

Concept-driven Chinese School-based Curriculum Development Based on Wukong Chinese School as An Example

Jiaying Sun

Hainan College of Economics and Business, Meilan District, Haikou City, Hainan Province,
China

Abstract

A school-based curriculum is a curriculum model developed independently by a school in relation to its own reality and students' needs. It is an important part of the school curriculum system and an important supplement to the national and local curricula, and can address the most pressing knowledge and skills to be mastered in teaching and learning in a targeted manner. Using concept-driven as a theoretical starting point, this paper takes the development and implementation of the school-based curriculum at Wukong Chinese School as an example to explore how to promote the positive development of the school-based Chinese curriculum and summarise the shortcomings of the experience, with a view to providing some reference for colleagues.

Keywords

School-based curriculum; Concept-driven; Teaching Chinese as a foreign language; Wukong Chinese School.

1. Concept-driven

1.1. Connotations of Concept-driven

H. Lynn Erickson & Lois A. Lanning (2018) define a concept as a mental construct that constructs a set of examples with common properties. Concept-driven instruction is inquiry-driven and concept-centred, based on the three dimensions of content, concepts and skills, and uses the nature of facts as an entry point to dissect their intrinsic properties, which in turn drives a positive development. The concept-driven approach focuses on the place of concepts in teaching and learning, emphasising the conceptual understanding of what students are learning and guiding them to acquire a way of thinking and learning. By introducing concept-driven teaching, abstract knowledge is taught to establish relevant connections to that knowledge in students' minds, thereby helping them to clarify concepts, to make inter-, inter- and supra-disciplinary transfers, to respond positively to in-depth research and creative exploration linked to what they have learnt, and to acquire the important ability of how to drive subsequent learning or practical application with conceptual understanding.

1.2. The Significance of Conceptual Drive for Expanding the Functions of School-Based Programmes

School-based Curriculum (SBC) refers to the curriculum developed by schools according to their own reality and the needs of their students and coursework. The developers of the curriculum are front-line teachers who are experienced and familiar with the needs of their students and are able to combine the school's resources and needs to solve practical problems. Thus, school-based curriculum is a good complement to the national and local curriculum (Yan Huayin 2018, Jin Yule 2001).

According to Zhu Xinhua and Zhong Zhumei (2007), the sustainable development of school-based curriculum requires effective strategies that combine school characteristics, mobilise

teachers' specialties, closely align with national curriculum goals, and respect students' developmental needs. Based on the national curriculum system, different models of school-based curriculum development can be adopted or adapted directly according to students' characteristics and needs, which can greatly reduce teachers' workload.

Wang Ke (2016) points out that the school-based curriculum itself has four major values: firstly, it can provide a complement to the national and local curriculum, secondly, it promotes teachers' professional development, thirdly, it helps to characterise the school, and fourthly, it facilitates students' personality development. Developing a school-based curriculum based on concept-driven has a positive effect on expanding the functions of these four values.

2. An Examination of the Wukong Chinese Concept-driven School-based Curriculum

Wukong Chinese (Wukong EDU) is an online Chinese language school that focuses on providing online education solutions for overseas children aged 4-18. It uses the New Shuang Shuang Chinese textbook (Wang Shuang Shuang, 2014) as a textbook to develop a school-based Chinese learning curriculum that aims to develop students' Chinese listening, speaking, reading, writing and deeper understanding of Chinese culture. Starting from a concept-driven philosophy, this study analyses the desirable and deficient aspects of the school's Chinese school-based curriculum development process based on the author's work experience in Wukong Chinese and a visit to the frontline teachers of Wukong Chinese, and suggests some ideas and recommendations for the future development of Chinese school-based curriculum in this school and Chinese schools with similar situations.

Based on the survey, this paper concludes that the main Chinese learning needs of the students studying at Wukong Chinese can be summarised as follows.

- 1) To increase literacy. Many students currently have Chinese lessons in their home schools, but the classroom content does not meet parents' needs for their children's literacy, so parents want to expand their children's literacy through the additional learning provided by Wukong Chinese.
- 2) Improve speaking and expression skills. Parents want their children to be able to express themselves in Chinese in an organised and logical way, with accurate pronunciation.
- 3) Improve reading skills. Many parents are concerned about their child's interest in reading in Chinese during the formative years of their student's life and hope that their child will receive training in Chinese reading methods and skills, which in turn will stimulate active reading and the development of creative thinking.
- 4) Improving writing skills. Parents of students expect that during their child's Chinese learning process, they will be able to clarify the elements of sentences, from being able to express complete sentences in spoken language to being able to write complete sentences correctly, to the development of writing ideas and techniques, and to apply the basic knowledge of the language acquired in the classroom to writing.
- 5) Understanding Chinese culture. Chinese parents living overseas expect their students to learn more about the culture of their home country and to enhance their children's sense of identity and belonging. Foreign parents also expect their students to enrich their knowledge of Chinese culture and increase their knowledge base, which in turn builds students' excellent concepts of respect for cultural differences.

Overall, the majority of teachers interviewed were positive about the role of the New Shuang Shuang Chinese Teaching Kit in meeting the above needs of students and parents. The teachers felt that the textbook progressed from the learning of words to the learning of simple sentence patterns, and was mainly based on short texts with interesting and meaningful content,

supplemented by poems and performance dramas, which provided important materials for Wukong Chinese to develop a rich school-based curriculum practice.

Combining the author's work experience and the results of her visits, we believe that there are the following merits in Wukong Chinese's work related to the concept-driven Chinese school-based curriculum.

1) Scientific construction of a framework system for the school-based curriculum. A quality school-based curriculum should be designed to match the philosophy of the school and the needs of the students, so as to maintain a high degree of fit between the school-based curriculum and the school culture, and to highlight the quality and cultural characteristics of the school curriculum. To this end, Wukong Chinese School aims to provide children with the roots of their mother tongue, and looks at the school's position from a scientific perspective, expecting students to accumulate core Chinese language learning skills as a result of their Chinese school-based curriculum. Based on the conditions of the school, the school evaluates and reviews the development of the school-based curriculum and puts it into practice so that it can serve the development of the school and the growth of the students. In building the framework system for the Chinese school-based curriculum, we strive to present a holistic arrangement and consistent design. To ensure the unity of the elements, holistic arrangements are made for curriculum objectives, curriculum content, curriculum implementation and curriculum evaluation. In the curriculum planning programme, factors to ensure the implementation of the curriculum are considered so that every student can enjoy the consistent design of the Chinese school-based curriculum in an equitable manner. For example, the thematic Chinese culture lessons designed for all students combine the Chinese culture content covered in the textbooks of all levels of the New Double Chinese Textbook with the use of quality extra-curricular picture books as a supplement, supplemented by careful teacher explanations, making it a distinctive part of the Chinese school-based curriculum for all levels of students. Its principles based on holistic arrangement and consistent design give new life to the learning of Chinese culture beyond the textbooks.

2) Exploring a benign approach to the management of the school-based curriculum. Standardising the process of managing the implementation of the school-based curriculum is an important support to ensure its quality. To this end, Wukong Chinese has established a special school-based curriculum management team, which is responsible for the development and post-implementation management and evaluation of the school-based curriculum, and regularly checks and provides feedback on the use of the school-based curriculum to help the Teaching and Development Department make timely adjustments and improvements, constantly integrating important concepts of the curriculum through practical training in teaching tasks and constantly strengthening the follow-up research of the school-based curriculum. The team also encourages outstanding teachers to participate in the development and management of the school-based curriculum and offers appropriate material rewards for outstanding performance. In the development and implementation of the Chinese school-based curriculum, the school authorities not only give teachers the important power to participate in the design of the curriculum, but also try to make all teachers participants and collaborators in the management of the school-based curriculum.

3) Gradually improve the school-based curriculum assessment system. A well-developed school-based curriculum assessment system plays a key role in achieving the intended construction goals of the school-based curriculum. To this end, the school has established a flexible and comprehensive curriculum assessment system. This includes both assessment of student learning and assessment of teachers' implementation of the curriculum. In-class assessments include dictation, sentence construction and paraphrasing, while in-class assessments are based on listening, speaking, reading and writing, with written and oral assignments designed to take full advantage of the online platform. Due to the global epidemic,

the original method of distributing paper textbooks and exercise books by post has been affected and some students' families do not have the means to print them. In response, the school has enriched the assessment model for after-school assignments and developed a variety of online assignments. This is a great way to motivate students to learn Chinese and to ensure that they are able to revise after school. For teachers' curriculum implementation, a quantitative evaluation scheme for teachers' school-based curriculum development has been established to evaluate teachers' participation in curriculum development, the quality of course delivery and students' acceptance, and to reward and punish teachers' work accordingly. The materials and results compiled in the teacher evaluation can then be used as an important basis for judging the quality of curriculum development and construction.

Concept-driven advocates that learning should be done in a directed, structured and focused way, with each teaching task revolving around some core concepts, allowing students to ask a series of questions around these core concepts in the process of completing the teaching task, and then using these questions to make the teaching more directed, structured and focused, ultimately promoting a more efficient development of the school-based curriculum.

Most of the students at Wukong Chinese School come from Europe, North America, Australia and Japan in Asia. The circles in which they live do not provide, or do not provide well, a Chinese language environment, and for many students, although they come from Chinese families, Chinese is already their second language. Therefore, it is appropriate to focus more on the comparison between the students' first and second languages in subsequent teaching activities. For example, when students were asked what they could do on a snowy day, many native English speakers would answer "make a snowman" instead of "build a snowman" or other more idiomatic expressions in Chinese. Apart from the word 'make' in the question, the main reason for this is that students directly translate the universal verb 'make' in English. To address this situation, schools can design lessons that focus more on the core concept of verb-object collocation in Chinese and help students understand the difference between Chinese and other languages in this concept, so as to avoid similar mistakes and achieve a more accurate learning of Chinese based on conceptual understanding. Teachers need to first clarify the important concepts of the teaching task, guide students' thinking and understanding, and try to anticipate what questions students will ask about the important concepts when preparing lessons in order to facilitate the efficient completion of classroom tasks and improve the breadth and depth of students' knowledge.

3. Summary and Outlook

This paper has explored the development of a school-based Chinese curriculum based on a concept-driven philosophy, using the Wukong Chinese School as an example and examining the results of the construction of its school-based curriculum. The system is a vast undertaking, from developing the concept, to creating the curriculum specification, to establishing an effective macro-management and micro-monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Against the backdrop of the normalisation of the epidemic, the school-based curriculum at Wukong Chinese School has been built to broaden the teaching pathways and meet the needs of students of different ages for quality Chinese learning resources for foreigners. At present, Wukong Chinese's school-based Chinese curriculum building has initially achieved good results, with diverse interactive and tracking teaching providing good solutions for Chinese language learners around the world. The experience gained from this is an asset for us as foreign Chinese language educators to draw on for future curriculum development on a wider scale. At the same time, Wukong Chinese should also innovate and adjust in the future as it accumulates, explores and deepens in order to provide a better quality and more relevant Chinese school-based curriculum to meet students' needs.

References

- [1] Jin Yule. Implementation of School-based Curriculum: Experiences, Problems and Countermeasures [J]. Educational Research, 2001(09): 53-58.
- [2] Lynn Erikson, Lois Lanning, Lu Hsiaokong. Concept-based curriculum and teaching [M]. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press. 2018.10.
- [3] Wu Xi. Exploring the practice of concept-driven teaching in the IBDP Chinese B course [J]. Teachers, 2020 (27): 82-83.
- [4] Wang Ke. Curriculum sharing: A new orientation for school-based curriculum development[J]. Contemporary Education Science, 2016 (22): 37-40.
- [5] Wang Shuangshuang. New Shuang Shuang Chinese teaching materials [M]. Beijing: Peking University Press 2007.
- [6] Xu Yuzhen. School-based curriculum development:A conceptual interpretation [J]. Curriculum. Teaching materials. Teaching Methodology, 2001(04):12-17.
- [7] Yan Huayin. Curriculum: Education line shaping students' runway [M]. Beijing/Xian: World Book Publishing Company , 2018.08.
- [8] Zhu Xinhua and Zhumei Zhu. Strategies for improving the effectiveness of school-based curriculum - An example from the early experience of implementing school-based Chinese curriculum in primary schools in Singapore [J] Journal of Chinese Language 2007 Vol. 5 No. 22, 22-31.