From One to Nine: a New Integrated Curriculum for the New Millennium

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Introduction

On September 30, 1998, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan announced that a new general curriculum outline for the national compulsory education had already been proposed and that a new integrated curriculum from grade 1 to 9 will begin to be implemented from 2001. This act will have very significant impact on Taiwan's education. It signifies that the Ministry of Education decides to loosen its control over the curriculum of the national compulsory education. A period of school-based curriculum development will begin. And the structure of the curriculum, the styles of teaching and the ways of evaluation will all be quite different from the past in the future. Because the change is so great, the controversy also rises. Besides describing the background and what the new curriculum will be, this paper will also discuss its impact and the controversy that it rose.

Background

1. The political background

Taiwan is an island near the south east part of Mainland China, which had been under the rule of Dutch, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese in the past four hundred years. After the World War II, Japanese gave up its sovereignty, and the land was taken by the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China. Later, this government was defeated by the Communists in the Mainland and was forced to move its government to Taiwan. Until now, it already had fifty years' rule in the island.

When the government just moved to Taiwan, it immediately faced two challenges. First, the local Taiwanese had been under a long time of foreign rule (especially...
Japanese), and had formed a psychological gap with the mainlanders. Second, the potential crisis that came from the difference of political ideology. Under these two kinds of pressure, with the terrible lesson that the whole mainland China was lost to the Communists, to seize an effective political control and to get a secure social order naturally became the Nationalist Government's first important task. (Chi Chen Yeh, 1991; Li Hua Chen, 1997).

After withdrawing to Taiwan, The late President Chiang Kai-Shek, the leader of the Nationalist government began to examine and reform. He thought the main reason that the Mainland China lost to the Communists was education. So he thought that the government should edit a set of standard textbooks to unified the diversified thinkings. And from that time, only the government can edit and issue the textbooks for the compulsory education.

About ten years ago, the marshall law that issued by Chiang Kai-Shek, was moved (by his son President Chiang Chin-Kou), and Taiwan began to democratize. However, for long time under the authoritarian rule, the minds of the officials to control the education were not easily to disappear. Not until five years ago, could the government issue the policy that the private publishers can also edit the textbooks for the elementary education.

2. The Social Background

Because of the democratization, the society soon became very open. The public and the intelligentsia began to criticize and question the curriculum. Not only the Ministry of Education had been asked to revise the Standard of the Curriculum, but also many private groups had done a lot of educational experiments to do the reform. The “Forest Elementary School”, the “Seeds School” and the “Whole Person Middle School” were some of the examples. They all tried to put out their own curriculums. The professional groups of education, for example: the Association of Teachers' Education and the Association of Curriculum and Teaching, had already done a lot of suggestions to the curriculum reform. The curriculum reform became a urgent need of the whole society (Po Chan Chen, 1999).

3. The International Background

1990s’ is an era of education reform. The major developed countries of the world are all doing the education reform. The United States, the United Kingdom of Britain, Japan and the Australia etc. all had put out their new proposals about education and curriculum reform. This also gave a stimulus to the government of R.O.C. on Taiwan. In 1994, the
Executive Yuan formed a National Council for Education Reform. After several years of discussion, in 1997 the Council issued a report and pointed out five major directions of the reform: (1) to loosen the central control; (2) to bring well every students; (3) to let everyone wish to study have school to enter; (4) to promote the quality of education; (5) to establish an endless learning society. Among them, within the item "to bring well every students", it especially pointed out that "in the aspect of curriculum and teaching reform, the total planning of curriculum should focus on real life, grasp the ideal goals of education, set the curriculum outline to replace the standard of curriculum, strengthen the linkage and integration of curriculum, and decrease the numbers of courses and the hours of classes." (Chin San Wu, 1999)

The Content of the New Curriculum

For above backgrounds, on April 1997 the Ministry of Education established a "Task Force for the Curriculum Development of Elementary Education and Junior High School Education". The work of this group was to set a "New From One to Nine Curriculum Outline for the Elementary Education and Junior High School Education". The members of this group include experts, scholars, teachers, the administrators of schools, the representatives, the industrialists, the feminists, the parents, the former members of the National Council for the Education Reform, and the administrators from the governments concerned. After through many researches, meetings and public hearings, it finally issued a "General Curriculum Outlines for the National Compulsory Education" in the end of September 1998. The new curriculum, according to the schedule, will be implemented in 2001. The content of the new curriculum is briefly summarized as follows (P.C. Chen, 1999):

1. The Goals of the New Curriculum

   The new curriculum emphasizes to nurture students to have the concern of humaneness, the ability of integration, the capacities of democracy and the consciousness to the homeland and the world. The concrete goals of the new curriculum are as follows:

   (I) To promote the physical and psychological development of the individuals.
      a. To increase the self-understanding, to develop the potentialities of the individual.
      b. To nurture the abilities of appreciation, display and creation.
      c. To develop the abilities of career planning and endless learning.
(II) To increase the social and cultural participation.
   a. To nurture the knowledge and abilities of expression, communication and share.
   b. To develop the respect to others, the concern about society and the cooperation with others.
   c. To promote cultural learning and international understanding.
   d. To increase the knowledge and abilities of planning, organizing and practicing.

(III) To correctly understand the nature and environment, and to use them properly.
   a. To nurture the abilities of using technology and information.
   b. To stimulate the spirit of active exploration and investigation.
   c. To nurture the abilities of independent thinking and problem solving.

2. To Develop Ten Basic Abilities

   (1) Be able to understand oneself and to develop the potentiality.
   (2) Be able to appreciate, display and create.
   (3) Be able to do career planning and lifelong learning.
   (4) Be able to express, communicate and share.
   (5) Be able to respect, concern and cooperate.
   (6) Be able to do cultural learning and have international understanding.
   (7) Be able to plan, organize and practice.
   (8) Be able to use technology and information.
   (9) Be able to explore and research actively.
   (10) Be able to do independent thinking and problem solving.

3. The Study Fields of the New Curriculum

   The new curriculum especially emphasizes the spirit of integration. It integrates the traditional courses into seven study fields—Languages; Health and Physical education; Social Studies; Nature and Technology; Mathematics; Art and Humane Learning And the Combined Activities. The whole structure of the new curriculum are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Field</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Physical Education</td>
<td>Health Physical Education</td>
<td>Health Physical Education</td>
<td>Health Physical Education</td>
<td>Health Physical Education</td>
<td>Health Physical Education</td>
<td>Health Physical Education</td>
<td>Health Physical Education</td>
<td>Health Physical Education</td>
<td>Health Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Humane</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Art &amp; Humane</td>
<td>Art &amp; Humane</td>
<td>Art &amp; Humane</td>
<td>Art &amp; Humane</td>
<td>Art &amp; Humane</td>
<td>Art &amp; Humane</td>
<td>Art &amp; Humane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
<td>Combined Activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The important regulations concerned are as follows:

1. The teaching time: Language fields occupies 20% ~30% of the whole time; other six fields occupies 10%~15% of the time. Every school can have a flexible arrangement within the field of regulation.

2. The basic required periods occupies 80% of the whole periods; the flexible periods occupies 20%.

3. The percentage of the required periods of every grade: the required periods of the first to the sixth grade occupy 80%~90% of the basic periods; the selected periods occupy 10%~20% of basic periods; the required periods of the seventh to nineth grades occupy 70%~80% of the basic periods; the selected periods occupy 20%~30% of the teaching periods.

4. The flexible teaching periods means besides the basic periods, the periods that the school can flexibly use. It can be divided into two categories: The periods that the whole school can use and the periods the class can flexibly use. The school and the teacher can use this periods to do the activities of the whole school or to do the remedy teaching.

5. In order to effectively design the school-based curriculum, every school should establish a committee of curriculum development and the curriculum teams for every study fields. They must do the whole planning before the school term begins. They design the themes of the teaching and the activities of teaching. Teachers should do the teaching according to their specialties.

6. The school days and the number of periods: Every year has 200 school days (National holidays and the ordinary holidays are not included), each week in principle has 5
schooldays. Each period in principle has 40~45 minutes. The teaching time of every grades are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>grade</th>
<th>Class time of each week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20~22 periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20~22 periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>22~26 periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>24~26 periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>26~28 periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>26~28 periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>28~30 periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>30~32 periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>30~35 periods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. The principles of the curriculum implementation

(1) The basic principle

a. It should have related practices to support the new curriculum, for example, the system of educating the new teachers; the opportunities for the old teachers to have inservice education; the study of the new curriculum; the development and selection of the textbooks. All of them should consider the spirit of the new integrated curriculum.

b. The content of the new curriculum outlines should base on the goals of curriculum, the basic abilities, the principles of implementation, the study targets of each study fields and the norms of the indicators for each grades. And it should give the local governments, the school teachers the autonomy and the flexible space that the design of curriculum needs.

c. Under the principle of according to the basic teaching periods, the schools can break the limits of study fields, flexibly adjust the teaching hours, and to practice the teachings of big entities and integrated themes.

d. Each fields should fully consider the conditions of the schools, the characteristics of the communities, the expectations of the parents, and the needs of the students etc. to unite all the teachers and the resources of the community to develop school-based curriculums which include the curriculum projects for the whole school and the teaching projects for the class.

e. The outlines of every study fields should include the definition and scope of this field, the targets of learning, the basic abilities (or standards of displaying) for the reference of editing the teaching materials, teaching and evaluation.

(2) The editing, examination and selection of the teaching materials

a. The textbooks should be examined according to the outlines of the curriculum. They are edited by the private publishers and selected by the schools.

b. The editing of the textbooks should base on the sprit of "from one to nine" and
integration. The contents of every fields and the quantities of the textbooks should obey the principles of the basic teaching periods.

c. The examination of the textbooks should base on the principle that they all are according to the spirit and content of this outlines, and that the developing space of the multifarious teaching materials can be offered. The standards of the examination will be issued by the Ministry of Education.

d. The schools should select or edit by themselves the suitable textbooks and teaching materials according to the nature of the districts, the needs and characteristics of the students. They should also base on the same principle to edit or select the teaching materials that the flexible periods need.

(3) Evaluation

a. The evaluation of the curriculum should be done by the central government, local government and schools separately and cooperatively. Their responsibilities are as follows:

  (a) The central government: to establish the indicators of learning for every study fields and to guide the local governments and schools to do effectively.
  (b) The local government: responsible for examining the schools to do the curriculum and to do the tests of the study fields.
  (c) The schools: responsible for the practice of the curriculum and the teaching, also responsible for doing the evaluation of the learning.

b. Every school should organize a "Committee of Curriculum" to examine the projects of curriculum for every grade to ensure the quality of education. The members of the Committee includes: the representatives of school administrators, the representatives of the teachers from every grade and every study field, the representatives of the students' parents and the community. 

c. The methods of evaluation should take a variety of ways to do, should put the formative evaluation and conclusive evaluation on a equal position, and should offer the learning reports of the students periodically.

5. The Comparison of the new Curriculum with the old one

The comparison of the new curriculum with the old ones can be summarized as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Old</th>
<th>New</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Framework Of Learning</strong></td>
<td>Elementary School: 11 Courses</td>
<td>Seven Big Fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior High School: over 20 Courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Numbers Of Teaching Periods</strong></td>
<td>Variousness and NO Flexible Courses</td>
<td>The Language Fields occupy 20%. The other Six Fields each occupy separately 10%. All of them occupy 80%, which consists of required and selected courses; and the flexible courses occupy 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The ways Of Teaching</strong></td>
<td>Teaching seperately Divided by Courses</td>
<td>Integrated, Cooperatively Coordinately Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The days of going To the school</strong></td>
<td>220 days each year each year two semesters 22 weeks each semester six days each week</td>
<td>200 days each year each year two semesters 20 weeks each semester 5 days each week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The teaching time</strong></td>
<td>Elementary School— Esch period 40 minutes</td>
<td>Each period 40~45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior High School— Each period 45 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The teaching time Of each week</strong></td>
<td>Elementary School— 26~35 periods</td>
<td>Elementary School:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior High School— 33~36 periods</td>
<td>Grade 1 &amp; 2— 20~22 periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The textbook</strong></td>
<td>Elementary School: Edited and published by the government and private publishers Junior High School: Edited and published by the government</td>
<td>Edited and published by the private publishers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Impact</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The new Curriculum will have a lot of influence on the compulsory education. According to Dr. Po Chang Chen (1999), the vice president of the Committee which is responsible for offering the outlines of the new curriculum, this new curriculum...
signifies the decision power of the curriculum moves from the central to the school and a new era of "school-based curriculum development" will come. The impact of the new curriculum can be concluded as follows (Yi Fong Young, 1999):

1. The new curriculum emphasizes to nurture the students the basic abilities that a modern citizen needs. This is quite different from the past. In the past, the memorization of the knowledge was very important. The change can make the learning combine with the experience of real life. And it can make the learning become a happy thing.

2. To combine the traditional courses into seven big study fields encourages cooperative teaching. In the past, each course was taught separately. The new curriculum emphasizes integration of the courses and so the teachers of different disciplines should cooperate with each other.

3. The new curriculum provides the school and the teacher with more flexibility and autonomy in the field of teaching. The new curriculum offers the "flexible teaching periods" and the selected courses occupy 10~30%. Besides those, the school and the teacher can also flexibly adjust the weeks and grades of teaching. These can help building the autonomy of the teachers, and are also suitable to the needs and special nature of the community, the school, and the class.

4. The new curriculum decrease the hours of teaching and the burden of the students. The teachers have more time to do the remedy teaching, the advanced teaching and the other activities of guidance.

5. The new curriculum emphasizes the teaching of English. The students must learn English at least since the 5th grade. If the conditions are good, the school can also teach English from the first grade. This is useful to the internationalization of Taiwanese society.

6. The new curriculum decrease the dependence on the textbooks. According to the outlines of the new curriculum, in the future, the school can edit the teaching materials by itself. The textbooks become only one of the references for teaching and not the only one. The teachers can use multi-media and computers to help teaching and make the teachings become more interesting.

7. The new curriculum combines the teaching with the evaluation. Because the new curriculum emphasizes the nurture of the basic abilities, the valuation of the teaching will also depend on the tests of the indicators of the abilities. This will make the curriculum, the teaching and the evaluation have better combination.

8. The new curriculum can make the curriculum have a real "from-one-to-nine" design. In the past, the design of the curriculum for the elementary education and that for the secondary education were done separately. That made the curriculum of the elementary education and
the curriculum of the secondary education can not have a real linkage and integration. This kind of situation can be changed in the future.

The Controversy

Since the Ministry of Education issued the General Outlines for the new Curriculum, it already rose a lot of controversies. Among them these two are the major ones:

1. Integration or not integration: In the past, the courses were not integrated. The teachers were used to it. And even the teacher colleges and universities trained their students by different kind of subjects. This kind of situation was especially obvious in the training of the teachers for the secondary education. So when the Ministry of Education announced that the future curriculum will integrate the traditional subjects into several big fields, Many of the professors from the colleges or universities above mentioned quickly argued against it. They argued that every subject has its own special nature and should be taught separately.

2. The time of the implementation of the new curriculum: The Ministry of Education announced that the new curriculum will be implemented from the year 2001. This announcement also rose a lot of questions. Many people thought because the change is so big, the time of preparation should be longer. For example, many people doubted the ability of teachers to do the teaching of integration. The Central Daily NEWs had a comment as follows:

“Rigidly speaking, teachers are the keys of the success of education reform. They are the important persons to inspire the students to learn. If there is no participation of the teachers in the education reform, even the curriculum were designed very well, the students can only have very limited absorption and the effects of learning will be very low. It looks like that the problem of integration raised the controversy. In fact, it is whether the teacher has the ability of teaching that caused the biggest doubt of the society.”

Conclusion

In order to meet the challenges of the new century, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan (R.O.C.) decided to implement a completely new curriculum for the compulsory education. It is very happy to see that a government like to change and even to loosen its control. However because the change is so big, its impact will also be great. Scholars had suggested the Ministry to do a lot of preparation works and researches before its implementation in 2001 (P0 Chan Chen; Sen Tsen Tsen, 1999). And the Ministry had already
adopted some of their suggestions. For example, it decided to choose 200 schools to do the pilot studies from next semester. And it will establish a National Academy of Education to do a lot of constant researches to evaluate the policies of the Ministry. All of these are very good developments for the education reform of the country. However, it still has a long way to go and a lot of efforts to do.

Reference


