

Research Proposal

A Study of Attitudes to Curriculum Innovation in a China's Rural Secondary School

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Abstract

China's Ministry of Education has been implementing a nation-wide curriculum innovation reform in some of the provinces for its moral education of socialist builders and successors and the national college entrance examination since 2019 and the curriculum innovation reform is at present conducting in secondary schools in cities and rural areas of Anhui province and will witness its new national college entrance examination after the curriculum innovation reform in 2024. Attitudes towards curriculum innovation reflect its implementation situation and provide a perspective of adjusting and perfecting the curriculum innovation for teachers, schools and even policy makers, especially the attitudes captured from a rural secondary school, which is one of the most earthly places carrying out the curriculum innovation and serves as a sample or a tip of the iceberg through which we are able to glimpse the whole picture of the curriculum innovation. Thereby this paper studies the attitudes to curriculum innovation in a China's rural secondary school to contribute to the curriculum innovation.

Key Words: attitudes; curriculum innovation; China; rural secondary school

Investigation Aims

In terms of the research proposal title the investigation aims are clear-cut and aim to make clear the attitudes of the school, the teachers, the students and the parents towards the ongoing curriculum innovation in the China's secondary school I intend to survey since attitudes towards curriculum innovation reflect its implementation situation and provide a perspective of adjusting and perfecting the curriculum innovation for teachers, schools and even policy makers. The attitudes of the school side thoroughly determine to what level or degree the curriculum innovation is implemented, the positiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of carrying out the curriculum innovation reform because it is the school side that maps the blueprint of the curriculum innovation reform of the school itself. Teachers are the conductors of the curriculum innovation and thus the attitudes of the teachers directly decide whether the curriculum can be made a reality and carried out positively and completely. The attitudes of the teachers also mirror the implementation situation of the school and undoubtedly affect the attitudes of the students. Students are the receivers of the curriculum innovation. Whether they are beneficiaries or victims of the curriculum innovation depends on the attitudes, the executive ability of the school and the teachers and the attitudes of the students themselves. And the attitudes of the students are the test stones of assessing the implementation situation of the curriculum innovation, via which the teachers, the school and the policy makers gain first-hand feedback and necessary reasons to improve or perfect the ongoing curriculum innovation. Nowadays schools and families bond over students learning under the curriculum innovation. Positive and supportive attitudes of the parents contribute to students' learning journey while negative and objective attitudes of the parents hinder students' learning process under the curriculum innovation. To some extent, the attitudes of the parents shed light on the attitudes of the students, the school and the school teachers.

Investigation Rationale and Significance

The rationales of this investigation are as follows. First of all, the new ongoing national college entrance examination reform is being carried out in Anhui Province from the year of 2021 after the first test region, the Shanghai city and Zhejiang province in 2014, the second test areas like Beijing city, Tianjin city, Shandong province and Henan province in 2017 and the third round of provinces like Hebei province, Liaoning province, Jiangsu province, Fujian province, Hubei province, Hunan province, Guangdong province and the Chongqing city in 2018. The aim of the new national college entrance examination reform is to foster and select better socialism successors. To meet the requirement of the national college entrance examination, the curriculum innovation is accordingly on its way. What is more, the author is now teaching in one of rural secondary schools in Anhui province, where both the national college entrance examination and the curriculum innovation are ongoing and at their initial stage with so many issues to be discussed, so many questions to be solved and so much research work to be conducted. Moreover, the author is now majoring in TESOL in an England university at Master's level where the author is equipped with some professional knowledge to do relevant research work. The author is now also the dean of the school in charge of teaching affairs, especially the study of the new Gaokao, the new national college entrance examination and the curriculum innovation, which makes the author suitable and advantageous to research the attitudes towards curriculum innovation in a China's rural secondary school. Most importantly, there are some practical English as a Foreign Language(EFL) theories and some other related theories to back up the author's study of attitudes to curriculum innovation in a China's rural secondary school.

Of all the following theories to be mentioned I put special emphasis on Brian K. Lynch's(1996) practical theory in his book *Language Program Evaluation: Theory and Practice* because the curriculum innovation is of a language program and the evaluation of it besides observing attitudes is consistent with Lynch's theory and practice and his research method of addressing the question of how young children become bilingual(his first research question) is of high reference value. For instance, when Brian K. Lynch studies how young children become bilingual, he does not use the mixed language group in all of his analyses and he chooses two families from different language settings to study further by making eight tape recordings of mother-child and father-child interaction separately, through which the percentage of the interactions is calculated and an appendix list is used. The questionnaires he sends out are over 100 and his data are compatible with the Sequential Model and what I quite appreciate is his skills in evaluation in his *Reading English for Science and Technology Project*, in which he offers a theoretical background and some practical techniques for the evaluation of language education programs. Scanning his book, historical overview, positivistic and naturalistic views, model designs, detailed evidence examples and research paradigms are traced to make his research systematic at every process. What really seize my attention is that some attitudes and curriculum evaluation are also mentioned, which makes me aware that analyzing attitudes is also of evaluating curriculum innovation.

Kenneth M. Zeichner (1987) in his book *Critical Pedagogy and Teacher Education* he provides a normative basis approach to teacher education and a series of conceptual lenses and instructional strategies are used to become much more politically involved in teacher education, which is often the case in China's education because Chinese teachers' pedagogy and education are more political. The curriculum innovation along with the new national college entrance examination is politics-oriented. Thus Kenneth M. Zeichner's theory is worth mentioning in terms of my study of

the attitudes towards the curriculum innovation of a China's rural secondary school.

For theories about curriculum innovation, Jones, L. B. (1962) in his book *Curriculum Innovations in a Public-School System. Theory Into Practice* analyzes the curriculum innovation situation in a public school, which is quite similar to mine and the theories presented in his book open up a window for my research. Behar-Horenstein, L. S., Pajares, F., & George, P. S. (1996) in their book *The Effect of Teachers' Beliefs on Students' Academic Performance during Curriculum Innovation* showcases how the teachers' attitudes affect students' attitudes towards academic performance during curriculum innovation, which appropriately contribute to my research. Hord, S. M., & Huling-Austin, L. (1986) in their book *Effective Curriculum Implementation: Some Promising New Insights* provides study findings based on Principal-Teacher-Interaction(PTI) study, which reflects the attitude of the principal, the representative of the school affects the attitudes of teachers in implementing the curriculum innovation. This perspective lives up to my expectations of studying the attitudes of the school and the teachers. Pemberton, R., Carmichael, S., & Lam, M. (2004) 's book *Developing learner motivation through curriculum innovation* gives a insight into the way of shifting students' attitudes towards curriculum innovation to motivate their learning, which can be a way and be adopted by analyzing students' attitudes. Mairtín Mac An Ghaill. (1992)'s theory in his book *Student Perspectives on Curriculum Innovation and Change in an English Secondary School: An Empirical Study* is quantitative-based. Mairtín Mac An Ghaill provides a case-study of how curriculum innovation is being mediated through a secondary school, in which a student perspective or a student attitude is shown. From the above books and theories , the study of attitudes among the school, the students , the teachers and the parents is more theoretically prepared.

As for the attitude itself and the identification of the attitude, there are also some theories to justify them such as Kuhl, J. (1982) 's Action-vs. state-orientation as a mediator between motivation and action, Ajzen, I. (1985)'s *From Intentions to Actions: A Theory of Planned Behavior*, Carl Hovland's *Attitude's ABC theory* and *Attitude Organization and Change* , Kelman's compliance, identification and internalization theories. Murphy, G. Allport, Krech, Freedman, La Piere, Newcomb, Weigel, Fishbein, Froming, Petty, Davidson, Kallgren, Fazio, Williams and so on are all additional resources for the study of attitude.

The significance the research consists of two aspects. One is that a study of attitudes to curriculum innovation in a China's rural secondary school provides objective theory support for the parents, the teachers, the students , the school and even the policy makers from an academical perspective. The other is from practical perspective to contribute to adjust and perfect the curriculum innovation for the school or the country, which is in fact realistic because the policy maker once made some adjustments according to students' attitudes towards curriculum innovation when they were choosing their compulsory and optional courses to learn.

Literature review

A large number of existing studies probe attitude itself, attitude and behavior and attitude towards a specific course. For instance, Musgrove, L. E. (1998)'s *Coming to Terms: Attitude*, Tamler Sommers. (2007)'s *The Objective Attitude*, Rokeach, M. (1966)'s *Attitude Change and Behavioral Change*, Liska, A. E. (1974)'s *The Impact of Attitude on Behavior: Attitude-Social Support Interaction and FAROOQ, M. S., & SHAH, S. Z. U. (2008)'s STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS MATHEMATICS*. There are also varieties of studies concerning curriculum and curriculum innovation like Jones, L. B. (1962)'s *Curriculum Innovations in a Public-School System. Theory Into Practice*, Lowrey, A. M. (1972)'s *Components of Curriculum Innovation*, Hord, S. M., & Huling-Austin, L. (1986)'s *Effective Curriculum Implementation: Some Promising New Insights* and Pemberton, R., Carmichael, S., & Lam, M. (2004)'s *Developing Learner Motivation through Curriculum Innovation*. A few studies touch the effect of an attitude towards another like Behar-Horenstein, L. S., Pajares, F., & George, P. S. (1996)'s *The Effect of Teachers' Beliefs on Students' Academic Performance during Curriculum Innovation*.

Whilst a considerable body of research has been carried out on attitude and curriculum innovation separately, much less is known about the study of attitudes to curriculum innovation, especially that of a China's rural secondary school. To fill this literature gap, this paper identifies attitudes of the school, the students, the parents and the teachers towards the curriculum innovation in a China's rural secondary school.

Investigation Evidence Description

Among the four ways of investigation evidence description, the observation notes, responses to interviews, responses to questionnaires and policy documents, the author decides on the latter three in case that the observation process will disturb the teaching environment. Questionnaires for the students, the teachers and the parents are designed separately and interviews with the school leaders are carefully prepared.

Investigation Methodology

Speaking of the investigation methodology, questionnaires and interviews are used to collect research evidence and Likert Scales, Thurstone Scales and Semantic Differential Scales are used to quantify and analyze the research evidence.

Investigation Settings

The school the author is teaching and conducting the research is a China's rural secondary school in a town named Yanzi, where both the national college entrance examination and the curriculum innovation are ongoing and at their initial stage with so many issues to be discussed, so many questions to be solved and so much research work to be conducted. Moreover, the author is now majoring in TESOL in an England university at Master's level where the author is equipped with some professional knowledge to do relevant research work. The author is now also the dean of the school in charge of teaching affairs, especially the study of the new Gaokao, the new national college entrance examination and the curriculum innovation, which makes the author suitable and advantageous to research the attitudes towards curriculum innovation in a China's rural secondary school.

Investigation Ethical Issues

In order to avoid any potential bias and some possible ethical issues , the author makes an informed consent form to participants to make sure their willingness to participate in. The author quits observation notes method to avoid disturbing the teaching environment. The author also signs to respect participants privacy, separate names with outcomes, and report the statistics to participants to member-check them.

Investigation Timetable

Project Items	Time Range
Literature review	April,12th
Evidence collecting	April, 12 th -14 th
Statistics analysis	April,15 th -16 th
Research proposal	April, 17 th -19 th
Proposal proof-reading	April, 19 th -20 th

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