AN ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL-BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: THE TAIWANESE SCHOOL OF MELBOURNE

TIEN-CHIN WANG & HSIU-CHIN HSIEH

National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences, 415 Chien Kung Road, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

ABSTRACT

School-based curriculum development (SBCD) has conceived as an alternative school management strategy and has been an international trend since past decade. This report reviews some articles from renowned academic journals that are related to school-based curriculum development to obtain concise understanding into the theoretical and practical implications of school-based curriculum development in education context. First, this report starts with the literature review that is summarized the contemporary issues of SBCD from a set of readings. Second, this report presents a situation analysis of Taiwanese school of Melbourne where implements SBCD, and some implications and reflections will be discussed in terms of analyzing school situation, planning professional development, improving assessment methods and implementing evaluation policy. Finally, this report will conclude the theoretical, practical and findings to provide a set of recommendation for the school principal to practice school-based management and improve consistent administrative procedure for implementing the principles and processes of SBCD in School.

KEYWORDS: *School-Based Curriculum Development (SBCD), Reflection, Involvement*

INTRODUCTION

This Curriculum development has influenced by three major change trends in school: influencing of globalization, developing information technology and practicing curriculum innovation in educational environment since the past decade [12]. During curriculum innovation and reform, school-based curriculum development (SBCD) has been conceived as an alternative strategy and as an international trend to centrally determine curriculum decision-making since 1970s [10]. This decentralized educational system was introduced in Australia and New Zealand and then influenced some centralised educational systems in jurisdictions such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and China [6]. In Taiwan, the teachers were also empowered and encouraged to join the Scheme and to produce school-based curriculum (SBC) projects with financial support from the Education Department since 2000s[9].

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the school-based curriculum development, in order to enhance the understanding of SBCD an observation was conducted with the Taiwanese School of Melbourne. This obtains an insight comprehension of SBCD to provide some suggestions for the principal to draw an improvement on the curriculum development and administrative procedures in the future. Initially, the report starts with a review of the literature based on some researches and contemporary educational journals and policies. Second, the in-depth situation analysis of the Taiwanese school of Melbourne will be analyzed to exam the SBCD in practical terms in the school. Third, the reflections and implications that are underpinned notions of school-based curriculum development will be discussed. Finally, the report will conclude theoretical, practical and findings to provide some recommendations that can assist principals and teachers to implement the principles and processes of SBCD in School.

The methodology of this paper draws from a range of literature sources to provide an overview of key themes and common understandings surrounding the notion of school-based curriculum development. Sources include research reports, journal articles, books, critical commentaries, and educational policy and curriculum documents. Moreover, this report examines books and articles that appeared relevant were retrieved. During the analysis and writing, key themes and ideas from the SBCD literature suggested links to additional areas of literature. In addition, a situation analysis will be conducted with the Taiwanese school of Melbourne by implementing observation and interviewing the principal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SBCD has prevalently applied in the different objectives of schools, where might encounter some challenges and barriers. Some of contemporary issues and major themes in SBCD will be summarized as following.

The Definition of SBCD

The term 'school-based curriculum development' (SBCD) is defined in the different ways in the literature; in accordance with Bolstad (2004) involves school staff making decisions about programmes of learning for their students; that collaborative decision-making processes are involved. As Marsh (2004) states the school is enhanced the degree of self-management to decentralize the certain area of authority, responsibilities and resources to achieve the school goals. In addition, Skil beck (1984) defines SBCD broadly that" the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of a programme of students learning by the educational institution".

According to Kelly (2004) several major principles are reflected on school-based curriculum development, first, SBCD is a large measure of freedom for both teacher and learner, is an essential condition for curricula provision in fully educational system. Second, SBCD review the school as a human socialised environment that develop the individuals' differentiation. Lastly, SBCD regards the role of teachers and staff in developing, modifying, and adopting curriculum that suit the needs of individual pupil.

Skil beck (1984) designs a model for school-based curriculum development, as can be seen in Figure 1; it is an outline of actions to be taken in curriculum development, conceived as a process of collaborative and structured decision-making. This diagrammatic representation of the processes of curriculum making must be frequently reviewed as a cycle.
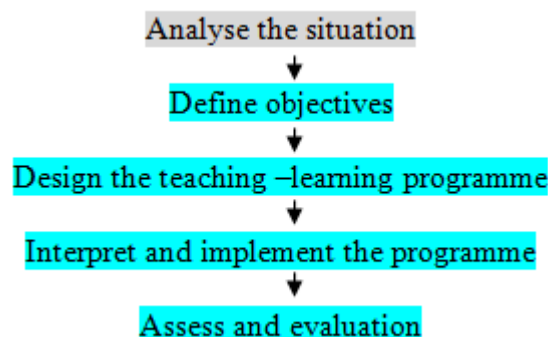
Source: Skilbeck M. 1984

Figure 1: A Design Model for School-Based Curriculum Development

After curriculum reform, the educators perceived the importance of the SBCD decision-making to that determined

by individual schools and teachers [6]. This trend towards decentralisation was primarily based on the assumption that teachers' involvement in curriculum development would enhance their level of professionalism and result in

More relevant and workable curriculum innovations A numbers of educators supported for autonomy at the school level because they perceived if the key decisions have been made at the school level, that school-based management can consistent with trends in school-based education management. It was widely believed that SBCD was associated with greater teacher autonomy, professionalisation and the pursuit of curricula better designed to meet the diverse needs of children and communities [6].

The Involvement of SBCD in School

For SBCD to work in practice, school needs different people with different positions to involve curriculum development. First, the school principal should help the teacher consider what the curriculum should be and how it might fit with the curricula of the schools. The principal should provide both material and psychological support to the teachers in their deliberations and should prepare to explain to the community what they are doing while curriculum has been developed. In this sense, the principal is not the instructional leader of the school, but the leader of instructors [13].

Second, the teacher with empowerment, the role of teachers requires a redefinition from the SBC management, teacher obtains a greater autonomy in decisions that affect the school. Moreover, the SBC program director/coordinator currently functon in a variety of different roles. Some are classified program coordinators as administrators with the ability to hire staff and control their own budgets. They are classified as specialists or teachers who are supportting and encouraging the processes of curriculum development, planning and review within the schools [8].

Third, a participartory style of curriculum development necessarily involves students [10]. The students involvment is an essential element in SBCD processes, as Figure 2 illustrates, the student learning outcome is depended upon the connection between the development of curriculum, teacher and school that is collaborated to create a suitable teaching and learning environment for students. Moreover, the idea behind SBCD is student benefits learning from the curricula that are taught and are developed specifically for them. Based on a closely assessment of the individual characteristics and needs and of the available resources in the school and the development of specific curricula will generate the greatest benefit for the students [14].
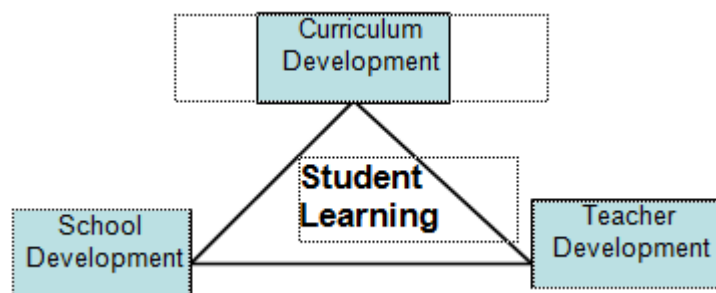
Source: Yang 2007

**Figure 2: Connection between Curriculum-Teacher-School Developments, Pedagogy,
Learning & Teaching Resources**

Last, the role of parent in school was one which had been generally restricted, but nowaday, the parents have played very essential role in Parents and Teachers Association. Parents may play intermediate role between school and

student, due to parents increase communication and involve decision-making in school [7]. The expanded role of parents hinges on the ability to commit the time necessary to consider educational, budget, and staffing issues. In addition, Kennedy and Brady (2003) state that "parents want to see their chlidren do well and they invest their faith in the school and its curriculum to ensure that this happens". The parental involvement also can assist teacher in collecting information, preparing teaching materials, contributing classroom acitivities and so forth. Therefore, the parents enhance their involvement in school to increase the degree of SBCD implementation in the school.

Besides school staff, sometimes parents, and sometimes students, the SBCD tends to be non-specific about who else might be involved in processes of SBCD. As Bolstad (2004) affirms that people outside the school who might involve in the SBCD process in at least three ways: being consulted during a SBCD process; having direct involvement in curriculum deliberation, decision-making, and development; and being drawn on as resources for schools that are developing school-based curricula.

The involvements that external people have been characterised in SBCD processes include: boards of trustees, local communities, families, educational advisers, local groups or agencies, local businesses or industry providers, other educational providers, or experts/mentors with specialised knowledge or skills, to name just a few [1].

The Challenges of SBCD

After implementing SBCD in school, there are some challenges for the practitioners , as Iwahama and Asada (2006) point out the five major internal problems of curriculum development, 1) the professional knowledge about subject matters, 2) social background of students, 3) the attitudes of learners, 4) teaching methods, and 5) learning styles and the way of learning. Furthermore, Li (2006) points out there also are some challenges: 1) lack of curriculum experts and their guidance, 2) shortage of resource for curriculum development 3) teachers are under-qualified to develop school-based curriculum. Moreover, Caldwell (1993) also states some inevitability of challenges bringing about school-based management schools, there are summarised as below:

- Choice of parents will lead to an improvement in the quality of education, due to an inter-school competition.

- Effects of recession and financial crises that have led to drastic cuts in head office person

- Empowerment of teacher and parents, especially as a result of some parents' involvements in curriculum decision-making.

- Politics of education, for example different governments have different perspective of education systems that may impact upon the educational policy.

- A national imperative: an emerging national framework, based upon economic   considerations to guide school-based activities.

IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

After conducting a situation analysis of Taiwanese school of Melbourne, ongoing analysis of data from multiple sources and interviewing the principal provide a comprehensive picture of a school-based curriculum development and implementations some implications and reflections that applied into Skilbeck's (1984) design model for school-based curriculum development which was mentioned above will be discussed. This section includes analysing school situation,

planning professional development, improving assessment methods and implementing evaluation policy as following.

Analysing the Situation of School and Consistent Objectives

A situation analysis can not only identify students' learning problems but also recognise the schools' objectives. School-based curriculum planning is often initiated by the recognition of some problems which existing in teaching and learning environment, but the effects of the problem as the symptoms of an illness may not recognise its ramifications or its causes (Skilbeck, 1984). For example, Chinese writing ability in level 4 leaves alot to be desired, after some deliberations several reasons are put forward, there may lack of knowledge of teacher to teach writing and composition or the lack of clear evaluation policy on developing curriculum. This example shows the problem can be probed and clarified through a situation analysis to find out the relevant information [10]. Therefore, the situation analysis is the foundation for decisions to be made on actions to overcome the problems, which will be a logical starting to undertake school-based curriculum planning [10].

Planning Professional Development for School-Based Teacher

The school and its teaching staff have inadequacy of professional consciousness and abilities for SBCD. The school needs to provide on-job-training and profession development courses to enhance the accreditation and qualification of teachers. However, the teachers' knowledge and experts' guidance can obtain through the professional development and educational training. Therefore, the professional development course has not only solved the under-qualified teachers' problem, but has also obtained the expert's guidance through the courses.

Some of knowledge and teaching skills can be learned in the professional development courses[8]; [4]:

- Competencies in project management (especially to initiate and lead a steering group in the school, time management, team management, presentation and moderation techniques)

- Competences in teaching individual subjects and integrated LOTE programs on the upper level (themes, assessments, culture of self-reflection, working together with experts of the university)

- Competences in methods and didactics (team teaching, testing with portfolio, gender mainstreaming)

- Self-competences (self-confidence in the fields of school-development, how to handle struggles, how to keep someone's own strengths)

- Interpersonal and intercultural competences (conflict culture, working in teams, empowerment)

Improving Assessment Methods

The school should improve its assessment instruments and methods. If school focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, that will result in the strong improvements in student' achievements. Student learning efficiency is based on teaching performance and strategy. Teachers identify the different needs of individuals to modify their teaching methods by utilising the different assessment instruments. For instance, the school has not clear understanding about Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) which is a new approach to curriculum from prep to year 10 [11], but the school still followed the previous assessment approach to instruct and assess students that will leave the students behind others. Therefore, the school leaders should coach teachers how to understand and implement a new assessment standard. A teacher should utilise an appropriate measurement tools and procedures for assessing students' performance to assist the

students achieving the new standard of learning goals.

Implementing Curriculum Evaluation

Curriculum evaluation completes the cycle of curriculum development and implementation [5]. Curriculum evaluation is a process of information that enables interested individuals and groups to participate in a specific grogram. For example, VELS provides a whole school curriculum planning framework; it also describes three core, interrelated strands of physical, personal and social learning, discipline-based learning and interdisciplinary learning. School plans its curriculum and evaluation policy by following VELS requirements that can enhance the students' effective learning to enable its students to achieve the essential statewide learning standards [11]. So that school should implement the new evaluation standard to assist students perceived how they should change or develop their learning strategies and methods to achieve different learning standard.

Evaluation policy also provides a basis for decision about the individual learning project, and helps teacher to judge the effectiveness of their teaching. In accordance with Kennedy and Brady (2003), the evaluation procedures have been suggested as below: focusing, preparing, implementing, analysing, and reporting. Similar, Ministry of Education and Training Victoria (1991) asserts the first step of evaluation is that teacher should focus on differentiation of student to design the testing style for different groups of students. Second step is preparing and implementing, teacher should determine what information, techniques and instruments are needed and when should implement an evaluation to collect the information from students. Third step is recording of evaluation, some cumulative record of individual progress through the various stages of course of study is essential. Fourth step is standardised tests, the way of grouping children in different fields of study such as reading, mathematics and spelling, is to apply appropriate standardised tests. Fifth step is diagnosis, checking the test results that can diagnose weaknesses in specific processes or general areas of schoolwork.

Evaluation is important for parents to know how their children are progression. In curriculum development processes, evaluation plays an important step in whole curriculum development cycle. The importance of evaluation is measuring the effectives of teaching and learning. For example, teachers have to propose some assumptions to evaluate students' performances and outcomes, such as what are the learning problems of achieving the learning targets/objectives. Should evaluation take in a particular situation? How should the evaluations be recorded? How should results be communicated to children and to parents? These assumptions should be followed by some actions to assist the learners to identify and solve their problems, so that the evaluation procedures are not the end of the SBCD processes that might put the things back to situation analysis step.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, the school-based curriculum development can serve as means to introduce a change philosophy and make the school more adept at dealing with change issues. It can be a guide for selecting process improvement tools, a communication enhancement, a means to provide reward/recognition, a school indoctrination mechanism, a method to introduce and expand the school's autonomy, and a foundation for determining ongoing training and development needs. It is important to emphasize that it is not only flexible responsibility of teachers but also the shared effectiveness of decision-making in the school.

As a result, there is a set of recommendations for the principal of Taiwanese School of Melbourne to make improvements in implementing SBCD in the future.

- Understand what is the school's current objectives and how to help teachers and staff understanding the school currently perspectives

- Ensure a consistent administrative procedure to avoid confusing the people who are inside or outside of school.

- Collaborate with the teachers to pursue means of flexibility and autonomy that allow teachers to develop more innovative SBCD

- Implement more appropriate teaching sources and to better support whole school change.

- Interact with professional institutions or government bodies providing professional development courses and educational training for teachers

- Improve their assessment and evaluation competencies and techniques to reflect on the students learning outcomes.

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AUTHOR'S DETAILS

Tien-Chin Wang, male, Professor, PhD He is a professor in National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences. He created four methodologies: Fuzzy Linguistics Preference Relations (Fuzzy LinPreRa), Fuzzy VIKOR, Fuzzy PROMETHEE, Fuzzy Incomplete Linguistics Preference Relations (Fuzzy InLinPreRa). Professor Wang is the journal reviewer: Information Sciences; European Journal of Operational Research; IEEE Transactions on Fuzzy Systems; Applied Soft Computing; Applied Mathematical Modelling.

Hsiu-chin Hsieh, Female, PhD student of National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences, Fu-Hwa senior High School's teacher, Research field: human resource management, crisis management.