sufficient and persistent ranging from providing professional training, building a pleasant culture climate in school, supplying both material and financial resources. All these efforts should be which can be concerted and persistent, with the involvement of different levels across the whole educational system.

3.1 School Level: Building a facilitative organizational structure and a pleasant culture climate

3.1.1 Building a facilitative organizational structure

An active and supportive school structure can greatly facilitate in helping teacher to strengthen professional knowledge, learn new instructional approaches, maintain positive staff relations. Such a facilitative organizational structure is composed of a vigorous principle and effective management of teachers

First of all, a facilitative school organization should be lead forward vigorously by a principle. A strong and transformational leadership by a strong principal is very essential to the successful reform of a school because implementing a curriculum uniformly entails new beliefs, new ideas, new concepts, new management and new approaches. Instead of directly issuing orders and assigning tasks, a principle should go into the grassroots with students, teachers, parents; deal with unanticipated problems, accidents and situations; obtain and allocate teaching facilities and resources; even lessen misunderstanding, conflicting values and miscommunications.

Moreover, an effective management of teachers is vital to the comprehensive management of a whole school. Only in an organization that gives teachers a sense of belonging, can they work for the school whole-heartedly and happily. To build an effective organization, the principal should in the beginning get to know the general information of all teachers such as the working ability, interpersonal relations, personality, age, health, family etc., so that they can learn from and complement each other in one way or another.

3.1.2 Building a supportive culture climate to alter teachers' beliefs and attitudes

Thomas in 2001 put forward that the culture or climate of a school could shape an individual's psychological state for better or for worse. So a pleasant school culture values and embraces reform, experimentation, learning and improvement, and under this culture climate everyone would love to look for better ways to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

Teachers who usually work isolated tend to hesitate and resist new instruction in self-contained classrooms, so school can arrange more time for teachers to be together and create more team work for them to share, such as formal meeting and discussion, collective preparation of instruction, class observation, and informal chats and lunch time etc. Pleasant culture climate also relies in and spreads into all levels in the school, between teachers and experts, administrators, institutional leaders. And administrator, by organizing, designing, and preparing teaching materials altogether with teachers, they can discover the problems of teaching approach, better understand teachers' worries and concerns, and share their considerable burden.

3.2 District and government Level: providing adequate and continuous resources

The local and governmental administrators and leaders serve as representatives of the nation who make the reform policy. Hiring trainers and educators to equip teachers with new knowledge, skills, technology and impart new theories and ideas; employing experts and professionals to conduct external evaluation based on the school; mandating personnel to manage and supervise all levels of administration in a school; allocating money to build more facilities and purchase teaching appliances for better class practice; organizing regular conference and seminars for teachers and educators to share experience, discuss problems and learn the new.

Actually, these are far from enough. The foremost problem is that efforts should be conducted in an acceptable and democratic way for teachers. Teachers need to be consulted and informed, rather than be forced and made to attend such programs or training; be encouraged for gaining intangible benefits and sometimes compensated in one way or another since these they input additional time and energy.

What's more, the local district should allow for more time and patience for teachers. The complexity and difficulty of a change decides it is a long-term process. So the local educational departments should understand, respect, support teachers. When doing school assessment or external evaluation, time and patience should be given to.

4. Conclusion

The success or failure of school reform depends heavily on the supply of teachers who buy into middle level ideals and have the knowledge and experience necessary to implement these strategies in the classroom. Thus, issues such as teacher resistance and faculty turnover may dramatically affect the level of implementation of recommended practices.

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