

# A new vision of school curriculum construction for the future

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**Abstract:** The current reform of basic education reform in China is unable to fully meet the needs of schools and students for individual development, which presents difficulties for management and curriculum development in schools. In order to assist schools in carrying out education reform further and improving education for students from the management level, this paper presents the issues that need to be addressed and the corresponding strategies from the perspectives of institutional development of school curriculum, cultivation of students' independent choice and agentic development, and school curriculum design methodology.

Our current educational system has to be a rallying point for a more thorough reform because it has not yet fully met the requirement of individual development needs of schools and students. In addition to the curriculum itself, the reform of the basic education curriculum must address the issue of "training people and how to train them" in our educational system, which cannot be resolved by only altering the format and structure of the curriculum. The new curriculum reform has brought a full range of challenges to primary and secondary education, and it is a crucial transitional step for school management systems and management mechanisms. An essential component of the difficulty is the management system's challenges. For instance, how to manage students after the introduction of the mobile learning system, how to encourage students to take charge of their own decisions, how to plan the curriculum from the standpoint of school administration, etc. The new curriculum reform poses many management challenges that call for both theoretical and practical solutions.

**Key words:** Curriculum construction; Individual development; System construction; Methodology of curriculum design

## 1. Trinity system construction of elective course system, mobile learning system, and credit system

The curriculum reform of general high schools in China has distinctly put forward the goal of "developing a curriculum implementation environment suitable to guiding students' active learning and enhancing students' independent learning". A clear proposal for the establishment of an elective course system has also given rise to the development of "personalized class schedules" for students' independent learning. This has formed the basic scope of research on the system and management of curriculum construction in general high schools, and has also raised a number of specific issues to be resolved.

### 1.1 Real credits and fake credits

The credit system is a management system of curriculum and teaching that uses credits as a unit of measurement to assess students' academic process and degree of completion, to meet the needs of students' individual development, as well as to fully reflect students' independent development. Due to various constraints, a way and method to implement real credit has not been sought in China, which is an issue that has been unresolved in the country so far.

### 1.2 Challenging the traditional structure of teaching with the "class" as the core element

The current reform needs to figure out how to build a platform for students' independent development. However, the "class teaching system", which is still in force, has been imprinted with the purpose of knowledge transfer since its inception and is incapable of carrying this burden. The current compromise approach of "administrative classes" and "teaching classes" does not significantly advance fundamental reform. There is an urgent need for a new initiative to reconstruct the community of student learning and development and to give it a new function, so as to overcome the limitations of the traditional classroom system that has been in place for centuries.

### 1.3 Creating educational resource bases and learning resource systems that allow students to decide their learning independently

The development and utilization of educational resources have entered the realm of curriculum construction research from school logistics management, which is a brand-new area that needs to be thoroughly investigated. The key question for further research is how the developed educational resources can give full play to their educational value and truly provide a platform for students to make their own

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choices and self-development.

## 2. Create a platform on which students can learn decision-making autonomy, self-responsibility and active development

The State Council's promulgation on "Deepening the Implementation of the Reform of the Examination and Enrollment System" intends to overcome the barriers imposed by the examination culture, advance comprehensive quality education, and foster the development of high-quality talents. In addition to the three compulsory examination subjects of Chinese, Mathematics and English, students will also have the opportunity to independently select from a wide range of other subjects, including politics, history, geography, physics, chemistry, and biology, depending on their interests, strengths and the requirements of the universities they plan to attend. This is an unprecedented choice given to students in the examination, requiring students to learn to choose and plan their futures, while putting forward new and higher requirements for curriculum implementation and student management. How to teach students to make independent choices, life career planning education in schools is mentioned on the agenda of school reform.

Our preliminary study indicates that high school pupils in China generally lack the awareness and ability to make their own choices. In recent years, many schools have begun to focus on guiding students to learn how to choose, and have made some initial attempts. As the research on this issue is still in its early stages of investigation, there are many disagreements and debates surrounding the question of whether this is "life career planning" or "career planning". Is it a course, or a series of implementation projects? We need to do the following investigation.

### 2.1 Give students the right to self-decide and self-responsible learning according to the result of student analysis

How guide students to learn to choose on their own, self-responsible, and active development, will expand the field of research in school reform. The starting point of the current research is to study and explore the following issues from the actual students in school: First, how to analyze the students' living conditions in light of their developmental requirements and their intention to choose the subjects for the entrance examination. Second, how each school forms its own goals, content, and implementation strategies based on its own experience. Career education is not only about nurturing and shaping, but also about students' self-generation and development, focusing on the process of understanding, planning, practicing, and experiencing.

### 2.2 Constructing a three-level structural system for students' career planning

At present, China's society is in a period of great transition, young students are living in a complex cultural ecological environment with multiple values coexisting in society. Therefore, young students present the contradictory problems of over- and under-socialization, which highlights the great practical significance of life planning guidance in schools.

The structure system consisting of "life career planning", "career planning", and "academic planning for the three years of high school" is built to comprehensively and systematically realize the guidance for students' life development. The system is intended to provide guidance for students' life development and to support students' self-awareness, life planning, and active development.

"Life career planning", or life development planning, includes the correct understanding of self, others, and society. It solves the problem that how students establish correct values and learn to behave themselves. "Career Planning", or professional direction planning, is to solve the problem of how students learn to choose and survive. "Three-year academic planning" addresses the issue of teaching students how to learn.

Based on the accumulated experience of certain school studies, the objectives, content, and implementation initiatives of the respective programs can be developed at the aforementioned three different levels.

### 2.3 Establish an open career education system using multiple methods and in the form of thematic research

Five models were initially established from the various types of life planning guidance activities that are currently being used in schools: courses, activities, counseling, consulting, and topics. After summarizing and analyzing the practical experience of life planning guidance in some schools, we argue that life planning guidance should be a subject group rather than a mere course. Life planning guidance should be organically permeated in the state-mandated compulsory subjects, and more importantly, it ought to be made into an elective course that students must take in the school curriculum system; it should be a subject course with theoretical guidance, and more importantly, it ought to become a comprehensive social practical activity course with experience, practice and perceptual cognition.

Life planning guidance should be implemented in stages, and schools should provide students with a "supermarket-type" menu of curriculum choices as much as possible. At the same time, school should carry out various forms of activities to create a foundation for students to make their own decisions, self-responsibility and self-education. Life planning guidance should first be based on the school, but at the same time appropriate to venture outside of it, to strengthen the link between school education and society. To increase the professionalism of educational counseling, the school should have a department in charge of the entire planning and implementation of life planning guidance.

### 2.4 Exploring the establishment of a new educational learning community

The new high school curriculum, with its open curriculum structure and diversified choices, has broken the traditional unified class structure of administrative classes and teaching classes, which has brought challenges to the traditional student management model. In practice, some high schools have already broken through the traditional student management model with the class teacher responsibility principle as the core, abolishing class teachers and replacing them with tutors, counselors and senior student groups. They gradually establish a new school education and student management model "full education and layered management" that combines classroom teachers, tutors, and

counselors with student management.

### 3. Methodology of top-level design of school curriculum

#### 3.1 Insist on the developmental subject consciousness and the consciousness of characteristics

In order to fulfill the so-called developmental consciousness of subject and characteristic, schools need to move from passive development to active development, and from popular to pursue characteristic development. Schools should really become the main body of "education-oriented," which is the basis and premise of school characteristic development. Besides, the school as the main body of "education-oriented" is not only the natural requirement of the information society, the era of knowledge economy and the innovation-driven development model, but also the natural state of China's ongoing education reform.

China's education reform strategy, particularly the reform of the basic education curriculum, places a strong emphasis on granting schools the authority to manage their own institutions as well as encouraging and promoting the development of school characteristics. It greatly expanded the autonomy of schools in curriculum development, construction and implementation. Schools should follow the trend and give full play to their initiative and creativity. Any school will always have some sort of advantage, and there is some way to radiate its own vitality, regardless of its history, size, level, or foundation. The school's subject consciousness and subject ability is good at finding and highlighting its development advantages.

#### 3.2 Insist on the difference and diversity of development

Difference and diversity of development indicate that school should be student-oriented, respect students' individuality and differences, and provide suitable education for each student. The curriculum ought to accommodate various levels of development in students.

To make education suitable for students, schools should set diversified development goals from the need to adapt to students' diversified development, and make students' basic goals and development goals in an open and flexible management process. Schools should try to create the richest educational resources, provide multi-level educational needs, and have both basic courses for all students and extension and research courses for a few students and individual students, so that different students can have different development.

Meanwhile, in order to promote the fullest and most effective development of each student, schools should create multiple areas in their curriculum construction that are conducive to the comprehensive, individualized, and sustainable development of students' intelligence in light of their diversity and differences, rather than limit themselves to traditional areas of intelligence. The curriculum should reflect the characteristics of individualization, diversity, choice, and integration. The formulation of curriculum objectives, the selection and organization of content, and the planning and evaluation of curriculum programs all operate with this as their core in order to allow students to obtain the best possible learning outcomes.

#### 3.3 Insist on the openness and integration of development

Openness and integration refer to the school curriculum system should be open rather than closed, systematic rather than dispersed, and integrated rather than fragmented. As a microenvironment in the general social environment, the school is influenced by the general social environment all the time. Students have an increasing number of faster and faster channels to acquire knowledge or information, especially with the growth of information and communication technology. Therefore, the contradiction between the relative closedness of school education (curriculum) and the openness of the social environment is becoming more and more prominent.

School education (curriculum) is somewhat systematic, and this is what makes school as an organization stands out from various other information media in the society that disseminate knowledge. However, the systemic nature of school education should be open. Any designed curriculum has a lag in knowledge compared to the continuous development of various scientific fields. Therefore, the openness of the school education (curriculum) system allows for a constant influx of new sources of knowledge. The education (curriculum) system must maintain a certain level of openness in order to adapt to this transition as the school faces an open and fast evolving world.

The national curriculum of China's basic education system has been replaced with a three-tier structure of national, local, and school-level curriculum administration, leading to a diversification of curricular forms. For instance, in contrast to the national curriculum, there are local and school-based curriculum forms, activity courses or integrated practical activity course forms in place of subjects courses, and elective course forms in place of compulsory courses. Whereas, how are schools dealing with these many curriculum formats? If we simply develop and construct whatever curriculum form there is, the result will be an inflated school curriculum. Most schools are very interested in developing so-called school-based curricula since they believe they cannot do something new anymore in terms of the mandatory national curriculum, particularly in the context of today's basic education curriculum reform in China. It seems to be more "student-oriented" in which schools develop and build school-based curriculum. Such an approach should cause us to reflect deeply. The quantity of school-based curriculum does not simply represent the quality of the curriculum, especially not the quality of school education. In order to create a structured curriculum, schools need to develop a structured curriculum design and focus on integrating relevant educational content and elements from the school's own educational philosophy or philosophy of schooling.

### 4. Conclusion

Exploring the road of China's basic education curriculum reform is developmental research, which is realistic, leading and pioneering. Each school should develop new ideas and strategies based on its own transformative practical experience and put them into practice, avoiding vague discussions. All levels of educational administration should make every effort to establish the conditions that will allow schools to design multiple developmental spaces, both hierarchical and individualized, to guide each school to discover its own growing

point.

With the reform of the national education system, schools are under unprecedented pressure to survive and develop as the core of education, requiring fundamental transformation through change. The principals of primary and secondary schools in China have responded to the trend of the times, seized the opportunity of development, explored the strengths and potentials of their schools with boldness and strategic thinking, and formed a self-renewal mechanism to cope with change, enhancing the overall comprehensive strength of their schools and building new competitive advantages for their schools.

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