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# Curriculum Studies in China

## Intellectual Histories, Present Circumstances

EDITED BY
WILLIAM F. PINAR

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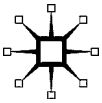

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# Series Editors' Introduction

*John N. Hawkins*

*W. James Jacob*

In the broad field of educational inquiry, practice, and development, what is referred to as "the curriculum," has been considered by many to be the most resistant to change. The use of the term *curriculum* in an educational context introduced a departure from the *studio* or master apprentice model of teaching/learning and introduced an understanding of education as a deliverable—a notion implicitly invoked by Adam Smith's affirmation of the need to provide mass education as a public good. The understanding of education as a quantifiable product of sequentially delivered, standardized content resonated particularly well with modernization theory, affirming the modern values of universality, control, order, precision, and certainty. To this study of perhaps the most critical element of pedagogy, we are pleased to add another volume of William Pinar's important series placing curriculum studies in an international content. Joining his series is this volume on *Curriculum Studies in China: Intellectual Histories, Present Circumstances*. Once again he has assembled an extraordinary group of essays by Chinese scholars followed by exchanges with experts in the field to provide an informed, expert, and accessible range of the field of curriculum in China in both an historical and current content. His method is revealing and important to an understanding of this very complex topic. We believe it adds substantially to both the field of curriculum studies and Chinese educational development.

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# Acknowledgments

Again I express my gratitude to Professors John Hawkins and W. James Jacob for their willingness to include this volume in their International & Development Education Series at Palgrave Macmillan. *Curriculum Studies in China* is the fourth volume to appear.

I am grateful as well to my editor at Palgrave Macmillan, Ms. Sarah Nathan, for her professionalism, courtesy, and support.

Many thanks go to Professor Zhang Hua who suggested the names of possible participants. As this volume testifies. Zhang Hua is an extraordinary scholar, an intellectual, and teacher to thousands in China. Through this book I hope the scale of his achievement will become known worldwide.

My thanks as well to each of the other scholar-participants—Chen Yuting, Cong Lixin, Kang Changyun, Liu Jian, Ma Yunpeng, Zhang Wenjun, and Zhou Huixia—as well as to the three distinguished members of the international panel: Alicia de Alba, Tero Autio, and Janet L. Miller. Without your willingness and work, there would have been no *Curriculum Studies in China*.

Thanks finally to Fu Guopeng for his faithful and prompt translations and for his editing of the final version of manuscript.

William F. Pinar

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| 21 CME | A Prospect of 21st Century Chinese Mathematics Education: Theory and Practice of Popular Mathematics |
| BNU | Beijing Normal University |
| CNKI | Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CPC | Communist Party of China |
| CPPCC | Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. |
| ECNU | East China Normal University |
| ERIC | Education Resources Information Center. |
| IAACS | International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies |
| ICME | International Congress on Mathematical Education |
| ICT Teacher | Information and Communication Technology Teacher |
| LDC | Learning and Development Community |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| NENU | Northeast Normal University |
| NPC | National People's Congress |
| PEP | People's Educational Press |
| SEI | Special Epistemology of Instruction |
| SSHRC | Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada |
| UBC | University of British Columbia in Canada |

# Introduction

*William F. Pinar*

Like South Africa,[1] China is bedeviled by its past, if differently. Rather than racism, authoritarianism remains, addressed now by the curriculum reform.[2] Like Brazil,[3] China has a dynamic economy with which its society struggles to cope and which its scholars labor to understand. Like Mexico,[4] centralization installs hierarchies to accommodate. Like the United States,[5] China's commitment to economic growth destroys the environment and increases economic inequality. While accurate, these overly simple comparisons of the present circumstances in which curriculum studies scholars work conceal the distinctive and dynamic character of the fields these scholars have produced. "Distinctive" and "dynamic" definitely defines curriculum studies in China.[6]

The distinctiveness and dynamism of the Chinese field are disclosed in the interviews, the essays, and the exchanges summarized and printed here. Contemporary curriculum reform[7]—as we glimpse it through the eyes of these scholars—is bravely "backward looking,"[8] as it incorporates concepts of ancient as well as early twentieth-century China. These reverberating traces of the past plus the staggering scale of the present complicate beyond measure what researchers, teachers, and students face in China today. Rather than degrading public education, as US politicians have done since Sputnik,[9] in China the Ministry of Education encourages reform through consultation with experts, including contributors to this volume. Rather than imposing a simplistic model of reform, as in the United States, in China the ministry demands complexity and local innovation, not in the service of standardization but to promote organizational diversity and student-centeredness. In their intellectual courage, their ethical conviction, and their cosmopolitan incorporation of concepts ancient and contemporary (East and West), curriculum researchers in China demonstrate that the future of education is not inevitably the tragic tale it too often is in the West today.

This project Curriculum Studies in China[10] proceeded as the others[11] have. My interviews with the individual scholar-participants were followed by their composition of essays concerning the intellectual history and present circumstances of curriculum studies in China, essays highlighting their own intellectual histories and present commitments. These comprise chapters 1 through 8. Questions of clarification—in the interviews (summarized momentarily) and during the exchanges (chapters 9–11)—were once again the order of the day, as one prerequisite for understanding alterity[12] is holding in abeyance[13] what one thinks one knows already. In the present project that meant suspending assumptions concerning the meanings of commonplace concepts like curriculum research, reform, development. Not only does national history and culture inform how these concepts are deployed, the present circumstances also do. First and foremost, present circumstances in the West—curriculum standardization and the quantification of educational achievement in service to economic development—differ from those faced by our colleagues in China. While standardized tests and anxious concerns for economic development have hardly disappeared, they are not associated causally with each other. Nor are they foremost among the features of the current reform. Instead, there are efforts to democratize[14] and decentralize, and not only for the sake of "modernization"—a process often associated with economic development—but also for the sake of cultural complexity, social invigoration, and the cultivation of cosmopolitan individuals, no standardized set of attributes but a shifting and situated series—in my terms[15]—that reconstructs private passion into public service.

Passionate public service characterizes the careers of the scholar-participants. In addition to the interviews[16] I conducted with each—Chen Yuting, Cong Lixin, Kang Changyun, Liu Jian, Ma Yunpeng, Zhang Hua, Zhang Wenjun, and Zhou Huixia—were protracted exchanges[17] focused on their essays with three members of an international panel: Alicia de Alba, Tero Autio, Janet L. Miller. These scholars are esteemed not only in the countries where they work but worldwide as well.[18] The acumen, sensitivity, and insight of each are evident in my summaries of the interviews, in their essays, and in the chapters (9–11) wherein I summarize the exchanges. My effort to summarize what I learned about curriculum studies in China—as it appears through the particular prism these scholar-participants provide—appears in chapter 12. As with the other projects, mine is not the "final word," as I invited the participants to comment—even critically—in the epilogue.

To start, I asked each scholar-participant to describe his or her present preoccupation, situating these—as they deemed appropriate—in life history, national history, international developments, and in the intellectual

history of curriculum studies in China.[19] Here I summarize the replies. Please meet our colleagues in China.

## Cheng Yuting

"I was born in a small village in the year 1970," Chen Yuting recalled, "where there was deep gender discrimination."[20] She adds: "There is now still, although much slighter." "I remembered I often asked my parents, other relatives and neighbors why girls were less important than boys. Why did parents feel on 'top of the world' after having a baby boy?" Most replied "tradition," an answer that satisfied Chen not at all. Through the years she kept asking the question. After teaching English for eight years at junior high school in a coal-mining village, Chen Yuting studied for MA at Qufu Normal University.[21] During that program, in a class on the sociology of education, Chen asked the instructor—Changyong Yang—about the question of gender inequality. In his reply he mentioned feminism. "That was the first time in my life that I had heard the word. From then on, I began to look for articles and books on feminism. In 2001, Chinese feminist studies were 'few,' and I didn't have very easy time securing English-language materials." There Chen studied qualitative research—specifically the work of Chen Xiangming—and she was inspired by it to interview six middle-school teachers on the subject of gender. That project led to her dissertation research, focused on gender discrimination in the hidden curriculum.

In 2003, as she started PhD study at East China Normal University (ECNU), Chen Yuting was keeping the question alive. Attending lectures on curriculum theory given by Professor Zhang Hua, Chen learned more about feminism. "It was in his class I 'met' William Pinar for the first time. I remembered Zhang Hua referenced Pinar's *Autobiography, Politics and Sexuality*. I could not have known at that time that how important for me this book would become."

In the end of that October, Chen attended the first international curriculum conference of IAACS,[22] held in Shanghai at ECNU. There we met. Yuting recalls: "We talked during conference breaks, then after the conference I accompanied him to Confucius' hometown where he gave a lecture at Qufu Normal University. I served as his interpreter. During our time together, I learned a lot about feminism, autobiographical research and the significance of subjective reconstruction." During her second year of PhD study, Chen studied autobiography as a form of feminist research, entitling her dissertation "Autobiographical Research Method in Teacher

Research—On William Pinar's *Currere*." This was, she reports, "the first systematic study of *currere* and autobiographical research method in China." While composing the study, Chen also translated Pinar's *Autobiography, Politics and Sexuality*[23] into Chinese.

After graduation, Chen accepted a position at the Tianjin Academy of Educational Sciences. There her main research areas were (1) autobiographical research method, (2) case studies[24] of the principals' leadership, (3) the post-1949 history of basic education in Tianjin, and (4) senior high-school curriculum reform.[25] Studying Tianjin's education history has enhanced "my context intelligence,"[26] but "autobiographical research methods provide the thread through which various projects are woven."[27] "My colleagues tend to attribute my intense engagement with the teachers and principals to my experience as a school teacher," Chen reports, "but I know it is mostly due to my belief that everyone's standpoints and actions are strongly related to his/her inner self." Every study of "practice," then, "should begin in the specificity of the person." Classroom curriculum research requires, first of all, "active listening" to school staff, principals, and teachers.[28] "Only in the 'complicated conversation' can 'opposing ideas or forces or individuals meet each other in ways that allow each to give itself up for the sake of the transformation of both, and the attainment of a hopefully more comprehensive, less parochial point of view.'"[29] Such "conversation is a process of 'turning inward,' and such 'turning inward' changes consciousness." Chen quotes Pinar: "A shift in the source of behavior signals a shift in the behavior itself. Thus praxis is effected."[30]

There is, Chen concludes, an "intimate distance" between researchers and the teachers and principals they study. "There is still a long way to go to reach mutual understanding." What is her "next step?" "I will continue to work with principals and teachers by listening to them and trying to understand them." As a consequence of such understanding, Chen knows, "my own state of mind will be enlarged." No self-enclosed state of mind, Chen affirmed her hope to "join the international conversation more," not only for sake the "enthusiasm and enlightenment," but also in order to "articulate my own voice from the land of China."

## Cong Lixin

Having worked in curriculum and instruction at Beijing Normal University (BNU) for 30 years, Cong Lixin writes that she is "never apart from this field." She focuses on instruction, from its role in the "evolution" of "human civilization" to its "role in schooling." She works as well

on understanding the "relationship between instruction and individual development." including key "concepts of instruction," its "essence, basic forms and methods," and its evaluation. These topics, Cong points out, "are directly related with domestic and international influences." First among the former is China's curriculum reform. Cong attends to the very conception of reform as well as to the "disputes" that surround it. Among disciplinary concerns is the question of postmodernism, specifically its "subversive ideas" concerning "the nature of knowledge, the value of science, and the meaning of cognition." These ideas implicate "the basic principles of curriculum and instruction."

During her undergraduate, master's, and doctoral study, Cong reports, "I always studied under the guidance of the 'pedagogy group' at Beijing Normal University."[31] After the "establishment" of the "New China,"[32] Cong continues, "this group has experienced many twists and turns. However, they still make significant contributions to academy." These contributions are grounded in "Chinese traditional educational thought" as well as in international thought "introduced from the late Qing Dynasty and from the former Soviet Union." Working with these multiple influences, the group conducted "painstaking research" as they "gradually established the Chinese pedagogical system." Among the members of the group are Professor Huang Ji, Professor Wang Cesan, Professor Cheng Youxin, Professor Sun Xiting, and Professor Li Yixian. Professor Wang Cesan was "my master's and one of my doctoral tutors," and "so his influence [on me] is the most profound."

Cong depicts contradictory tendencies at work in Chinese academic life. Despite tendencies toward consensus (see note 29), there are also cultural traditions that encourage "noteworthy conduct" and "independent character," if "restricted by the social and political system." Cong names the Cultural Revolution as "the most extreme period" when "consensus" was obligatory. In the "Deng Xiaoping era, the situation was greatly improved." For Cong that was the "best period," as government and society generally encouraged "free research." Today there remain "some limitations." On the "macroscopic level," research must be "basically in accordance" with governmental policies. This "accordance" is sometimes "voluntary," sometimes "compulsory." Regarding "specific issues," however, the "unprecedented" can occur: "There are various views and different ideas." These ideas sometimes derive from foreign influence, "especially the Occident—Europe or North America—always shows strong influence on some opinions and ideas."

That "influence" is evident is the new curriculum reform—Dewey's influence is sometimes explicit for instance—but it encounters decades of "consensus" concerning Marxism. Marxists, Cong reports, "believe that

schools should hold comprehensive development as the goal, that schools should impart systematic cultural and scientific knowledge, that teachers should play the leading role in teaching, that students are above all subjects of cognition, and that education represents 'special understanding' for the people." In contrast to these, Cong experienced Western ideas during time spent abroad: one year in the United States and three months in Australia. Because the United States was "the most developed country in the world," she sought "differences" and the "advantages" of education there to take back to China. Returning to the United States a second time in 2005, Cong found himself more focused on what the two systems have in "common," including the incorporation of national culture and history in the curriculum. Both, she decided, are influenced by "ideology." One must exercise caution in conducting comparative research, Cong concluded. While "actively absorbing others' experience," one must also "cherish and uphold one's own country's excellent traditions." In the future, "perhaps" China will have "its own curriculum theory." To achieve that, however, means "managing its relation with its original instruction theory."[33] "Managing" here would seem somewhat akin to "reconstructing," as she underscores that foreign influences are not simply "incorporated" but are "absorbed," so that they "gradually form Chinese characteristics." It is on this point—"mutual learning" then cultural "absorption"—that Cong finds differences between the humanities and the social and natural sciences.

Testifying to what is "common," Cong suggests that China's emphasis upon instruction and the West's concern for curriculum are "undertaking the same tasks." Both are "subject" to the "educational system" and "academic traditions" of the nation. While, she points out, the Chinese use chopsticks to eat while Westerners use knives and forks, the different utensils enable the same activity: dining. The question of "what and how we should teach" is shared by both theories of curriculum and instruction. In my response to this point, I noted that I had replaced the "should" in that canonical phrase with "understanding," to which Cong replied that while she appreciated *Understanding Curriculum*—and agreed with me that we find our "own ways to 'understand' curriculum—she added: "I still insist there are 'should' issues." To illustrate, she noted that a "thousand readers" will discern a "thousand Hamlets." Acknowledging this as a "profound insight," Cong nonetheless emphasized that "even so Hamlet will not change into Romeo."

> He remains the prince of Denmark; his father is still killed by others. His mother marries his uncle. At this point, readers' understanding is similar. Otherwise, "dialogue" is impossible. By the same token, there are also such

> "should" issues in curriculum. Moreover, in my view, we still know quite little about these "should" issues.

Determining the "should" will absorb both curriculum and instruction theories,[34] Cong believes, as they will, she predicts, "digest themselves and become the main power to promote the development of pedagogy. Here, what I say includes the two disciplines [of instruction and curriculum]. I still uphold my view: I do not think the independence of these two disciplines is absolute." There is "bound to be unification after prolonged division."

## Kang Changyun

"I was born in Qufu city," Kang Changyun reports, "the hometown of Confucius, in Shandong province." The year—1967—was the year when the Cultural Revolution "broke out," and "I spent my elementary school in the turbulence." In 1978, "my last year in the elementary school," Deng Xiaoping "regained political power "and China "re-regulated her education system," resuming the national higher education entrance examination. "Like most Chinese students," Kang tells us, "I strove to take a seat on the examination train when it was my turn. Unfortunately, I didn't do well enough to go to a good university." It took "courage" to try again, but try Kang did, this time doing well enough to be admitted to the early childhood education program at Shandong Normal University. This success rewrote "the life-track of my peasant ancestors who, generation after generation, had survived by farming." "Step by step," Kang continues, "I left the countryside where Confucius had lived, moving first to the capital city of the province, then to the capital city of China." The experience of taking twice the university entrance exam left him with a "permanent mark in my mind. Through middle-age, I was awakened by the recurring nightmare of the exam."

Upon graduation, Kang was assigned to a vocational college in a rural area in Jinan (still Shandong province) where he taught in an early childhood programs. Two years later, he passed the national graduate examination and was admitted to the early childhood education master's program at BNU,[35] specializing in early childhood psychology. After graduation, he remained at the university, working at the Beijing Normal University Press. By "chance," Kang tells us, he became engaged in the state level K–12 curriculum reform. That started what would become for him "a momentous association with curriculum."

At the BNU Press, he was promoted to directing the production of children's textbooks. The year 1990—when Kang started his master's program in early childhood education—was the year China undertook the reform of early childhood education. In 1989 the Ministry of Education (MoE) had issued the Early Childhood Guidelines, dedicated to "the development of every child." Throughout the three-year master's program, "I followed my supervisors in participating in the research work for this program, which was led by Madame Zhu Muju, then the Director of Early Childhood Education Department in the K–12 Education Division in the MoE."[36] That the curriculum exists "for the development of every child" became "imprinted in my mind."

During this period, Kang chaired the publication of textbooks prepared for kindergarten classes,[37] including teacher resource books and student textbooks. Emphasizing "objectives" and "activities," the textbook series replaced the traditional texts that had structured the curriculum. Indeed, it was "a remarkable breakthrough," applying Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, requiring distinctive educational objectives for each activity. The textbooks were "widely adopted" in Beijing and in a "large number of provinces and cities" throughout China. "Once I happened to turn on a TV," Kang remembers, "and saw on the screen an image of a boy running after a passing car in a vast grass field in Inner Mongolia. Accidentally, a book dropped from his schoolbag. That book was the textbook I had published!"

In 1997, Kang became the assistant president of BNU Press, while at the same time retaining the directorship of the K–12 Education Department. Now "my responsibilities expanded from kindergarten textbooks to include the entire primary and secondary school curriculum." A period of renewed curriculum reform—one set of textbooks was being phased out, another being phased in—Kang's "mandate" included the protection of the press' economic interests. "Therefore I organized the revision of the textbooks to reflect the principle of the curriculum reform at the same time." To increase adoption of these textbooks, "I traveled to experimental districts to offer a variety of supporting workshops. This enriching experience provided me with the first-hand knowledge of curriculum implementation at the grass-root level."

Curriculum in China, Kang reminded, is "distinctly structured by its textbook-orientation," and this fact is "evident through successive curriculum reform programs." The traditional model[38]—"one syllabus, one textbook"—was replaced by a new set of teaching syllabi released by the MoE, followed by a corresponding set of new textbooks published by the People's Education Press (PEP), followed by large-scale textbook training. "While the MoE is the representative of the dominant authority," Kang

continues, "the PEP represents enormous economic interests." Because "all levels of examinations are textbook-orientated," the PEP constitutes the major "academic authority." The eighth curriculum reform program—launched in 1999—aimed to replace "textbook-orientated" curriculum reform with "curriculum goals, structure, content, implementation, assessment and management. What could not possibly escape me was that this model is rooted in powerful political and economic interests."

Proposing "multiple syllabi, multiple textbooks" and "encouraging multiple presses" to publish textbooks according to the curriculum standards issued by the state, it was clear to Kang that "reformers were striving to break the monopoly of the PEP." Affiliated "directly" with the MoE, the PEP constitutes a "powerful interest group" whose administrators are "assigned" by the MoE. The leadership team of China's eighth reform had been drawn into "this political vortex" comprised of "powerful political and economic interests." Against "ever greater difficulty," reformers "struggled to achieve their aims." In 2001, when 38 state-level curriculum reform experimental districts were allowed to select their own textbooks—the first time in China's history—textbooks published by the PEP "utterly lost their dominance." Over a "dozen" textbook companies began to publish textbooks for primary and secondary schools. The BNU Press ("where I was working," Kang reminds) "succeeded remarkably" in this competition. Making good use of the opportunity created by the participation of BNU experts in the reform, the BNU Press published a series of "high quality textbooks" and became "an influential textbook publishing institution" in China.

The diversification of textbooks, Kang argues, represented a "substantial step," evidenced in part by the reaction against it. Not only did "certain interest groups" defend "their own economic interests," they also "resorted to "political and economic" tactics, even "personally abusing" reformers. Kang himself was among these, as he shared with me that "I was under pressure from various sources. In 2005, I made a final decision to leave this place of chaos and went abroad to advance my learning and research." The battles over textbook profits continue and reformers face today "an even more difficult situation. Previous progress is now in jeopardy, as the publication rights of ideology-dominated subjects like Chinese Language Arts, History, Politics are now under the jurisdiction of the central government. Textbooks for these subjects are to be compiled by the state and published exclusively by the PEP."

Kang's commitment to the diversification of textbooks became embedded in his commitment to curriculum reform.[39] Because he believes that "the textbook is subordinated to curriculum," Kang argued—at one point to Vice-Premier Li Lanqing—that "one version of textbooks must not

constitute the curriculum." With understatement I suspect Kang reported that "it was heartening to witness the change of central government on curriculum reform." Working academically at the BNU Curriculum Centre and at the BNU Press, Kang supervised the development of a "set of new textbooks compiled mainly by BNU scholars, textbooks representing the spirit of this round of reform. A group of young faculty members at BNU enjoyed the opportunity to become textbook editors and came of academic age engaged in the practice of reform."

Despite the obvious influence of government and the centrality of collectives, individuals have driven curriculum reform in China, or so Kang insists: "Scholars have been playing far more significant roles in this reform than in any previous reform. A large number of outstanding scholars, forsaking their own specializations, have devoted themselves fully to this reform. Their efforts and wisdom have enabled the enactment of this reform; in return, this reform has transformed their lives and destinies." He names Professor Liu Jian[40] as "one of the most remarkable representatives."[41] Ten years later, Kang concludes, "I am now far from the reform battlefield that is still ongoing, though I maintain continuous communication with those colleagues, with whom I had worked closely in those days. A decade of reform has changed my life and destiny, which, at the same time, has left me with a life-long opportunity for reflection and deliberation over the character of curriculum and its reform."

## Liu Jian

Liu Jian graduated from the Department of Mathematics at BNU in 1984. "That same year I was appointed a position at BNU, engaging in mathematics curriculum development and conducting experimental work in middle schools."[42] Starting in 1984 and continuing for four years, Liu Jian supervised students gifted in mathematics in a middle school in Beijing. In 1989, under the sponsorship of Sir Zhang Xiaoda, chair of China National Council for Mathematics Teaching (who turned 91 years the year of this interview), "I became the Primary Investigator" in a ten-year national social science youth research project[43] entitled "21 Century: Chinese Mathematics Education Prospects—Theory and Practice of Mathematics for the Public.[44] I was 25 years old at that time." The project lasted ten years (1989–1998), during which time "I organized about 100 young and middle-aged math educators and teachers nationwide to participate in this research project." Results were reported in two books (published in 1992 and 1995) as well as in a series of papers. Also coming out of the project

was a set of textbooks entitled *Future Educational Textbooks: Mathematics*. By 1999, some 20,000 students were using this experimental textbook.

Given the influence this research project had on mathematics education, Liu Jian was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to lead a team to study and publish the National Mathematics Curriculum Standards (1999–2001). These curriculum standards were put into effect during the following ten years. The formulation of this very first set of curriculum standards set an example for other subjects.

Since the publication of the mathematics curriculum standards, Liu Jian has worked in the Ministry of Education Basic Education Curriculum Textbook Development Centre, in charge of the professional organization and coordination of research, development, experimentation, and the promotion of the process of the curriculum reform.[45]

In order to ensure that students meet the requirements of curriculum standards, Liu Jian coordinated the development of a student assessment and guidance system. This project lasted ten years and gave birth to the first evaluation system for compulsory education in China. Based on large-scale statistical analysis, the system allowed education quality assessment, which has made possible further guidance and improvements.

To answer the need for large-scale teacher professional development, Liu Jian led the development of "New Curriculum Online Forum" which, for the first time, introduced online education in the field of teacher professional development. After three years, the online platform (www.cersp.com) had become the information portal for teachers from all across China. At its peak, the website received 17 million page views per day, and has established a new teacher professional development mechanism in China.

Based on a large-scale survey with more than 5 million participations, Liu Jian led a project (2011–2012) to establish an array of "education health" indicators aimed at assessing students' learning aptitude, motivation, burden, physical fitness, as well as teacher-student relationship. This assessment system was then put into practice in Shanghai and Jiangsu, which led to the first provincial assessments of educational progress.

In May, 2013, Liu Jian returned to BNU to serve as the vice president at National Innovation Center for Assessment and Improvement of Basic Education Quality, where he has been leading various regional education quality health assessment projects. He also serves as the president at the Chinese Academy of New Curriculum, a nongovernment organization that focuses on exploring and refining China's experience gathered from the ongoing curriculum reform.

Given his rich experience, what are the areas of professional responsibility that rest Liu Jian shoulders? The first he lists is the "timely

establishment" of "sustainable institutional frameworks and mechanisms" that support curriculum reform, including "legislation, special funds and grants, professional teams," as well as the "coordination of communication" among researchers, policy makers, and practicing teachers and administrators. Second is the "full implementation of the concept of 'respecting the students' through helping teachers emphasize 'student inquiry.'" Liu Jian acknowledges that this concept is now a cliché among many teachers who still emphasize how much students can learn and at what speed. Given this fact, implementing the concept remains "an important and exceptional task," as he guides teachers to "face unknown knowledge together with the students in classrooms, listening to the voices of children, learning the unique characteristics of children's thinking, observing the process of their learning, realizing the uniqueness of each child consciously, and profoundly comprehending the essence of 'respecting students' and 'student-oriented development.'" Third on his agenda is research on mathematics education, a commitment that dates back a decade to his tenure at BNU.

"One can see," Liu Jian concludes, "that my present intellectual preoccupations and research agenda appear to be directly related to my personal beliefs and the history of my study of curriculum, as well as my inner personal pursuit for curriculum ideals." No doubt accurate, that explanation does not convey the collective character of his commitment, something that becomes clear when, in the sentence following, he clarifies: "But essentially it [my work] is closely related to the age of our country, where we are in our embarking on the opening and reform policy in a market-orientated economy, following upon a closed-door and planned economy." That his work is nationally situated is also an insufficient explanation, as Liu Jian then references history and the world. "The fact is," he writes, "that more than 10 years ago the whole world was thinking about one question: What kind of education should be brought into the new century? China is not exceptional. It was a question that demanded that we ponder curriculum reform and those issues concerning its modernization." Liu Jian has focused this crucial question on the mathematics curriculum, but his concern is, clearly, for the curriculum overall.

That comprehensive commitment became explicit in his listing of what he regards as the most "crucial" curricular concerns. "First of all," he wrote, "how do we ensure that each student will live a decent happy life" as she or he comes of age? "Second," he asked, "how do we contribute—through exerting a gentle and subtle influence—to students' sense of responsibility" for themselves, for others, for society? "Third, how do we encourage students to think independently, critically and creatively?" When the curriculum supports the actualization of these aspirations—happiness,

responsibility, critical and creative thinking—"we are indeed making the greatest contribution to the humankind."

## Ma Yunpeng

"My present intellectual preoccupations," Ma Yunpeng told me, "are curriculum implementation and evaluation." There are "two reasons," he said, one personal and one national. A student at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Ma conducted his doctoral dissertation research on mathematics curriculum implementation in rural and urban areas in China. This case study solidified Ma's ongoing interest in both theoretical and practical issues of implementation. That interest and expertise intersected with those elements of the 2001 curriculum reform that addressed elementary education. "Since I myself took part in the design of the reform plan for curriculum," Ma reported, "I was fully aware . . . that effective implementation would be the key to the success." Ma himself was charged with evaluating its success, and from "2001 through 2006 we performed four evaluations of curriculum implementation." Through this "historical opportunity," then, Ma's interest in implementation became associated with evaluation.

Ma Yunpeng named two scholars as especially influential in his formation[46] as a specialist in curriculum implementation and evaluation. First is Professor Chi Chung Lam, Ma's PhD advisor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Professor Lam "directed my attention to the field of curriculum implementation and provided specific instructions concerning the issues and methods of my research." Second is Professor Michael Fullan of the University of Toronto; his 1991 book, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, was also influential. After graduating from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Ma returned to Northeast Normal University in 1999, where he was soon invited to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of the new curriculum reform. While informed by his study of curriculum—which, he reports, began in 1996 and was influenced by work in the West as well as in China[47]—Ma's research focused on issues key to the reform. As a "member of the Development Team" formulating Mathematics Curriculum Standards in Compulsory Education, "I played an important role in the design and content of mathematics curriculum."[48]

Since the reform, Ma reports, curriculum research has progressed by "leaps and bounds." It has become more popular as well, as "more and more people began to pay attention to and study curriculum issues." During

the last ten years, approximately 1,300 MA and PhD theses were written in curriculum studies. Moreover, research topics have become "more and more wide-ranging," including "theoretical and practical research." Methodologically, there is increased diversification, as empirical, theoretical, and comparative studies—both quantitative and qualitative—are now being conducted. "My interest in curriculum studies has further intensified," Ma explained, "with these developments in the field of curriculum research, and as the themes of my research have become more focused on the curriculum reform in elementary education, including macro and micro issues." These include "realistic" issues associated with actual classrooms as well as international issues that global communication and cooperation have identified. Ma sees the combination of domestic and international exchanges as providing passages to the future of curriculum studies in China, as Chinese scholars will articulate curriculum theories "with vivid Chinese characteristics."

## Zhang Hua

"My present intellectual preoccupations," Zhang Hua wrote in response to my questions, are "school-based reform" of "curriculum" and "classroom practice" as well as "understanding curriculum based on China's wisdom traditions from an international perspective." Regarding the first, Zhang Hua works to "root" curriculum and classroom practice in "each student's and teacher's personality, their individuality, creativity, and basic human rights, and a social ideal of democracy." Regarding the second, "I try to recover the dignity of Chinese culture in the curriculum field through my life work of thinking." Holding in "absolute esteem" the cultural differences encoded in curriculum studies worldwide, Zhang sees these as interrelated, not isolated: "Chinese culture and other cultures might help each other, co-exist, co-grow, and form a cultural ecology." For Zhang Hua, cooperation structures internationalization.

"My present research agenda," he explained, "includes two sides." On the one hand, he continues to study and participate in the "bottom-up reform "of curriculum and teaching in China, determined to support students' self-reflective engagement with a "curriculum of life-inquiry" and teachers' capacities to "create curriculum" as they regain "professional dignity" through "autonomy." On the other hand, "I keep thinking about constructing Chinese curriculum theories—based on Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism—while I take part in the movement toward the Internationalization of Curriculum Studies."

The emergence of these interwoven commitments becomes evident in his life history.

"I am a native of Shandong Province, where I studied and worked at Qufu Normal University."[49] When he was 18 years old, Zhang became a middle-school teacher in his hometown of Laiwu, where he worked for four years. There, he "watched, participated, and experienced students' agony" as they suffered through "school regimes of competition and examination." Students from the "disadvantaged" classes—"most were peasants' descendants"—suffered the most. "That's why I have been engaged in national curriculum reform." In 1995, Zhang Hua left Shandong for Shanghai, where he pursued a PhD at East China Normal University, supervised by Professor Zhong Qiquan, "the most important influence on my academic career." Starting in 1999, Zhang Hua participated in the national curriculum reform, which is "the most important event for my research work." The curriculum to be reformed had been the ideological installation of the former Soviet Union, "represented by a famous professor at Beijing Normal University, Professor Wang Cesan. I try to provide an alternative theory to Professor Wang's theory—the so-called 'Special Epistemology of Instruction'—so that, frankly speaking, the work of Professor Wang Cesan is important too, if in a different way."[50]

Curriculum reform requires historical consciousness, and Zhang Hua recalls (in his chapter) the May Fourth Movement. "I believe in democracy," he writes, "but I don't want to simplify its meaning and directly transplant western democracy to China. On the contrary, I am inclined to understand democracy based on cultural differences, and to try to graft the attitude and lifestyle of democracy into Chinese culture." The ideas of John Dewey and Paulo Freire on "educational democracy deeply affect me." Integrating his "personal ideas into the intellectual tradition of the discipline," Zhang Hua attempts to build "three bridges." The first is a "time bridge," by means of which he links the past, present, and future of the curriculum field. "Wisdom traditions, present problems and future visions" constitute "the core" of this bridge. The second is a "space bridge," linking the Chinese curriculum field with the field worldwide. "For me, they are related with each other although this relationship has not been realized." The third is a "content bridge," linking theory and practice, domains that "maybe should not have been divided originally. I want to locate curriculum studies in this primary state of the undivided."

This commitment to interconnectedness might have been born while Zhang Hua was working at Qufu Normal University. It was there, he reports, that "I started to realize that international consciousness is important" as he found the Chinese field was too "ideological, too closed." After moving to East China Normal University in Shanghai, Zhang chose

"comparative studies" as one of his "main" areas of expertise. The work of Professor Liang Shuping—specifically his *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies*—was influential. He realized the inextricability of the national and the international. "Macro-political events, global conflicts and cultural imports are inseparable parts of my curriculum research," Zhang affirms, as "I always think about the curriculum meanings of macro global events and cultural affairs. It took me more than ten years to get rid of the strong influence of the ideology of the former Soviet Union. And now I've learned to keep a critical consciousness regarding any kind of official ideology." In the public schools, Zhang Hua works to "help schoolteachers to create curriculum and teaching for international understandings."

These are aspirations, not realities, as the state of the contemporary field is "more technical" and "less theoretical." In fact, Zhang Hua reports, "most curriculum scholars and students are busy providing prescriptions to schools and show little interest in understanding curriculum as an academic field with long intellectual history." While he cannot escape "this atmosphere, I never choose the technical orientation in my research. Every week I go to schools to listen to the schoolteachers. I base my study in schools on the pedagogy of listening. And this echoes my theoretical thinking." Contesting this "technical" orientation constitutes a "next step" for the field to take, one that implies remaining "neutral to mainstream ideology." His own next steps, he reports, "focus on the question of children and cultures. The former is toward the dignity of the human being; the latter is toward the dignity of culture. The connection of the two is the cause of "neo-enlightenment" in China. This is my life's work."

## Zhang Wenjun

During the mid-1980s, Zhang Wenjun studied at Hangzhou University,[51] where she took a bachelor's degree in education in 1990, followed in 1993 by an MA in comparative education. Since primary school, she reported, she disliked writing: "All I could think of was flying away, far away." Writing assignments were then focused exclusively on "good deeds, good ideas, beautiful scenes." How to determine what was good "I never figured out clearly. My real life and thoughts were very far from what the assignment required, and so I became lost." Part of Zhang's "real life" was a protracted experience of bullying. "I didn't know that people could write what they think." It was the obligatory emphasis on the "good" that "killed my voice, my ability to write and think at that time." That she knows now, but then it seemed to her to a problem of insufficient self-confidence.

That lack of self-confidence was also associated with social class. "My parents' families are both plebeian," Zhang Wenjun reported, and "writing" was "far" from the daily realities of "our family life." Living at different times with her parents, grandparents, and aunts, Zhang "never received encouragement" from them. "What I knew was that I was a burden for them." Both home and school, then, contributed to the formation of "my personality." Zhang Wenjun felt a lack of decisiveness, in part due to an inner complexity: "I always felt too many minds without connection flying inside . . . and I didn't know which to catch."

Catch one she did. Zhang recalls running into one of her former high-school teachers in 1986; he had just returned from a conference on Tao Xingzhi, a student of John Dewey. He told her about how Tao Xingzhi had gone to New York to study with Dewey, taking the PhD there in 1910, returning to China to open a rural school, determined to transform society through education. "I was very excited to hear that story; I felt I wanted to be an educator like him, to open a school, to transform society." But Zhang also wanted to transform schooling. "I had experienced schooling as suffering, and so I aspired to change that experience for schoolchildren today." As did Dewey and no doubt Tao, Zhang realized—during her undergraduate study—that education is "no panacea" for society. Uncertain what to do after graduation, Zhang applied for graduate school, but the "affair" at Tiananmen Square—after which the government cancelled the required examination for admission to graduate school—delayed enrollment. Finally allowing a very few applicants to enroll, Zhang "was very lucky to be chosen as the only M.A. student in the Department." Because there was only one MA student, "teachers did not bother to prepare courses." Told by her supervisor to research secondary education in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Japan, Zhang became paralyzed by the scale of this assignment. Two years later, she was allowed to focus on education in Thailand; Zhang graduated with the MA in July 1993. During the year that followed, she took noneducation jobs, but found herself "still wanting to do something more meaningful. I sat for the entrance examination for Ph.D. study at East China Normal University where I was admitted, studying with Professor Zhong Qiquan." Zhang Wenjun chose Professor Zhong—who coauthored the chapter on China in the 2003 *International Handbook of Curriculum Researc*h[52]—because he was "the leading specialist" in curriculum reform. Zhong's commitment to reform "inspired me." She found him "very supportive supervisor; he gave me full freedom in choosing my research topic." She adds: "I can say that Professor Zhong was most influential in my research and my career life."

Now Zhang Wenjun teaches at Zhejiang University, working with both undergraduate and graduate students, conducting research on

postmodernism, including postmodern curriculum theory. "I advocate," she writes, a "curriculum culture of self-responsibility. My career is the synthetic result of my individuality and life, including the political events I experienced." In 1975, the year Zhang entered primary school, "my father was suddenly imprisoned because he'd said a politically incorrect sentence in an open debate." Because that one sentence was judged "anti-revolutionary," he was sentenced to a ten-year term. "My teachers and my classmates all knew I was the daughter of an anti-revolutionary, so I suffered discrimination in the school. I felt unequal to my classmates no matter how hard I tried. I daydreamed of a world with real justice, equality and dignity." While the Cultural Revolution "ended soon after my father's imprisonment, he was not released until 1982. As soon as he was released, my status changed too. Suddenly I was considered politically equal."

After the promulgation of the "Open Policy, economic development replaced political struggle as the main task of social development." That required the education of "experts and specialists." At that time "the content of curriculum was difficult and discipline-centered. Teaching methods were mainly recitation and drill. There were no arts and music in my junior high and high school." School life was "boring"; its only purpose was to "pass" the entrance examination and move to the next level. "All these," Zhang explained, "drove me to a commitment to transform the educational system and its curriculum, to offer young people a decent and happy learning life. To become a curriculum reformer became appealing to me."

The Open Policy encouraged intellectuals and academicians to study and express their convictions concerning society, history, culture, and education. "There was," Zhang reports, "a zest in learning and thinking among intellectuals and students during 1980s and 1990s." Reforming the Chinese system invited not only critique and creativity but internationalization as well, as Chinese scholars began to study scholarship—including curriculum research—worldwide. Zhang read Foucault, Freud, Hegel, Nietzsche, Kant, Lyotard, Rorty, and Rousseau. Those "western classics," she wrote, "became part of my identity as they were stimulated by the will to reform." She was calmed by the knowledge that realities exist beyond the daily ones she experienced. Surprised that there were "other worlds beyond my world," she knew she wanted to explore them. A "new world" was opening "through discourse."

In curriculum studies, Zhang read William E. Doll Jr., Henry Giroux, Noel Gough, and David Geoffrey Smith. The work of these Australian, Canadian, and US scholars enabled Zhang to question "globalization and consumer capitalism," encouraging "me to find the way home." Zhang reflects: "I was just lucky enough to grow up under the rapid social change and became a curriculum academic due to the social context and personal

choice." She is appreciative of the government's support of higher education: "my M.A. and Ph.D. studies were all free. The government even provided monthly subsistence. Had higher education not been free, my family could not have afforded to send me." She concludes: "Higher education provided passage out of my circumstances; it changed my fate. Teaching and research provide me with a meaningful life." What is to come? "The future is always unpredictable and full of possibilities," Zhang Wenjun affirms.

## Zhou Huixia

"Currently," Zhou Huizia wrote, "my research mainly focuses on curriculum implementation." Influenced by her graduate supervisor, that research has been inspired by and focused on the eighth national curriculum reform, "the most influential and thorough one since the founding of the Republic of China." Focused "particularly on implementation," this reform is "innovative" and "reaches all aspects," including "the role of teachers, the most crucial factor in the curriculum implementation process." Teacher preparation is also affected, as the Ministry of Education required teachers' colleges increase the portion of coursework allocated to practice teaching. These "synthesis practice activities" acknowledge the importance of the teacher in implementing the new reform, and practice teaching is now "one of my key research areas." While the reform and issues associated with its implementation structure his research agenda, Zhou insisted—in response to my question—that "political or social convictions have very little influence upon my choice; rather, I consider research topics from the perspective of how to educate a human being."

Fundamental questions may predominate, but of course context matters. "The college where I am working now," Zhou explains, "is located in an area where the research culture is comparatively poor and the economy is relatively backward, and therefore it has little impact upon my research in terms of micro-political influence." There Zhou enjoys "freedom" and "independence" in choosing what to study, although she is sensitive to discussions concerning local as well as national issues. The intellectual history of curriculum studies in China has had a "huge impact on my research, as it must on everyone, as the curriculum research one conducts now always follows what has been done before." The field of curriculum studies is "growing rapidly with enriched research fields and varied research methodologies." Moreover, the research agenda has shifted from "relatively macro issues like curriculum orientation to in-depth and

refined research, including topics on teachers, teaching wisdom, microscopic curriculum culture, curriculum emergence, and curriculum implementation." Zhou's research focuses on "practice," and she hopes her work will make "contributions to educational practice in the region I can reach." That contribution, she continues, will "support the reform," both theoretically and practically. Indeed, his "next steps" will "mainly center on how to better implement the new curriculum concepts in practice. To gain first-hand knowledge, I have also started teaching in schools."

Currently, Zhou adds, China provides "a favorable political environment for research work." Its "global initiatives, influences, aspirations" as well as its "geo-political realities have all penetrated into my knowledge structures both conceptually and theoretically," and "in particular they have direct impact on my interpretation of a number of principal education issues, among them the relationship between education and society." When she designs new research projects, Zhou takes "into consideration all these factors." That seems to me like a version of "synthesis practice activity."

In that phrase are combined what in the West we often consider as separate. An activity is a unit of practice in service to reflection, understanding, and the improvement of one's teaching, in an ongoing series of events we synthesize as "skill" or "effectiveness" or, more expansively, "action." I emphasize behavior as embedded in exchange, in historically as well as socially and institutionally informed conversation among teachers, students, and concepts: yes curriculum as complicated conversation. As Zhang Hua indicated, these are not separate, not for her at least, and it would appear not for several of his colleagues. Theory and practice are, as Zhang Hua will later explain, "undivided." They are synthesized, as Zhou suggests, in ongoing activities that constitute classroom practice. The discourse of flexibility, of skill- not knowledge-based curriculum wherein the teacher is more facilitator of student learning than its creator and judge is common to curriculum reform in several countries committed to their nationally specific version of neoliberal capitalism. In China, the surface may seem similar but the depths are different. In China, reform reconstructs the present through the past.

## Notes

1. See Pinar 2010. Of course, every country can be said to be "bedeviled" by its past.
2. In the United States, authoritarianism is not *addressed* by curriculum reform but *enacted* by it (see Pinar 2012, 2–3).

3. See Pinar 2011a.
4. See Pinar 2011b.
5. See Pinar 2013.
6. This work could not have occurred without the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Project 410–2009–0953).
7. While "reform" in China is focused on questions of practice, it is, as we will see, not exclusively "organizational"—as it tended to be in the 1930s Eight-Year Study conducted in the United States (see Pinar 2011c, 77–91)—a point the perceptive Tero Autio made during his exchanges with the scholar-participants. Autio told Professor Ma Yunpeng that he had read his chapter as a "metaphor" of the recent shift [in the West] in conceiving curriculum in only organizational terms, "as quite an unproblematic syllabus or content to be taught/transmitted/delivered towards more intellectual, more complicated understanding of curriculum." Autio is right: while definitely organizational, the current curriculum reform in China is profoundly political and intellectual, informed, as we will see, by culture and history.
8. In the West this phrase implies an unwillingness or even inability to face the future, but in the present context I am using it as praise, as will be clear soon enough.
9. See Pinar 2012, 102–132.
10. Funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada grant # 410–2009–0953.
11. In South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico, referenced above.
12. Difference may always exceed our capacities to understand it, but ethical engagement with alterity requires not only the suspension of one's assumptions—to the extent possible; it is a subjectively demanding undertaking—but active listening to whatever others—in this case our colleagues in China—write and say. "Language announces the other in its alterity," Kleinberg (2005, 271) notes, "and thus it places the self in question, and by placing the self in question it opens the possibility of an ethical society based on alterity instead of homogeneity."
13. My thanks to UBC PhD student Joanne Price for her articulation of this important concept.
14. Not in ways that are perceived to challenge the hegemony of the Communist Party of course.
15. See Pinar 2009.
16. Before production I sent my summary of each interview to the scholar-participant for his or her authorization to include here.
17. The essay composed by Liu Jian was submitted too late to be discussed by the international panel.
18. Alicia de Alba (2000, 2011) teaches at the National Autonomous University of Mexico; Tero Autio (2006, in press) teaches at Tallinn University in Estonia; Janet L. Miller (2005) teaches at Teachers College, Columbia University, in the United States.
19. See appendix.

20. Unless otherwise indicated, all quoted passages reference the interviews I conducted online with each of the scholar-participants.
21. Confucius taught in Qufu.
22. International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies. (www.iaacs.ca).
23. It was published in 2007 by the Educational Science Publishing House in Beijing.
24. "The interviewing and data-collecting methods I use," Chen explains, "are a combination of qualitative and autobiographical research methods. In this process, there is a conversation between the theories of John Dewey, William Pinar and other researchers, and the everyday practices of principals and teachers, all occurring in my own mind like a kind of fermentation in the Chinese context."
25. This work was registered in several publications, among them: Chen and Xie, Zhenfang 2008, "On the Integration of the Thematic Unit Integral Teaching Method and Inquiry Learning in Senior High School—a Chinese Textbook Published by Shandong People's Press as an Example," *Education Research Monthly* 6, 32–34. Chen, Yuting, 2009, "On the Bottleneck of Curriculum Reform in Senior High Schools and a Way of Breakthrough," *Journal of Chinese Society of Education* 7, 55–58. Chen, Yuting and Guo, Hefu. 2009, "On Several Regular Issues in the Process of Implementation of the Integrative Practical Activity Curriculum in Senior High Schools," *Exploring Education Development* 18, 39–43.
26. The phrase "context intelligence," Chen notes, "is from Professor Tiedao Zhang of the Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences. He thinks that there are specific ways of working with traditions, like composition of local population, leadership style, and so on. The sooner and the more completely researchers know these, the more focused his or her research will be. Of course, this kind of "context intelligence" mostly belongs to tacit knowledge.
27. See, for instance, Chen, Yuting 2006, "Autobiography as a Classroom Teaching Method—a Case Study of the Environmental Autobiography," *Global Education* 9, 40–44. Chen, Yuting 2007, "The Expression of Inner Voice: What Research into the Experience of Elementary and High School Teachers Should Enable." *New Curriculum* 8, 20–29. Chen, Yuting 2007, "On the Functions of Autobiographical Research Method," *Global Education* 4, 71–75. Chen, Yuting 2009, "How to Study the Self in the School Environment—on Pinar's *Currere*." *Global Education* 5, 19–23. Chen, Yuting 2009, "Looking for the Inner Strength of Oneself: Autobiographical Research Method, the Study of Teachers and Me," *Journal of Contemporary Educational Science* 20, 18–41.
28. To support this work, Chen began reading books on school management and leadership mostly written by Yin Cheong Chen from Hong Kong and Thomas J. Sergiovanni from the United States.
29. Pinar, William. 1994. *Autobiography, Politics and Sexuality*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 117.

30. Pinar, William. 2000. *Currere*: Toward Reconceptualization. In *Curriculum Studies: The Reconceptualization*, edited by William F. Pinar, 412–413. New York: Educator's International Press.
31. Due to "Chinese cultural as well as political and social traditions," Cong wrote, "there has been a tendency toward reaching consensus in academic work." The term "group," then, implies some degree of intellectual uniformity in point of view, not simply an organizational arrangement focused on specific tasks.
32. By this phrase Cong means the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. "After the establishment of new China," she writes, "educational theories were based on Marxism. Scholars believed that there were basic and general laws of education, and the main tasks of educational research are to discover and explain these laws."
33. Here Cong is referencing Soviet-era influences as well as China's ancient cultural conceptions of teaching. The blend results in "the centralization of authority," including the "curriculum" (plans, standards, textbooks). All is "decided by the state." While scholars "participate in this process," the task they "mainly face" is "implementation." This situation is "unchanged," Cong writes, so that "China's instruction theories are more developed than its curriculum theories." A "special concept"—"Jiao4 Xue2"—denotes the equivalence of teachers' teaching and students' learning. In this view they are "one thing."
34. The separation of curriculum and instruction is, Cong emphasized, "relative."
35. Kang received the PhD from BNU as well.
36. Also a graduate of the early childhood education program at BNU, Madam Zhu is, Kang reports, "a scholar-official" who had studied in Japan. "A reformer, she is full of passion and ambition, especially important because like other reforms worldwide, the early stages of this reform were particularly difficult. With her extraordinary courage, foresight and sagacity, Madam Zhu devoted herself enthusiastically to this reform program."
37. In China, Kang reported, there are three levels of classes in the kindergarten, organized by age.
38. Since the foundation of People's Republic of China in 1949, Kang reports, schools had followed the "one syllabus, one textbook" model. The syllabus was issued by the MoE, with textbooks compiled and published by the People's Educational Press (PEP), a subsidiary of the MoE. This single series of textbooks was distributed to all K–12 schools in China. Such a model represented a "rigid centralized curriculum management system," which had lasted till 1980s, which then saw a transition from "one syllabus, one textbook" to "one syllabus, multi-textbooks," but still remaining under direct regulation of the MoE. That would change, as Kang recounts.
39. During 1999–2001, for instance, "I was so heavily involved in the reform program that I almost worked round the clock. My little son was hardly able to see his father and his memory of me was that 'my Dad's job was to attend meetings.'"

40. "Formerly an outstanding young faculty member in mathematics education at Beijing Normal University," Kang tells us, "Liu Jian was a key organizer and designer of this reform program ever since the very early stage, to which he devoted himself passionately for more than ten years. In the end, however, he is not appropriately acknowledged by either the academic field or the political circle." The summary of my interview with Liu Jian follows next; and his essay appears as chapter 8.
41. "Representing the interests of the curriculum and of student development," Kang told me, "scholars are often held up as flags for the reform at the early stages. In time, however, they become victims of powerful political and economic interests." Certainly this has been the case in the United States (Pinar 2012, chapter 3). While rarely raised as flags, US curriculum scholars have been made victims, scapegoated by politicians and profit-hungry entrepreneurs. At one point Kang quotes Madame Zhu Muju: "Curriculum reform is a cause of grave-digging."
42. In 1995, at the age of 31, Liu Jian was promoted to associate professor; in October 2001 he became a full professor.
43. "Only ten projects that year passed the adjudication process," Liu Jian reports, "with mine the only one in a single subject area."
44. The project won the first prize in the Basic Education Research Achievement Competition organized by the Ministry of Education, and first class in the category of "consulting reports" for a "National Philosophy and Social Science Research Achievement Award," sponsored by Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.
45. Among the issues curriculum reformers face, Liu Jian suggests, are China's "large population, unbalanced development, generally poor school conditions, low credential levels for a large number of teachers, aging teachers in elementary schools in rural areas, conservative teaching philosophy among the majority of the teachers, large classroom sizes, and long-standing examination culture."
46. A term important in Mexico: see Pinar 2011b, 3–4.
47. Among those in the West whose work was influential were Bobbitt, Dewey, Tyler, Bruner, Schwab, Pinar, and Doll; among those in China whose work was influential were Baokui Zhai, Xia Chen, and Qiquan Zhong.
48. Ma reports that he is also interested in curricular questions of sustainability.
49. Recall that Qufu is where Confucianism occurred.
50. As I know too, enemies can be formative, "important" in their adversarial stimulation. In Beijing—at Capitol Normal University—in 2007 I witnessed a heated exchange over Professor Wang's "Soviet-style" pedagogical theory. Zhang Hua was undeterred. Indeed, he has experienced considerable success, as the following figures suggest: "I am sure that hundreds of thousands of school teachers have listened to my talks, and many students at universities attend my course on curriculum studies. One of my books—*Research on Curriculum and Teaching* (published in 2000)—was reprinted 16 times and sold more than 100,000 copies."
51. Now part of Zhejiang University.

52. Zhang, Hua and Zhong, Qiquan (2003). Zhong became one of the leading participants in the 2001 national curriculum reform; Zhang Wenjun reports she was "very happy" to be counted among the reformers.

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# Part I

## The Essays

# Chapter 1

# Curriculum Studies and Curriculum Reform in China
## 1922–2012

*Zhang Hua*

## Introduction

Curriculum studies includes curriculum history. Curriculum history is the unfolding development of curriculum studies. For any curriculum field in any nation, theoretical construction and historical perspectives are integrated. In China, with its long history of wisdom traditions for more than 2,500 years, a historical focus is a natural character of Chinese curriculum field (H. Zhang and Zhong 2003). To understand the Chinese curriculum field, it is necessary to inquire into Chinese curriculum history. In the construction of Chinese curriculum studies, we need to critically examine the wisdom traditions and historical situations in China.

As a spiritual world with its own intellectual tradition, curriculum studies in China is not necessarily a mirror reflection of curriculum reform and other practical affairs of curriculum. But curriculum practices exert influences upon curriculum studies directly or indirectly: "In the contemporary field, theory and practice are often regarded as embedded in each other" (Pinar et al. 1995). In essence, curriculum theory is practical, even for "pure theory." Curriculum practice is theoretical, even for the "value-free practice." In China, curriculum studies have been closely related to curriculum reform. The birth and development of curriculum studies are

significantly influenced by curriculum reform—a major characteristic of Chinese curriculum studies.

In this chapter, first I will tell a story to explore the meaning of history and the value of an era's spirit. On July 11, 1921, after more than two years of academic trips and lecturing in China, John Dewey went back to United States. Hu Shih, Dewey's most important Chinese graduate student, wrote a short retrospective paper on the same day, "John Dewey in China." In generalizing Dewey's philosophy, Hu argued that "experiment or practice is the only touchstone to test truth" (Hu 1921/2001, 51).

In the early 1950s, there was a national movement to criticize Dewey's philosophy and Hu's thoughts; it lasted for more than 20 years. In the educational field, Dewey and Hu Shih were condemned as representatives of reactionary education. In 1978, China adopted an Open Door policy. After intense debate, the government reached the following conclusion as the new mainstream ideology: "Practice is the only standard by which to test truth" (Special Commentator 1978). Ironically, this is a restatement of Hu's words.

*That* is the force of historical tendencies. At least from the early twentieth century on, the worldwide historical tendencies are democratization and internationalization. The two tendencies are intrinsically related to each other. Democracy is not limited to specific areas or countries. It must be applied all over the world, both as means and as ends. Otherwise it is a lie. In curriculum studies, internationalization is democratization. As a consciousness and a lifestyle, internationality means peaceful, interactive, and concerned living with and taking responsibility for the people in other countries or cultures. Internationalization is not the universalization of diverse culturally situated values, orientations, behavior norms, or social systems, but an ongoing complicated conversation of cultural uniqueness. Democratic life attitude and style constitutes the core of internationalization. Internationalization is cultural democratization. I argue that the Chinese curriculum field must be based on democratization and internationalization. Modern China has experienced two important national curriculum reforms: the 1922 Curriculum Reform and the 2001 Curriculum Reform. As an academic field of study and practical engagement, curriculum studies in China has enjoyed significant progress as a consequence of both reforms.

## The 1922 Curriculum Reform and the Genesis of Curriculum Studies

In 1903, the Qing dynasty adopted the first modern school system, which basically copied the model of Japan.[1] In 1905, the Imperial

Examination, the traditional system to choose government officials, was ended. In 1911, Qing dynasty was overthrown and the Republic of China was founded. The first curriculum reform in modern China began in 1922, during the period of the May Fourth Movement or the New Culture Movement.

The May Fourth Movement is a watershed event between traditional China and modern China. On May 4, 1919, thousands of university students in Beijing protested the Northern Warlords Government for betraying China's interests in the Versailles Treaty after World War I, which transferred German rights in Shandong to Japan. In the days that followed, millions of students all over China joined the demonstrations. Workers in Shanghai, Beijing, and other cities went on strike to support students' claims. Finally the students won. On the surface, the May Fourth Movement was a struggle against domestic feudalism and Western imperialism. In essence, it was a widespread movement of democratization in China. Regarding the May Fourth Movement, the famous historian Yu Ying-shih wrote:

> The May Fourth Movement has a broad sense and a narrow one. Narrowly speaking, "May Fourth" means the students' patriotic movement which happened on May 4th, 1919, in Beijing. Broadly speaking, "May Fourth" means a nation-wide cultural movement or thought movement which lasted for many years before and after that day. The upper limit can be traced back to the literature movement which happened at least two years before May 4th in 1919, i.e. 1917. The lower limit is Northern Expedition which occurred in 1927. (Y. Yu 2005)

In this essay, I adopt the "broad sense" of the May Fourth Movement. As a cultural or thought movement, its basic characteristic was democracy-claiming and science-seeking.

In the circle of thought and history, two analogies are often drawn to describe the May Fourth Movement. One is the Renaissance; the other is the Enlightenment (Y. Yu 2004; Hu 1926; Hu 1934; Schwarcz 1986). As nearly all the leaders of the May Fourth Movement advocated that the vernacular tongue replace classical language and the recovery of the dignity and honor of Chinese culture, the "Renaissance" metaphor fits here. As the May Fourth Movement initiated aggressive claims for democracy and science along with a strong critical spirit, it is often analogized to Enlightenment. Barry Keenan wrote: "The fervor of new ideas characterized the May Fourth period (1915–1924) with a sort of *esprit critique* reminiscent of the French Enlightenment" (Keenan 1977, 22–23) But I think neither the "Renaissance" or the "Enlightenment" can reveal fully the

meaning of the May Fourth Movement as it was both the embodiment of cultural crisis in China, and the requirement of cultural transformation.

Three orientations followed from the May Fourth Movement: liberalism, radicalism, and conservatism. They are the main melodies attuning the transformation of Chinese thought and society over the past 100 years. Understanding the essence of each and the relationship among them reveals the transformative processes of Chinese thought and society, including curriculum reform and curriculum studies.

*Liberalism*: Liberalism is a trend of thought that tries to reconstruct Chinese traditional culture based on democracy and science. The main representatives of liberalism are Hu Shih, Fu Sinian, Jiang Menglin, and Zhang Dongxun. In the field of education, the main representative is Tao Xingzhi. The aim of liberalism, in Hu's words, is "to make a successful connection between world civilization and the best part of our own civilization" (Grieder 1970, 160–161). In this sense, liberalism is a cultural reform. Hu imagined a tableau of the process of cultural reform in China as follows:

> Slowly, quietly, but very obviously, a Chinese Renaissance will become a reality. The product of this cultural rebirth will have a doubtful appearance of the West. But after uncovering the appearance, you will find its constituent elements are essentially Chinese. The plentitude of weathering and etching will make the essentials much clearer. Due to the encounter with science and democracy in the new world, Chinese humanism and rationalism will have been revived. (Hu 1934, ix–x)

Liberalism in China has three characteristics: first, it views individual liberty, independent thought, and social democracy as central. In order to guarantee the human right of liberty and social democracy, it advocates a scientific attitude and methodology. Second, it adopts a critical spirit to analyze and solve problems in Chinese traditional culture and contemporary society based on the standards of liberty, democracy, and science. Third, it labors to recover the intrinsic elements of liberty, democracy, and science in Chinese traditional culture, recalling them as the seeds of a new civilization, helping our ancient civilization to germinate new branches.

*Radicalism*: In this view, at least from the mid-nineteenth century on, China has been experiencing a long-term radicalization process (Y. Yu 1993). The main provocation is the invasion of Western countries and the clash between Chinese culture and Western culture. There are said to be three rounds of cultural communication between China and foreign countries. The first round is the incorporation of Indian Buddhism into Chinese culture, from the East Han dynasty in the first century

to the Tang dynasty in the mid-seventh century. The establishment of Chinese Buddhism, Zen, symbolized the accomplishment of the incorporating process and Buddhism thus became an organic part of Chinese culture. Overlapping this process was China's cultural borrowing from the Arab world. From the seventh century to thirteenth century in late Song dynasty, China completed the incorporation of Islam civilization, which is now another organic part of Chinese culture. These two cultural incorporations, each taking up around 600 years, were peaceful, constructive, and mutually beneficial. The third round of cultural intercommunication, however, was different from the previous two. From the mid-nineteenth century on, the West has been invading China for commercial interests. The basic ways for Western countries to invade China are, as suggested by Mu Qian, "sending businessmen as the vanguards in order to gain benefits and having soldiers and warships as the props to make a big show of their powers" (Qian 2004, 15). During the continuous business, military, and cultural conflicts between China and the West, China was oppressed. Chinese people started to thoroughly reflect the problems of Chinese society and culture and opened up a restless stage in Chinese history—the stage of radicalization.

Radicalism is, then, the inevitable outcome of invasion. In the history of Chinese thought, radicalism means an attitude (and an attendant body of thought) that thoroughly denies Chinese traditional culture. The basic content of radicalism is Chinese Marxism. Its concrete forms are early Chinese Marxism in the 1910s and 1920s, the ideological trend of the "new Enlightenment" or the "new rationalism" in the 1930s, and Marxism as the mainstream ideology in China from the 1950s through the 1970s. The leading figures of radicalism during the May Fourth period include Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, and Lu Xun. Radical thinkers adamantly argued for rejecting Chinese traditional culture, especially Confucianism, and replacing it with Marxism-Leninism, thereby building a socialist-communist China.

*Conservatism*: In China, conservatism is a trend of thought that tries to reconstruct the society based on Chinese traditional culture, including Confucianism. Conservative thinkers do not oppose democracy and modernization. In contrast, they try to realize the ideal of democracy and modernization in a practical and steady way—based on Chinese culture. For them, cultural integration is inevitable. To borrow the words of Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909), a famous Confucian in late Qing dynasty: "Chinese learning is the fundamental structure; Western learning has practical use." The main content of conservatism is Confucianism. Because it absorbed some elements of western culture and modernized the original ideas, it is a modern Confucianism. The representatives of conservatism

are Liang Shuming (1893–1988), Liang Qichao, Wang Guowei (1877–1927), Chen Yinque (1890–1969), Mei Guangdi (1890–1945), and Wu Mi (1894–1978).

Liang Shuming is a leading figure in conservatism. His ideas are very typical and representative. Liang Shuming is seen as "the last Confucian" in China (Alitto 1979). When Liang Shuming was 28 years old, he published *Eastern-Western Cultures and Their Philosophies*. In this book, Liang Shuming defined culture as "the life style of human beings" (Liang 1921/2006, 57). The problems of human beings and their related attitudes and lifestyles determine cultural difference. Liang discerned three attitudes or directions of human life. When human beings inevitably encounter problems in their lives, the first attitude is to march forward courageously to solve the problems in one's surroundings and reconstruct the environment to meet one's needs. This is "a struggle attitude" and "the original direction of life" (57). The second attitude is to turn back to one's mind, reflect on one's behaviors and control one's desires in order to adapt to and make peace with the readymade environment. But the problems in the surroundings that threaten one's life are not solved. This is "an in-harmony-with" attitude or "a-feeling-at-home-wherever-one-is" attitude and "the second direction of life" when the society has grown rich (57–58). The third attitude is to reject the human world and sidestep the problems of human life. This is an attitude of renouncing the world and "the third direction of life" when the society gets to the most advanced stage. If the first attitude requires reconstruction of the environment through problem-solving, and the second attitude means changing ourselves to adapt to circumstances, the third attitude invites us to "let go" of the problems we encounter.

Based on this understanding of human life, Liang recognized three typical cultures in the world. The first is "Western culture," which adopts the first direction of life. Its fundamental spirit is "the will of marching forward" and both "science" and "democracy" are derived from this primacy of will (Liang 1921/2006, 31). The second is "Chinese culture," which expresses the second direction of life. Its fundamental spirit is "the will of controlling desire and going to the mean" (59). The third is "Indian culture," which adopts the third direction of life. Its fundamental spirit is "the will of turning back" (59). Liang claimed that each culture has its own unique characteristics. We cannot judge which culture is better: "Every culture is essentially a specific attitude or direction; no attitudes and directions are unbiased, each has its good parts and bad parts; that means we can't say which culture is good and appropriate, and which is not so" (186–187).

I think that Liang made at least three contributions to understanding Eastern-Western culture. First, he articulated the relationship between a

culture and a way of life. Second, he generalized three attitudes of human life and the related characteristics of human cultures: the attitude of problem-solving and environmental reconstruction, which is the characteristic of Western culture; the attitude of meaning-seeking and mind adjustment, which is the characteristic of Chinese culture; the attitude of external transcendence and life renunciation, which is the characteristic of Indian culture. Third, since each culture has its own unique characteristics, the relationship between cultures is not the replacement of one with another, but communication for the sake of mutual learning and growth. This embodies a communicative culture. Liang kept this view all of his life. In 1980 when Liang was 87 years old, the Harvard Liang Shuming expert in the United States, Guy S. Alitto, interviewed Liang Shuming in Beijing:

> *Alitto*: Do you think it is possible for China to bring about and promote the harmonious communication and reconciliation between Eastern and Western culture?
> *Liang*: Yes, I do. Actually we have been going to this direction. Especially for China, we have to borrow science from foreign countries. We have to study foreign cultures. So we have been in this direction. Have Western countries accepted China's influence? I dare not say that. But it is very clear that China has accepted great influences from western countries. (Alitto and Liang 2006, 101)

I think that today's world—including academic fields like curriculum studies—should cherish and practice Liang's ideas on cultural communication.

## The Three Orientations and the Chinese Curriculum Field

Liberalism, radicalism, and conservatism formed a triptych in the Republic of China in 1923. In the same year, a very important event occurred: "the debate on science and life outlook." The core question in the debate was: Can science solve all the problems in human life? The advocates of liberalism and radicalism debated with those of conservatism. Hu Shih, Ding Wenjiang, Chen Duxiu, among others, insisted that science can solve all the problems in society. For example, Hu Shih endorsed a "scientific outlook of life," asserting that "the scientific outlook of life has two meanings: (1) science is the foundation of life outlook; (2) having scientific attitude, spirit, and methods as life attitude and method" (Hu 1921/2001, 334).

In contrast, thinkers such as Zhang Junmai and Liang Qichao thought that science cannot solve all the problems of human life. Finally the former won and the latter lost. This event had two results. First, scientism and positivism took root in Chinese society. Second, although conservatism is the common opponent of liberalism and radicalism, the pragmatic view of science represented by Hu Shih is very different from that of the Marxist or materialist view of science represented by Chen Duxiu. As a result, liberalism and radicalism broke away from each other. After "the debate on science and life outlook," liberalism, radicalism, and conservatism ran parallel tracks in Chinese society until 1949.

How can we understand the relationship among the three orientations? They are different attitudes toward traditional Chinese culture. Liberalism views traditional culture in a positive way and thus tries to reconstruct Chinese culture based on the general tendencies of world culture, especially the cultural ideals of liberty, democracy, and science since the Enlightenment. In Hu's words, Chinese culture should endorse "wholehearted internationalization" (Hu 1921/2001, 306). Radicalism is a critical attitude toward traditional culture, thoroughly negating Chinese culture and embracing Marxism. In Chen Duxiu's words: "'materialist conception of history' is our fundamental thought" (quoted in Hu 1921/2001, 185). Conservatism is a respectful and acceptable attitude to traditional culture, which works for reviving the dignity of Chinese culture by implanting the appropriate elements from Western culture into its organic life. In Liang's ambitious prediction in 1921, "the future of the world is the renaissance of Chinese culture, just as the renaissance of Greek culture has been for the modern era" (Liang 1921, 187).

Each of the three orientations has intrinsic values. Liberalism is helpful in the realization of modernization, personal emancipation, and social democratization. But if it goes to extremes, it will slip into exclusive individualism and relativism. Radicalism is beneficial to the development of critical and reflective abilities in Chinese culture. But if it limits itself to the criticism and negation of traditional culture, it will inevitably devolve into nihilism and ultra-"Leftist" trends of thought. The Chinese people have suffered deeply from this tendency. Conservatism is good at preserving traditional Chinese culture. But if it closes itself into a narrow circle of local culture, it will result in cultural provincialism and nationalism (Tang 2006).

The key to understanding and developing Chinese culture is to work with all three orientations. We should abandon the uniform standard, especially the standard of "political correctness," to evaluate the different orientations. Since each orientation has its intrinsic values, a reasonable choice is to adopt an appreciation of their intrinsic standards, which would

lead to pluralism, the creation of a cultural ecology in which each thought orientation, cultural value, and academic view can interact generatively through complicated conversation. This process can not only promote cultural development, but also encourage social progress. This idea can be called "interactive pluralism."

These three orientations have deeply influenced the academic fields of education and curriculum. Liberalism gave rise to "New Education Reform Movement" (Keenan 1977, 55). Radicalism generated "socialist or Marxist education." Conservatism advocated "education for social reconstruction" (Liang 1933). During the first half of the twentieth century (1917–1948), liberalism was the dominant outlook, and conservatism and radicalism were peripheral. Generally speaking, they worked in harmony, although there were many debates among their advocates. This period is one of the generative stages in the development of Chinese culture and thought. With the "progressive education movement" in America and the "new education movement" in Europe, the "New Education Reform Movement" in China was an organic and important part of global educational democratization movement at that time.

From the "1922 curriculum reform," Chinese curriculum studies emerged. From 1949 to 1977, China adopted a highly centralized system of politics and society from the Soviet Union. Marxist-Leninism became the mainstream ideology. Radicalism devolved into ultra-"Leftist" trend of thought as liberalism and conservatism were at first criticized, then dismissed. At last they disappeared. Chinese education was thoroughly politicized and had lost any pretence of independence. As a field, Chinese curriculum studies was destroyed and it too disappeared. In 1978, however, China adopted the Open Door policy. Liberalism has slowly recovered. Conservatism and traditional models of "Chinese learning" have gradually revived. From the mid-1990s on, there has been even a "rethinking China" from conservatism (Tingyang Zhao 2005, 9). The parallel-track state of the three orientations has been, in some sense, recovered. Chinese education has started its journey to the second round of democratization. In this context, China has carried on "2001 Curriculum Reform" and Chinese curriculum studies have been revived. It has entered a new stage.

## The 1922 Curriculum Reform

The May Fourth Movement tried to reconstruct Chinese culture and society based on the personification of idea as "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science."[2] It is also called "New Culture Movement." The "New

Education Reform Movement" is the direct outcome and an organic part of the "New Culture Movement." Jiang Menglin, John Dewey's famous student at the Teachers College (EdD, 1917) and the former chancellor of Peking University, founded the influential journal *The New Education* in February 1919 in Shanghai. It became one of the most important platforms to disseminate the ideas of the "new education." Hu Shih, who studied in the Department of Philosophy at the Columbia University, became the leading figure of the "New Education Reform Movement" and the major participant of 1922 Curriculum Reform in China. Tao Xingzhi, John Dewey's famous student at Teachers College, Columbia University, and the most important educator in modern China, beautifully and powerfully practiced John Dewey's thought of democratic education in China. Based on Dewey's ideas of cooperative teaching and learning, Tao Xingzhi transformed the traditional passive-linear method of instruction into a "teaching-learning method" or "the union of teaching and learning" (Tao 1991a/2005a, 1:18), hoping to create a mutual-learning environment. Based on Dewey's fundamental ideas of inquiry-oriented teaching and learning-by-doing, Tao changed the traditional "banking" method of instruction into "the union of teaching, learning, and doing" (105). In the social context of modern China, Tao Xingzhi transformed Dewey's conceptualization of "education as a social process" into a more radical and expansive one—"society as school"—so as to completely remove the firm fences placed between societies and schools and encourage schooling to become rooted deep into local communities. He also transformed Dewey's idea of "education as life" into a more comprehensive one, "life as education," in order to promote his philosophy of "life education" and "lived education" as "the union of teaching, leaning, and doing." Tao Xingzhi created laboratory schools and promoted democratic education all his life. On October 15, 1929, William Heard Kilpatrick, the creator of the "project method" and advocate of progressive education in America, visited Xiangzhuang[3] Teachers School in Nanjing created by Tao Xingzhi, and told the faculty, students (who were in-service teachers), and children: "This school is the one I have been looking forward to seeing every day for the past couple of years." Kilpatrick commented:

> It is really a source of educational revolution. . . . In this school, you are not bookworms, but creators of life. This life education can lead the mission of peasants, which echoes the calling of modern trends of thought. The school kids are also happy, because they are not living the dead and rigid life, but vital and vivid life which embodies the changeable world. . . . I hope I can live longer. So I can see the spirits of this school fully influence all over China. (Tao 1991b/2005b, 2:380–381).

Tao Xingzhi's thought and practice were an organic part and pioneering example of the movement toward global educational democratization during the early twentieth century.

In the context of the "New Culture Movement" and the "New Education Reform Movement," on January 1, 1922, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China issued its "School System Reform Decree." This decree was developed by National Association of Education and approved by the Ministry of Education. Following the example of the United States, it adopted a new school system: "6-3-3 school system" (six years for elementary school and three years each for junior and senior high school). The National Association of Education developed and issued "The Outline of New Curriculum Standards for New School System" and related textbooks. The new school system and new curriculum were implemented in 1922. This is the first modern curriculum system in China.

The School System Reform Decree raised seven "standards" that were basic curriculum ideas or philosophies for 1922 Curriculum Reform. They are as follows:

1. Adapting to the need of social evolution or progress
2. Promoting the spirit of democratic education
3. Seeking the development of individuality or personality
4. Fostering the economic ability of citizens
5. Emphasizing life education
6. Making education universal
7. Creating enough flexibility to meet the needs of local places (National Association of Education 1925, 127)

The outline of curriculum standards for each subject matter and the related textbooks fully embodied these ideas.

We find the following distinguishing features of 1922 Curriculum Reform. First, it conformed to the international trends of education and formed an important part of the worldwide educational democratization in the early twentieth century. The key curriculum concepts—"democratic education," "life education," "universal education," "social progress," "individuality," "ability," and "flexibility"—expressed the essential meanings of educational democratization. Second, the reform was generally liberalism-oriented, as "democracy," "science," and "the development of individuality" were the main tunes. But the reform also absorbed the positive elements of conservatism and radicalism. For example, the Confucian idea of "rural education"[4] was fully considered. Young Marxists could endorse the idea of "fostering the economic ability of citizens." Third, the content and structure of the new curriculum affirmed the positive elements of Chinese

tradition of culture and education while borrowing the achievements of curriculum reform in America, Japan, and Germany. This first modern curriculum system in China balanced students' interests, social needs, the requirements of vocations, and the development of new subject matter. It emphasized activity, integrity, and choice in curriculum. It created a credit system of curriculum management on the junior and senior high school level. It affirmed flexibility and variety in curriculum in order to meet the complex needs of different places. Fourth, the processes of curriculum decision-making and development were based on democracy, professionalism, and internationalization.

According to democratic procedures, the Chinese Association of Education formed the Drafting Committee of Curriculum Standards for New School System to which Yuan Xitao, Jin Zengcheng, Hu Shih, Huang Yanpei, and Jing Hengyi were elected as members. It organized experts to develop curriculum standards. This curriculum reform was open-minded and international. While the new curriculum was in process, John Dewey was making his famous visit to China. In October 1919, the Chinese Association of Education held its fifth annual conference in Taiyuan, Shanxi Province. John Dewey gave an important address—"The Experimental Attitude in Education"—which laid the cornerstone for the reform: a new school system and a new curriculum. Famous Chinese educators—Cai Yuanpei, Huang Yuanpei, Guo Bingwen, and others—invited Professor Paul Monroe from Teachers College, Columbia University, to visit China. Two months after Dewey left China, Monroe visited China in September 1921 and, like Dewey, participated in meetings where the new school system and the new curriculum reform decrees were drafted (Lv 1999).

I argue that 1922 Curriculum Reform is the first "modern curriculum reform" or "democratic curriculum reform" for the following reasons. It laid a strong foundation for the educational democratization in modern China, and it contributed to the social progress and cultural prosperity in China during the first part of the twentieth century. In addition to Confucianism, this curriculum modernization and democratization in the era of Republic of China constitutes a continuing resource for the development of curriculum field in China (H. Zhang and Zhong 2003).

## The Genesis of Curriculum Studies

Chinese curriculum studies was born during the 1922 Curriculum Reform. The new curriculum constituted the core of the new school system. In order to develop this new curriculum, an academic field of curriculum

studies had to be developed simultaneously. Tao Xingzhi clearly realized the importance of curriculum issues and curriculum studies. As the president of Chinese National Association for the Advancement of Education, he advocated the first *Curriculum Book Series* in China. In 1923, Tao wrote:

> The most important and urgent duty for today's educational field is to study and solve the issues of school curriculum based on pedagogical understanding. Because curriculum is the center of schooling, if curriculum issues are solved satisfactorily, other problems can be readily solved. (Tao 1991a, 1:550)

As appreciated by Tao, curriculum is the center of education. Curriculum studies is the core of educational science. Chinese educational scholars realized that fact in the early twentieth century.

The hallmark of the birth of Chinese curriculum studies is the 1923 publication of Cheng Xiangfan's groundbreaking book *An Introduction to the Elementary School Curriculum*, the first curriculum book published in China. Cheng Xiangfan followed US curriculum scholars Franklin Bobbitt and Frederick Bonser in his study of curriculum theory in the early twentieth century. After graduating from the Teachers College, he taught curriculum studies at the Southeast University and at Jinling University for many years. His *An Introduction to the Elementary School Curriculum* is a collection of his lecture notes. In this book, he located curriculum studies in broad cultural traditions, including Chinese culture, Anglo-Saxon culture, and Continental European intellectual traditions. He focused on the crucial issues of new curriculum reform and fully absorbed the curriculum thought of John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, Franklin Bobbitt, and Frederick Bonser. In his view the "curriculum is living experiences or changeable experiences" (Cheng 1923, 10). He also wrote: "Since curriculum is living, growing, and developing, all varieties of school subjects are growing and developing" (10).

But the concept of curriculum is not limited to school subjects, for it includes the whole of human life. Cheng Xiangfan pointed out: "It is a misunderstanding that most people think that school subjects are curriculum or that curriculum is subject matter. . . . Curriculum is the process for children to enjoy a satisfactory life" (Cheng 1923, 2–3). He concluded: "Curriculum includes the sum-total of human activities" (3). To provide "a satisfactory life" to children, he borrowed and integrated the curriculum thoughts of Franklin Bobbitt (1918) and Frederick Bonser (1920), systematically elaborating the principles of "scientific curriculum construction," including how to formulate curriculum objectives and how to

choose and organize curriculum content (Cheng 1923, 25–33). He distinguished between two orientations to organize curriculum: "hard curriculum" and "soft curriculum." "Hard curriculum" denotes rigid procedures of curriculum construction and a fixed curriculum with which teachers and students must comply. On the other hand, "soft curriculum" means flexible procedures of curriculum development and sufficient room for teachers and students to choose and change curriculum. Cheng Xiangfan emphasized the importance of "soft curriculum" and he fully explicated a "project organization," which was, for him, one of the most representative approaches of "soft curriculum" (227–238). Furthermore, Cheng Xiangfan applied his curriculum understanding to the development of curriculum in citizen life, vocational life, healthy life, leisure life, and language life.

Cheng Xiangfan's 1923 *An Introduction to the Elementary School Curriculum* played an important role in Chinese curriculum history. On the practical level, it met the need of 1922 Curriculum Reform, answering the urgent questions of schoolteachers while promoting curriculum reform. On the theoretical level, it systematically explored the basic principles of curriculum development and other key curriculum concepts. It generated a series of original curriculum views based on the intellectual development of international curriculum studies. It laid a firm foundation for the development of Chinese curriculum studies. Both in the depth and breadth of its consideration of academic issues of curriculum, this book constituted a world-level achievement at that time. Along with Franklin Bobbitt's *The Curriculum* (1918), Fredrick Bonser's *The Elementary Curriculum* (1920), and William Charters's *Curriculum Construction* (1924), Cheng Xiangfan's *An Introduction to the Elementary School Curriculum* (1923) is one of the great founding works of the worldwide curriculum field.

The achievements of Chinese curriculum studies in this stage can be generalized in three ways: curriculum history, curriculum principles, and internationalization. First is curriculum history, a continuing concern of curriculum studies in China. During the first decades of the Chinese curriculum field, three important books focused on curriculum history: Xu Zhi's *The Evolving History of Chinese School Curriculum* (Z. Xu 1929), Sheng Langxi's *The Evolvement of the Elementary School Curriculum* (1934), and Chen Xia's *The Developing History of the Elementary School Curriculum in Modern China* (X. Chen 1944). Xu Zhi was a famous writer in the era of the Republic of China. *The Evolving History of Chinese School Curriculum* is the refinement of the thesis he wrote at the Dongwu University, and the title was given by his professor (Z. Xu 1929, 1–2). Xu Zhi investigated the evolution of school curriculum from the primitive society, that is, the era of Tangyu (i.e. Yao-Shun-Yu, before 2070 BC) through the end of Qing

dynasty (1910). It explored the school curriculum in each dynasty, a span of time of more than 4,000 years. Xu (1929) defined curriculum history as follows:

> Since curriculum has been transformed according to the changeable needs of society, curriculum history is the study of the evolvement of school curriculum, in order to understand the causal relationship of its transformation and evolvement. (6)

Based on this definition, he argued for the vertical and horizontal meanings of the study of curriculum history.

Vertically, the aim of historical studies on curriculum is "to compare current school curriculum with the past one, in order to understand the differences and discover the origins of its evolvement. Therefore, the characteristics of school curriculum in one country can be manifested, including its powers and limitations, along with possible solutions to improve the whole system" (Z. Xu 1929, 6). Horizontally, Xu thought that "human minds are often limited to what they are familiar with. The historical and comparative methods can help people go beyond the society in which they live and therefore adopt another perspective to observe their curriculum. So, they can find the true face of their own and get new perspectives on curriculum" (6–7). Consciously noticing the verticality and horizontality of the study of curriculum history and systematically studying the whole historical span of Chinese school curriculum, Xu Zhi greatly contributed to the field of curriculum history and curriculum studies (W. F. Pinar 2007, xiii–xv). Xu Zhi's *The Evolving History of Chinese School Curriculum* is the first book on curriculum history in China, perhaps the first one in the world. Xu not only wrote a curriculum history book, but also created history in the field of curriculum studies.

Another important work of curriculum history in China is Sheng Langxi's *The Evolvement of the Elementary School Curriculum.* It focuses on the history of school subjects, especially in the elementary school. He has established links between Chinese traditional and modern school subjects. Sheng explored the differences and similarities between the traditional subject of the "cultivation of minds" (*Xiu-Shen*) and the modern one of "citizenship" (Sheng 1934, 5–43), between the traditional "study of the world" (*Ge-Zhi*) and modern "science" (137–165). Sheng provided insight in understanding the transformation of traditional school subjects into modern ones. This interesting historical study raised a critical question for the process of curriculum modernization: the relationship between tradition and modernization. Can modernization proceed through affirmation of the values of traditional subjects?

Another early work of curriculum history in China is Chen Xia's *The Developing History of the Elementary School Curriculum in Modern China*. Chen Xia was a famous curriculum scholar in China. His book explored the development of the elementary school curriculum from late Qing dynasty (1902) to late Republic of China (1941). It fully absorbed John Dewey's curriculum thought. Chen (X. Chen 1944) wrote: "If we acknowledge that education is the reconstruction of experience, curriculum is the media to reconstruct experience. So curriculum is at the center of all educational installations" (3). He claimed that curriculum has three functions: "(1) to replenish and improve direct experience; (2) to aggravate and prove indirect experience; (3) to nurture and train scientific attitude and method" (3). Based on this understanding, Chen Xia studied the 40-year journey of the earliest modernization of the elementary school curriculum in China.

China has more than 4,000 years' history of school curriculum. From Confucius (551 BC–479 BC) on, curricular wisdom traditions have been formed. Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are the representative wisdom traditions (H. Zhang and Zhong 2003, 253–270). Thus China has more than 2,500 years' history of curricular wisdom traditions. These provide solid foundations for the development of contemporary Chinese curriculum studies. Fortunately the early Chinese curriculum scholars realized the importance of these valuable sources and honored them with their outstanding scholarship. These curriculum history books have made lasting contributions to the field in China and the field worldwide.

*Curriculum Principles*: In order to realize curriculum reform, "how to develop a curriculum" became the most urgent problem for curriculum scholars to solve. There emerged extensive research regarding curriculum principles. Among the works published on curriculum principles were: Cheng Xiangfan's *An Introduction to the Elementary School Curriculum* (1923); Wang Keren's *The Principles and Methods of Curriculum Construction* (1928); Zhu Zhixian's *Research on the Elementary School Curriculum* (Z. Zhu 1931); Xiong Zirong's *The Principles of Curriculum Construction* (1934); Li Lianfang's *The Integrated Curriculum for Early Elementary Schools* (L. Li 1934); Wang Fenggang's *Curriculum Theory* (1939); and Wang Fenggang's *The Theory of Curriculum Construction* (1940). In addition, there were countless papers on curriculum principles published in academic journals such as the *Journal of Education*, *Circle of China's Education*, and *New Education*. For example, Zhao Tingwei's "Reconstructing Curriculum" (Zhao 1924), Shen Zishan's "The Issues of the Elementary School Curriculum" (1924), and Yu Jiaju's "On Curriculum" (1925) were seminal journal articles on the topic of curriculum principles.

These books and articles systematically explored the following issues: conceptions of curriculum, including curriculum definitions, roles and

functions, origins and evolvement; the foundations of curriculum, exploring the relationships between curriculum and society, curriculum and human life, curriculum and children, curriculum and psychology, curriculum and education, curriculum and school system; the theories of curriculum development, exploring a variety of theories of children-based, society-based, and integrated curriculum development, as well as the curriculum thought of John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, Franklin Bobbitt, W. W. Charters, Frederick Bonser, and Henry Harap; the general principles of curriculum development, including the rules, methods, procedures, and tendencies of curriculum development; the concrete issues of school curriculum construction, including different school (the elementary school, the secondary school, vocational school, and teachers' school) and school subjects.

Due to the great influence and strong motives provided by the 1922 Curriculum Reform, the papers and books on curriculum principles increased dramatically. Overall, they constitute a brilliant achievement of the Chinese curriculum field. Although "how to develop a curriculum" was the key question stimulating these curriculum writings, and the curriculum thought of Franklin Bobbitt and W. W. Charters were carefully studied and fully absorbed, the paradigm of curriculum development in China was not developed as extensively as that in America. Why? First, from the perspective of social context, the rapid development of science, technology, and industrial development was just under way. There was no equivalent to the "social efficiency movement" in China, and "social control" was not a dominant value in Chinese society. Second, Chinese curriculum scholars understood curriculum based on very broad theoretical foundations, including educational thought from European and North American as well as Chinese traditional culture. Third, John Dewey's ideas on the experiential curriculum and William Heard Kilpatrick's ideas on the "project method" played important roles in the development of Chinese curriculum studies from the very beginning. Chinese curriculum scholars also fully absorbed Frederick Bonser's curriculum thought. Thus in the Chinese curriculum field, curriculum development was not a rigid procedure dominated by "scientific rules," but was, instead, a "soft" and flexible process, to borrow the phrases from Cheng Xiangfan (1923, 227–238). Fourth, in order to meet the changing needs of curriculum reform, Chinese curriculum field was more problem-based and practical rather than procedure-based and technical.

*Internationalization*: In China, curriculum modernization and internationalization were intertwined. Dozens of curriculum books and papers were translated into Chinese, among them F. G. Bonser's *The Elementary School Curriculum* (translated by Zheng Zonghai and Shen Zishan, 1925),

Franklin Bottitt's *The Curriculum* (translated by Zhang Shizhu, 1928), Franklin Bobbitt's *How to Make a Curriculum* (translated by Xiong Zirong, 1943), John Dewey's *The Child and the Curriculum* (translated by Zheng Zonghai, 1922), John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (translated by Chang Daozhi, 1922), John Dewey and E. Dewey's *School of Tomorrow* (translated by Zhu Jingnong, 1924), W. Kilpatrick's *Foundations of Method* (translated by Cao Chu, 1927), I. E. Miller's *Education for the Needs of Life* (translated by Zheng Zonghai, 1924), and E. L. Terman's *A Socialized Project Curriculum for the New Six-Year Elementary School* (translated by Zheng Guoliang, 1923). As acknowledged earlier, cross-cultural conversations between the East and West have deeply influenced the development of Chinese culture and society, including the curriculum field. Because young curriculum scholars adopted a liberal and all-embracing attitude to foreign curriculum studies, curriculum internationalization proceeded rapidly and extensively during the era of the Republic of China.

In sum, the three branches of curriculum studies formed a beautiful curriculum scene. Relatively speaking, the study of curriculum history was both brilliant in itself and it established history as a continuing specialization within the broader field. Studies of curriculum principles constituted international-level achievements. The study of curriculum internationalization anticipated the future of the field. Without question, the 1922 Curriculum Reform was the provocation of these developments. The trio of liberalism, radicalism, and conservatism and attendant ideological freedom in Chinese society provided spiritual conditions for curriculum studies to develop so rapidly. To understand the circumstances and features of curriculum research in this stage proves crucial for understanding the contemporary Chinese curriculum field.

## The Disappearance of Curriculum Studies in China

In 1949, the People's Republic of China adopted the ideology and social system of the Soviet Union. In the educational field, "Kairov's pedagogy," which fully expressed Stalinism and "Soviet pedagogy," was accepted in the early 1950s in China. "Kairov's pedagogy" is a mixture of Herbartianism, especially its theory of formal stages of instruction, mixed with elements of the traditional theory of education in Russia, and presented in the synoptic text *Pedagogy*, edited by I. A. Kairov. This text went through three editions. The first one was published in 1939, which enjoyed little influence and was

not translated into Chinese. The second one was published in 1948; this was the most popular and influential one, translated into Chinese and published in China in 1950 and again in 1951. The third one was published in 1956, which was the edition revised after Stalin's death, and it appeared in China in 1957.

"Kairov's pedagogy" was recognized as the only true and scientific pedagogy because it was based on Marxism-Leninism. It dominated the Chinese educational field for more than 60 years. Even now, several famous professors in China still call for "learning from Kairov's pedagogy" because it is the "universal truth" (C. Wang 2008, 3–21; Huang and Wang 2011, 3–9).

"Kairov's pedagogy" has four parts. The first is "educational principles," a general interpretation of educational phenomena based on Marxism-Leninism, especially Stalinism. The second is "instructional theory," a rigid procedure to transfer readymade knowledge and skills in classrooms. It regulates as it sequences six steps (or "links" according to Kairov) of teaching during one class period: (1) class organization (recording the absent students and preparing the current work swiftly), spending 1–2 minutes; (2) checking the homework and judging if students have finished it, spending 3–8 minutes; (3) explaining the title and aims of a lesson and determining the relationship between the new lesson and the learnt ones, spending 5–10 minutes; (4) lecturing and explaining the new subject matters, spending 10–20 minutes; (5) strengthening the taught subject matters, spending 10 minutes; (6) presenting the new homework details, spending 5–8 minutes. This is "the structure of a lesson and all the links of instruction" (Kairov 1951, 171–176). If we add all the time limits of the "six links" together, we can find that each class period needs 45–46 minutes. In the past 60 years (from 1949 to now), all the schools and universities in China have adopted a uniform class system of 45-minute periods. Maybe this originated from "Kairov's pedagogy" (H. Zhang 2009a, 10). The third is "the theory of moral education," which expounds the principles, methods, and content of Communist moral education. The fourth is "the theory of school management," which sets forth the systems and methods of organizational, including student, management.

These four parts are interrelated: "educational principles" are the applications of mainstream ideology to education and provide the theoretical foundation for the other three; "instructional theory" not only embodies the characteristics of the mainstream ideology but also lays an epistemological base for ideological control; "the theory of moral education" represents the instillation of mainstream ideology and determines the ultimate aims of education; and "the theory of school management" provides the basis for instruction and moral education. This format

provided a classic matrix for all branches of Chinese educational science because its "Marxism-Leninism" aligned with the mainstream ideology of the People's Republic of China. Nearly all the typical synoptic texts on pedagogy, instruction, and educational history written for preservice and in-service teacher education in China treated "Kairov's pedagogy" as the basic model.

On March 5, 1953, J. V. Stalin died. From that moment on, "Kairov's pedagogy" has been criticized and revised. In the late 1950s, "Kairov's pedagogy" was eclipsed by a more humanistic pedagogy that had emerged in the Soviet Union (D. Yang 2009). China also criticized "Kairov's pedagogy" after Stalin's death, but in an opposite way: it severely denounced the "revisionist inclination" in the 1956 edition of Kairov's pedagogy and firmly adhered to the earlier Stalinist version. So "Kairov's pedagogy" has had different fates in the former Soviet Union and China: it existed in the former Soviet Union for only ten years, but has dominated Chinese educational field for more than 60 years (D. Yang 2008). Until recently, Chinese educational science was still living in the shadow of "Kairov's pedagogy." Nearly all the influential textbooks on pedagogy and instruction adhered to it, both in form and in content.

The Chinese version of "Kairov's pedagogy" is "special epistemology of instruction" (SEI), that was systematically elaborated by Professor Wang Cesan in his *On Instruction* and *Instructional Epistemology* (C. Wang 1985/2002). Why is instructional epistemology "special"? Because, according to Wang, the knowledge of children is absolutely different from that of professionals such as scientists, artists, writers, and social workers. For Wang, the knowledge of children is essentially "indirect experience," which means that the main epistemological characteristic of children is knowing the world through others' knowledge, especially academic subject matter. So, for SEI, "indirectness" is the essential characteristic of school knowledge, learning, and instruction. What is "instructional epistemology"? Wang (2004) answered: "Briefly speaking, teachers teach students to mainly learn ready-made knowledge in order to know the world and develop themselves. This knowledge is instructional knowledge" (14). Why are students' knowing and learning "indirect"? Because children's bodies are weak and their minds are naïve, Wang answers, they are not able to know the world directly by themselves; they must be taught the readymade knowledge by mature adults. Because knowledge of human beings has been fully accumulated in history and nowadays, and there are so many branches of "best knowledge"—all kinds of subject matter, it is not necessary for young students to create knowledge by themselves, they just must be ready to receive readymade knowledge from textbooks through teachers' instruction (14–15).

From the basic nature of instructional "indirectness," the other two characteristics were derived: "dominance" and "educativeness." The "dominance" of instruction means that teachers play the dominant roles and students must be obedient in the instructional process because teachers know the subject matter and students do not. The basic relationship between teachers and students is of "dominance-obedience." The typical statement of this perspective is: "In the instructional process, the teacher is in charge of passing on knowledge to the student. Between instruction and reception, the teacher always plays dominant role. Whether what the teacher imparts is right or wrong, the dominant role of the teacher is an objective being" (X. Xu and Shi 1988, 1:159–160). Compared with Kairov's *Pedagogy*, this is a soft statement. In Kairov's *Pedagogy* one of the most famous sentences is: "Every word the teacher says is just like a law for the student to comply with" (Kairov 1951, 58). Which teaching method can fully embody teachers' dominant roles and guarantee instructional efficiency to teach students readymade knowledge and skills as much as possible? According to SEI, the answer is the lecture-based method. Wang Cesan (1985) said, "The chief form for teachers to play dominant roles is to systematically lecture subject matters to students," while "the chief form of students' learning is to systematically listening to teachers" (129). He also argued: "Systematic lecturing is really a good form to guarantee teachers' leadership. It transmits systematic knowledge to all the students. And this is the most important determinant of instruction" (129). In the past 60 years, the lecture-based method has been not only a concrete teaching method, but also an instructional philosophy that dominates educational theory and practice for sake of the social control through mainstream ideology.

The "educativeness" of instruction means that teachers reconstruct students' ideologies and form their worldviews based on "scientific knowledge." In Kairov's *Pedagogy*, this is known as the unity of scientific content and ideological content. The "ideology" and "worldview" that are communicated in the instructional process are a Communist morality and worldview, which meet the requirement of mainstream ideology and provide the ultimate aim of instruction. If we assemble all the characteristics of instruction in the view of SEI, they are: (1) chiefly through lecture-based method, (2) teachers dominate students so they may learn readymade knowledge or "indirect experience" and form the ideology and worldview that (3) corresponds to the needs of social control through mainstream ideology.

I composed a series of papers to criticize SEI (H. Zhang 2005; H. Zhang 2008a; H. Zhang 2008b; H. Zhang 2009b; H. Zhang 2009a). On the axiological level, SEI is the mixture of autocratic ideology and

Enlightenment rationality. It is a control-based instruction. It aims to control the minds of teachers and students to comply with the readymade social order and ideology. On the epistemological level, SEI is the educational derivative of materialist theory of reflection, which sees human minds as mirrors of the reality and knowledge as the embodiment of objective "truth." It imposes readymade knowledge, skills, and norms upon teachers and students in the name of "truth." It is a transmission-based instruction. On the methodological level, SEI believes in universalism and mechanism. How to efficiently impart knowledge is the basic concern of SEI. It thus uniformly adopts the lecture-based method of teaching.

In the view of Kairov's *Pedagogy* and its Chinese homologue SEI, all "curricula" are input from the outside world to schools and classrooms, based on political and scientific correctness. Who can judge "political correctness" of curriculum? The government's various departments, especially propaganda organs can. Who can judge "scientific correctness" of curriculum? The scientists, especially the ones that are approved by the government, can. This kind of "curriculum" is completely "teacher-proof" and "student-proof." The necessity of curriculum research was thoroughly erased. Curriculum studies in China disappeared for at least 30 years after 1949. From 1949 to 1980, one can hardly find any papers or books of curriculum studies.

If we trace the historical background of Chinese society and thought during this stage, we can find the deep reasons for the disappearance of the Chinese curriculum field. From 1949 to 1976, as China thoroughly adopted and enforced the highly centralized social system of Stalinism, public spheres, civil societies, and intellectual freedom were entirely eliminated. The balance among liberalism, radicalism, and conservatism was destroyed. Liberalism and conservatism (Confucianism) were fiercely criticized and in fact became illegal. Radicalism was embraced, an ultra-"Left" trend of thought. Meanwhile, the radicalization of Chinese society reached its zenith. A series of social movements, such as "Socialist Transformation Movement" (in the early 1950s), "People's Commune Movement" (in the late 1950s), "the Anti-Rightist Campaign" (1957), "the Great Leap Forward" (in 1958), the "Three Years' Famine" (1959–1961), and "the Great Cultural Revolution" (1966–1977): all these severely hurt Chinese society. In these movements, education was a small "screw" of the big state machinery. There was no independence. Education studies amounted to the inculcation of the educational thought of the "five great leaders": Karl Marx, Friedrich Von Engels, Vladimir Ilich Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Zedong. It was impossible for curriculum studies to exist under such circumstances.

Curriculum studies is a liberal cause. If there is no freedom, there can be no curriculum. The recovery of curriculum studies requires that freedom return to China. At last, that day is coming.

## The 2001 Curriculum Reform and the Resurrection of Curriculum Studies

Since 1978, Chinese society has been becoming more and more open and liberal. In order to develop better textbooks for schoolchildren, the National Ministry of Education founded the Institute of Curriculum and Subject Matter and the first refereed academic curriculum journal in curriculum studies, *Curriculum, Teaching Materials and Methods*, published by the People's Education Press in 1981. Among the curriculum papers published during this period were Dai Botao's "On the Importance of School Curriculum Research" (Dai 1981) and Shi Guoya's "On the Research Scope and Guiding Principles of Curriculum Studies" (G. Shi 1984).

In 1986, China issued the Compulsory Education Law, requiring nine years of compulsory education. China reformed the original curriculum system in the late 1980s. Shanghai led this curriculum reform and formulated a curriculum framework for "personal development." This framework was translated into compulsory curriculum, an elective curriculum, and an activity curriculum for K–12 education. The National Ministry of Education adopted this framework and extended it to the whole country in 1992. In this context, in 1989, two synoptic texts were published in China: one was Zhong Qiquan's *Modern Curriculum Theory* (Zhong 1989); the other was Chen Xia's *Curriculum Theory* (X. Chen 1989). I suggest that these two books symbolize the rebirth of Chinese curriculum studies (H. Zhang and Zhong 2003, 264–265).

During the 1990s, curriculum studies gradually grew as a field in China. During this period, at least ten books and numerous papers on curriculum topics were published. Among them were three synoptic texts and two books of curriculum history: Liao Zhexun's *Curriculum Studies* (Liao 1991); Jin Yule's *Modern Curriculum Theory* (Jin 1995); Shi Liangfang's *Curriculum Theory* (Shi 1996); Lv Da's *The History of Modern Curriculum in China* (Lv 1994); and Xiong Chengdi's *Research on School Subject Matters in Ancient China* (Xiong 1996). In 1997, the Chinese Society of Education ratified the establishment of the Professional Committee of Curriculum. Curriculum studies became formalized and professionalized in China (T. Zhang 1998, 11–12).

From 1978 to the present, liberalism has gradually recovered its position in Chinese society, and the ultra-"Left" trend of thought has been somewhat corrected. In the educational field, schoolteachers' autonomy in curriculum and teaching has been somewhat regained. The reestablishment of intellectual independence in curriculum studies meets the needs of contemporary curriculum practice. But in the late 1980s, liberalism was also radicalized in China, as conservatism was thoroughly criticized and rejected again (Y. Yu 1993). At that time, a trend of "wholesale Westernization" was popular, even overwhelming. Therefore, it was impossible for curriculum studies to develop healthily. China needed another opportunity to fully develop its curriculum studies. That opportunity would be the 2001 Curriculum Reform.

## The 2001 Curriculum Reform

On June 7, the State Council of China issued *The Guidelines for Curriculum Reform of K–12 Education* (Try-out Version). This marked the start of 2001 Curriculum Reform. The objectives of this curriculum reform were as follows: (1) To transform the focus from teachers' knowledge-centered dictating teaching to students' active learning. Therefore, students could learn how to learn and establish good values while learning basic knowledge and skills. (2) To transform the curriculum structure from the subject-based and too many and separated subjects to consistently constructing nine years' curriculum (1–9 grade) as a whole and integrated curriculum, in order to address the needs of the students with diverse backgrounds in diverse regions. The new curriculum structure to be designed in the spirit of balance, integrity, and electiveness. (3) To transform curriculum contents from overemphasis on knowledge from books that are invariably too difficult, complicated, out of date, and meticulous, to building connections between curriculum content and student life, modern society, and the development of science and technology; attending to students' experience and learning interests; and carefully choosing basic knowledge and skills that are required for students' lifelong learning. (4) To transform curriculum implementation from overemphasis on receptive learning, rote memory, and mechanical training to encouraging students to experience participatory knowing, inquiry learning, and hands-on projects, and to help students learn to search for, acquire, and process new information, and develop the ability of critical analysis, problem solving, communication, and cooperation. (5) To transform curriculum evaluation from overemphasis on the function of screening and selecting students to giving

full play to the function of evaluation as promoting students' development, teachers' professionalism, and the improvement of teaching practice. (6) To transform curriculum management from hierarchical centralization and a top-down system to a decentralized management system of national curriculum, local curriculum, and school curriculum so as to promote the adaptability and flexibility of curriculum to local places, schools, and students (National Ministry of Education 2001).

The "keywords" of 2001 Curriculum Reform are: "back to student life and experience," "integrated curriculum," "elective curriculum," "inquiry learning," "hands-on projects," "developmental evaluation," "local curriculum," and "school-based curriculum development." Each of these curriculum concepts and strategies affirms each student's personal development and each teacher's professional development (H. Zhang 2009c).

What is the fundamental nature of the 2001 Curriculum Reform? I suggest that it is educational democracy, which saturates the new curriculum in every aspect. The basic aims of curriculum are to foster independent personalities, liberal thought, and a cooperative spirit. The outstanding feature of curriculum content is the connection among subject matters or disciplines, life world, teacher lore, and students' lived experience. Curriculum content is open and evolving. The integration of curriculum is crucial. This not only results in new learning areas like "integrated curriculum of practical activity," "integrated science," "integrated social studies," "integrated arts," and so on, but it also realizes the reconstruction of traditional subject matter based on students' experience and social life. The basic philosophy and styles of learning and teaching are autonomy, cooperation, and inquiry. Students can thus collectively create knowledge in daily classrooms and throughout their school lives. The key conception of curriculum evaluation is "developmental evaluation," which tries to cast off the tradition of "education to testing" and instead evaluates each student as a whole person. Many kinds of "qualitative evaluation," such as "performance assessment," "portfolio assessment," "seminar assessment," and "display assessment," have been introduced during this curriculum reform (Y. Li 2002). In recent years, "assessment for integrated qualities" has been advocated (Y. Li 2011). The basic conception of curriculum development is "school-based," accompanied by "school-based teaching research and teacher training." Each of these concepts and projects fully embody the nature of this curriculum reform.

Because this curriculum reform set the direction of Chinese education and met the needs of Chinese teachers and students, it was welcomed wholeheartedly and adopted swiftly. It became the most important event in the field of basic education. In 2004, the New Curriculum Reform entered a stage of reflection as it encountered criticism. The criticisms

were complicated. Some were constructive and conscientious, but many others represented vested interests from various theoretical, practical, and policy-making fields who criticized the New Curriculum Reform for the sake of maintaining their own vested interests. In 2008, China marked the thirtieth anniversary of "the Reform and Open Policy" (1978–2008), and the government endorsed "keeping on reforming and opening." That means China will support continuing liberalization and internationalization. Because the New Curriculum Reform fully embodies this direction, the government decided to continue it. In 2011, the revised edition of curriculum standards of compulsory education (1–9 grade) was issued. The New Curriculum Reform has entered its second decade. The ultimate aim is educational democracy based on the valuable experience of 100 years' curriculum reform.

The 2001 Curriculum Reform echoes the 1922 Curriculum Reform beautifully. Educational democracy, personal development, life education, and the decentralization of curriculum management are among the commonalities. These two curriculum reforms are the great two-century efforts of Chinese progressive educators to realize educational and social democracy in China. The 2011 Curriculum Reform is the first curriculum reform in the People's Republic of China and second one since the twentieth century. The 2011 Curriculum Reform is not only deeply influencing Chinese educational practice, but also reconstructing Chinese educational science. It has greatly promoted the development of curriculum studies in China.

## The Fast Development of Curriculum Studies

Because of the intensifying need for curriculum reform due to the urgent call for the reconstruction of educational science and the increase in freedom in Chinese society, Chinese curriculum studies has entered its springtime. Compared with other branches of educational science, the field of curriculum studies has been developing the most dramatically. Many universities established departments of Curriculum and Instruction, and nurtured thousands of doctors and masters of curriculum studies. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of academic papers and books on curriculum studies were published in China. These can be categorized into four primary research areas: (1) research on curriculum reform, (2) understanding curriculum based on Chinese wisdom traditions, (3) research on foreign curriculum theories, and (4) research on synoptic texts.

*Curriculum Reform*: Scholarship on curriculum reform has become an important area in the field of curriculum studies. According to the

statistics from China Knowledge Internet (www.cnki.net), during 2000–2012, 36,166 papers on curriculum reform were published in China! Meanwhile, hundreds of books were published. The research scope includes theoretical foundations as well as a variety of concrete themes. For the former, the most important event is "Wang-Zhong Debate" and the most influential books are *For Chinese People's Rejuvenation and Every Student's Development: Interpretations of The Guidelines for Curriculum Reform of Basic Education* (Zhong, Cui, and Zhang 2001) and *Toward New Curriculum: Having Dialogue with Curriculum Implementers* (M. Zhu 2002). These two books have been widely read by researchers, policy makers, and schoolteachers. For the latter, the following themes were systematically explored: project-based learning (H. Zhang and Li 2004); integrated curriculum of practical activities (H. Zhang 2007; H. Zhang and An 2008); school-based curriculum development (Y. Xu 2003; Y. Xu 2009; Wu 2002; Cui 2000); curriculum implementation (Ma 2001), and qualitative curriculum evaluation (Y. Li 2002).

In the process of exploring the New Curriculum Reform, the most important and influential academic event was the "Wang-Zhong Debate." In September 2004, Professor Wang Cesan from BNU published "A Critical Reflection on the Thought of 'Despising Knowledge' in Chinese Basic Education" in the *Peking University Education Review* (C. Wang 2004). One month later, Professor Zhong Qiquan and Dr. You Baohua issued a rejoinder entitled "The Mouldy Cheese: Thoughts on Reading 'A Critical Reflection on the Thought of "Despising Knowledge"'" in *Global Education* (Zhong and You 2004). What quickly became the famous "Wang-Zhong Debate" was now under way. In 2005, Professor Zhong Qiquan published "Reconceptualization and Curriculum Innovation in China: Dialogue with the Author of 'A Critical Reflection on the Thought of Despising Knowledge'" in *Peking University Education Review* (Zhong 2005), which extended and refined the points in the paper "The Mouldy Cheese." In April, 2006, Wang Cesan published "The Debate on the 'Direction' of Curriculum Reform" in *Journal of Educational Studies* (C. Wang 2006). Five months later, Zhong Qiquan published "What are the Social Responsibilities of Curriculum Persons" in *Global Education* (Zhong 2006). These papers formed the first round of this great debate. From 2008 on, the "Wang-Zhong Debate" entered a second round. In July 2008, Wang Cesan published "The New Curriculum Ideas," "Reconceptualization," and "Learning from Kairov's Pedagogy" in *Curriculum, Teaching Materials and Methods.* In January 2009, Zhong Qiquan published "Critique of Kairov's Pedagogy: Also Commenting on 'Complex of Kairov's Pedagogy'" in *Global Education* (Zhong 2009). If the first stage of "Wang-Zhong Debate" focused on the New Curriculum

Reform *per se* and the related views of curriculum and teaching, the second stage was extended to the reconceptualization of educational studies in China.

Accompanying the dialogue between Professors Zhong and Wang, there have been hundreds of papers published on these topics and at least ten academic educational journals have been involved. These papers and journals can be divided into two "camps," one supporting Professor Zhong, the other supporting Professor Wang. The participators include professors, masters and doctoral students, educational researchers, and many schoolteachers. The "Wang-Zhong Debate" is the most important and largest-scale academic dialogue in the Chinese field of education for the past 30 years.

On the surface, the "Wang-Zhong Debate" demonstrates different views on curriculum reform. In essence, it concerns the necessity of reconceptualizing the Chinese curriculum field and reconstructing Chinese educational practice. According to Zhong, because Chinese educational science has been tightly controlled by the ghost of Kairov's pedagogy, it is in urgent need of reconceptualization. The concepts of knowledge, curriculum, learning, teaching, and classroom culture need to be reconceptualized (Zhong 2005). Meanwhile, Chinese educational practice needs to be revised, no longer from "education to tests" (*Ying-shi Jiao-yu*) but from elitism to "quality education" (*Su-zhi Jiao-yu*) for all, in order to promote every student's individual development and every teacher's professional development (Zhong and You 2004; Zhong 2006). As the most famous and notable curriculum scholar, Professor Zhong confidentially predicted,

> Chinese educational thought and the practice of educational reform declare the end of the dominant role of Kairov's pedagogy. That's inevitable and no one can rescue it. The social responsibilities of reconceptualization have historically been laid on the shoulders of young and middle-aged curriculum scholars. That's also inevitable no matter who tries to stop it. I believe that the big wave of curriculum reform will eventually break through all kinds of barriers from "education to tests" and create the new visions of Chinese curriculum innovations in the new century! (Zhong 2006, 22).

Professor Wang is the main advocate of Kairov's pedagogy and one of the creators of the "special epistemology of instruction." In the 1980s, to address the more and more passive position of students in educational process, he made what is now a famous proposition: "Teachers are dominators and students are subjects" (C. Wang 1985, 33). In the circle of Kairov's pedagogy, Professor Wang first raised the point to acknowledge students'

subject roles and to emancipate students' subjectivities. He has made historical contributions to the Chinese educational field. But because he firmly maintains the standpoint of Kairov's pedagogy and teachers' dominant roles, his contributions must be judged as very limited. After 2004, he became the main representative of traditionalism in the Chinese curriculum field. First, Professor Wang believes in the "universalized theories" and "basic rules" of modern schooling. He argued that Kairov's pedagogy, Johann F. Herbart's pedagogy, and John Amos Comenius's pedagogy "embody and include the universalized theories of modern education. Because they carry forward the aim and continuously reveal the basic rules of modern schooling, they have laid on the keystones for the theory of modern schooling and formed the traditions of modern pedagogy" (C. Wang 2008, 14). Meanwhile, Wang asserts that history has proved that J. J. Rousseau's educational thought, John Dewey's pragmatist theory of education, postmodern theory of curriculum, and the current "new curriculum ideas" have failed or will fail soon (17–20). The key point here is that Wang believes in universally applicable rules of education and curriculum, which fully expresses technical rationality or rationalism. Second, based on technical rationality, Professor Wang has emphasized key ideas in his theory of curriculum and instruction: (1) the essence of curriculum is readymade knowledge (C. Wang 2004, 15–16); (2) the lecture-based method is the most important element in instruction (C. Wang 1985, 129; C. Wang 2004, 16–19); and (3) all learning is receptive learning (C. Wang 2004, 18). Obviously, these ideas are thoroughly opposite to the New Curriculum Reform. That's why Professor Wang fiercely criticizes the "new curriculum ideas" and the curriculum reform.

The New Curriculum Reform is not only a great effort to reconstruct educational practice in China, it also provides the opportunity to reconceptualize the Chinese curriculum field. The aim of the reconceptualization is to go beyond Kairov's pedagogy and its Chinese version in the "special epistemology of instruction." I think that ten years of effort has achieved a great deal. The "Wang-Zhong Debate" is a milestone in the reconceptualization of the Chinese curriculum field. I absolutely disagree with Professor Wang's ideas, but I deeply respect his spirit and conduct in carrying on these curriculum dialogues. To have complicated conversations on curriculum and curriculum studies is the fundamental way to promote the development of the field.

*Understanding Curriculum based on Chinese Wisdom Traditions*: In China, there are three main wisdom traditions: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Confucianism is a moral metaphysics; Taoism is the metaphysics of Nature; and Buddhism is the wisdom of nonbeing (H. Zhang and Zhong 2003). According to the statistics from China Knowledge

Internet (www.cnki.net), in 2000–2012, 3,606 papers on Confucianism and 258 papers on Taoism were published in the Chinese curriculum field. Meanwhile, dozens of books were published on Chinese curriculum wisdom traditions.

Regarding the Confucian theory of curriculum, a great variety of themes have been explored: the Confucian vision of curriculum (H. Zhang 2008c); lived experience curriculum (H. Zhang 2001); the virtue of teaching (W. Liu 2009; W. Liu 2011); Confucius's conception of teaching (Y. Wang 2003); the educational thought of Mencius (famous Confucian during Pre-Qin dynasty) (J. Yu 2010); the curriculum thought of Zhu Xi (famous Confucian in Song dynasty) (S. Zhao 2009); postmodern perspective on Confucian thought of curriculum (Fan 2011); Confucian perspectives on the teacher-student relationship (Wen 2011); and so on.

Concerning the Taoist theory of curriculum, the following themes have been studied: Taoist views of naturalist education (Q. Yang 2001); Taoist traditions of teaching (Q. Yang 2002; Q. Yang 2010); Laozi's educational thought (W. Chen 2011); Zhuangzi's teaching thought (D. Xu 2003; Tan 2006); comparative study of Zhuangzi and J. J. Rousseau's educational thoughts (W. Wang 2006); and the Taoist perspective on curriculum reform (B. Li and Jin 2005).

The Chinese curriculum field is a domain of wisdom, not a world of techniques. When the paradigm of curriculum research shifted from "curriculum development" to "understanding curriculum" (W. F. Pinar et al. 1995; W. F. Pinar 2000), the wisdom traditions in each country or region were released and acknowledged as necessary to understand curriculum. China has rich wisdom traditions of more than 2,500 years. All of them are valuable intellectual resources for curriculum research. I believe that, based on the deep understanding of Chinese wisdom traditions along with broad international horizons, Chinese curriculum scholars will (re)construct unique curriculum theories with Chinese characteristics.

*Foreign Curriculum Theories*: Because China is becoming more and more open and liberal, and because the New Curriculum Reform has adopted an international horizon, China has entered a golden age of studying foreign curriculum theories. Since 2000, hundreds of foreign curriculum books have been translated, published, and widely read in China. Among them, William E. Doll's *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum* (Doll 1993), Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman's *Understanding Curriculum* (1995), Max van Manen's *The Tact of Teaching* (Manen 1991) and *Researching Lived Experience* (Manen 1997), Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1968, Manabu Sato's *Curriculum and Teachers* (Sato 2003), David G. Smith's *Pedagon* (Smith 1999), and Michael Fullan's *Change Forces*

(Fullan 1993) are among the most influential foreign curriculum books in China (Gong and Bai 2006; Gong 2009).

Meanwhile, many foreign curriculum theories have deeply absorbed the interests of Chinese curriculum scholars and schoolteachers and been systematically studied by them. The research papers on foreign curriculum theories have mushroomed in the past decade. From China Knowledge Internet (www.cnki.net), we can find that, during 2000–2012, a number of papers have been published—Postmodern curriculum theory: 1,940 papers; Constructivism: 2,952 papers; Multiple intelligence theory: 2,000 papers; Narrative inquiry and autobiography: 1,717 papers; Phenomenological curriculum theory: 273 papers; Hermeneutical curriculum theory: 194 papers; Critical curriculum theory: 214 papers; Feminist curriculum theory: 669 papers; and Multicultural curriculum theory: 1,274 papers. From the data above, we can, in some sense, glimpse the abundance of Chinese curriculum studies in recent years.

As Chinese curriculum scholars, we have not only introduced foreign curriculum theories. We have also tried our best to use these theories to broaden our horizons and solve our own theoretical and practical problems. For example, when we laid the theoretical foundations for the New Curriculum Reform, we fully absorbed the pertinent elements of postmodern curriculum theory, constructivism, and multiple intelligence theory (Zhong, Cui, and Zhang 2001). We contributed our unique understanding to foreign curriculum theories based on our own culture (H. Zhang, Shi, and Ma 2000). We try to create "Chinese" postmodern curriculum theory (W. Zhang 1999; X. Wang 2003), "Chinese" phenomenological curriculum theory (Ning 2011; H. Liu 2009), and "Chinese" autobiography and narrative inquiry (Y. Chen 2006; L. Liu 2011).

The curriculum field today is becoming more and more international and interdependent. For any country, it is a prerequisite to study curriculum theories from other countries or regions for the healthy development of its own field. In China, research on foreign curriculum theories is not only beneficial for the internationalization of Chinese curriculum theory and practice, but such research is also helpful for curriculum scholars working to break away the control of mainstream ideology. Therefore, this study is a necessity and an organic part of the reconceptualization of the curriculum field in China.

*Synoptic Texts*: "Synoptic textbooks have played an influential role in the advancement of U.S. curriculum studies," Pinar (2006, 1) observes. This is also the case in China. During the past decade, dozens of synoptic texts on curriculum studies were published and widely read by curriculum scholars and schoolteachers. In 2005, Professor Zhong Qiquan's seminal textbook *Modern Curriculum Theory* (Zhong 2005) was revised and republished.

The new edition presented the development of the new curriculum studies and fully embodied the practical needs of curriculum reform. In 2000, Zhang Hua published his textbook *The Theory of Curriculum and Teaching* (H. Zhang 2000), which elaborated the idea of the integrity of curriculum and teaching. Along with Professor Shi Liangfang's *Curriculum Theory: Foundations, Principles, and Problems of Curriculum* (L. Shi 1996), these three texts are among the most influential curriculum books in China today (Gong and Bai 2006; Gong 2009). These have advanced the development of Chinese curriculum studies.

## The Future of Chinese Curriculum Studies

In reviewing China's curriculum studies and curriculum reform in the past 90 years, I arrive at the following conclusions: First, in order to promote the development of curriculum studies, curriculum reform, and Chinese culture and society, we should adopt the attitude of "interactive pluralism." That means that we should be open to every trend of thought in society, and at the same time, create conditions to carry on "complicated conversations" among them. Our history has proven and will continue to prove that when liberalism, radicalism, and conservatism interact in harmony with each other, China meets a golden age of the development of culture and society, including curriculum studies and curriculum reform.

Second, the emphasis on intellectual history and wisdom traditions is not only the feature of Chinese curriculum field. It is also a necessity for formulating Chinese curriculum studies in its true meaning. History is the past that is alive today. Tradition is an organic element of contemporary society. Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, among many others, are full of potential for Chinese scholars to gain unique curriculum understanding. The great and fruitful efforts made in the movement of education democracy in the first part of twentieth century are the eternal foundation of contemporary and future Chinese curriculum studies and curriculum reform.

Third, Chinese curriculum persons (curriculum scholars, schoolteachers, and curriculum policy makers) should be open to curriculum theories from other countries or regions. On one hand, we should carefully choose and translate foreign curriculum books into Chinese. On the other hand, we should carefully study them based on our own culture and "sinicize" them as much as possible. Today's China should whole-heartedly welcome Western culture and other cultures as ancient China welcomed Buddhism from the Han dynasty to the Tang dynasty. Today's Chinese

curriculum scholars should carefully translate foreign curriculum books as the famous Buddhist monk Tang Xuanzang[5] translated Buddhist classics 1,400 years ago. Meanwhile, we should make foreign curriculum theories as Chinese as possible, just as Tang Xuanzang did. We need not worry about losing the nationality of Chinese culture. On the contrary, the more international, the more national. When Chinese curriculum scholars have (re)constructed "Chinese" postmodernism, "Chinese" constructivism, "Chinese" phenomenology, "Chinese" autobiography, "Chinese" critical theory, and so on, it not only symbolizes the maturity of Chinese curriculum studies, but also means that China can contribute its curriculum wisdom to the world.

Fourth, Chinese curriculum scholars should develop practical consciousness and focus on practical problems. The field of curriculum studies is both theoretical and practical. We should realize that not only scholars can create curriculum theories, school teachers too are qualified to create theories during their everyday life, but in different ways. We should also realize that not only schoolteachers can solve practical problems, curriculum scholars are also creating curriculum practices, if in different ways. Only curriculum scholars hear the voice of school children and their teachers and learn to listen to them, to cooperate with them. Then the theories they have created and are creating can be full of lived and generative dynamics. These conclusions imply the brilliant future of Chinese curriculum studies!

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## Notes

1. Qing dynasty (1636–1911) is the last feudalistic dynasty in China.
2. During the period of May Fourth Movement, people intimately and humouredly renamed "democracy" as *De-Xian-Sheng* (Mr. Democracy) and "science" as *Sai-Xian-Sheng* (Mr. Science) in order to show their welcoming feelings.
3. Xiangzhuang is a local village in the city of Nanjing.
4. The Movement of Rural Education is a famous movement initiated by the Confucian Liang Shuming in 1930s.
5. Tang Xuanzang (602–644/664), the most famous Buddhist monk in Tang dynasty and greatest translator of Buddhist classics in China.

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# Chapter 2

# From Follower to Creator
## The School as a Reform Subject

*Chen Yuting*

I began my primary education in 1978, the year China started to open itself to the outside world. I was an English teacher at a junior high school in a coal mining village in Shandong Province for eight years. Afterward I returned to university to study for my master's and doctor's degree. After I received my PhD, I took up a position in an educational research institute in Tianjin.[1] From my experiences as student, teacher, and parent, I examine the school as a subject of reform, as a "reform subject" in China's educational reform.

Reflecting on the history of basic education in China over the last 30 years, Ye Lan pointed out that schools' autonomy has never existed. Only when schools have the right to autonomy, Ye (2009) argues, can they act consciously as a reform subject. Only then can authentic reform occur; only then can wisdom be cultivated. Researchers have failed to focus on schools as wholes in transformation, so we lack comprehensive studies of schools' inner everyday life, their key problems (as they identify them), and society's system of support for them.

In recent years, I have conducted case studies on several schools that have successfully engaged in school-based reform. My fundamental conclusion from these studies is that those schools in China that have successfully undergone reform have encouraged their teachers and students to shift from the position of "followers" to that of "creators."

## Education in Tianjin since 1949

By 1985 the destructive effects of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 had been cleared, and the Ministry of Education undertook an educational reform that was of far-reaching significance. It reported the decisions of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) concerning the reform of education: "To reform the management system, to strengthen macro-management and at the same time to implement streamline administration and institute decentralization so that to expand schools' right autonomy."[2] In accordance with the central government's decision, Tianjin began to implement a principle to manage schools based on their locations. In inner-city districts there were two administrative institutions, but in the rural areas there were three. Each level of institutions had its own responsibility for the development of basic education. The style of leadership of educational administrations changed from direct management of schools to indirect management that emphasized consultation, plan, evaluation, information survey, research, and so on (Wang 2006).

Schools received relative autonomy in the educational reform decreed in 1985. Some schools took advantage of this relative autonomy and began to explore new teaching methods. Soon after, experimental classes and schools began to appear, among them classes on electrification, English (now introduced in elementary schools), nature study (also introduced in the lower grades), music, and other teaching experiments.

Since 1986, the city of Tianjin has worked hard on compulsory education. In 1994, together with Beijing and Shanghai, Tianjin raised new and higher standards for basic education and at the same time worked hard on improving senior high schools. In 1999, Tianjin intensified its focus on the senior high school. Its entrance rate was 86 percent, much higher than the average rate of 48 percent for the whole country.

In December 1980, China reestablished the concept of key school, establishing in each school district one or several key schools. Competition was keen. Conceptions of "quality education" became popularized. By the late 1980s, in order to alleviate stress on students, Tianjin proposed that teachers should learn to engage in several relationships with greater wisdom: learning in class and after class, balancing outcomes with process, reconsidering "teaching" and "learning."

In 1997, Tianjin Bureau of Education formulated the "Tianjin Evaluation Scheme for Levels of Development of Primary Students' Quality." In 1999, Tianjin released "Views on Intensifying Educational Reform and Advancing Quality Education" in which were identified eight measures to

guide schools. In 1998, Tianjin implemented its "Six Optimizing Project": optimizing educational ideas, enrollment systems, teaching process, the school environment, evaluation system, and the ranks of teachers (Cheng 1999). Schools actively tried new routes to practice "quality education." For example, the Yueyang Street Elementary School tried its school-based education reform called "Three Combinations" (Wei and Zhong 1999). The phrase refers to combining the three influential forces of school, family, and society, integrating them to help students to receive fuller education. Yueyang Street Elementary School has implemented a "Three Combination" education model since 1979.

At the commencement of the twenty-first century, Tianjin undertook measures to support the balanced development of all schools. The city conducted a series of projects, among them "The Standardization of Schools in Compulsory Education," "The Construction of Model Senior High Schools," "The Project of Modernization of Schools in Compulsory Education," and "The Construction of Funding Guarantee Mechanisms for Compulsory Education." During 2001–2005, Tianjin committed to the standardization of schools in basic education. In the rural areas, Tianjin invested 1,185,000,000 RMB to build 422 standardized schools and allowed 660 schools to disappear. Within the city, Tianjin spent 408,000,000 RMB to transform 268 schools; some 120 shabby schools disappeared. From 1999 to 2007, Tianjin carried out a project of the construction of model senior schools and constructed 60 new senior high schools.

Since 2006, Tianjin has encouraged the balanced development of all schools, evaluating all teachers and classrooms. Tianjin also started to shut down the "school within school" and the "class within class" by means of which teachers charged students extra fees. In retrospect, since the 1990s the development of education in China has been characterized by rapid expansion. Much of the educational reform has been focused on education funds. Earning extra money from students and parents received tacit permission. New schools (affiliated with the mother school) and special classes (associated with extant classes) were created, which required extra money. In these new schools (within schools) and classes (within classes), students had access to the best teachers. These were very attractive to those parents who could afford them. This development ensured greater inequality. So, in the beginning of the new millennium, the government began to close these "schools within schools" and "classes within classes." This cleaning-up of corruption was completed in 2008. That year saw 90 percent of primary students able to go to public junior high schools free of charge. Public school students constituted no fewer than 85 percent of all students.[3]

As mentioned, in August 2007 Tianjin undertook a "project of modernization of schools in compulsory education" in order to advance urban-rural integration and development. In it, there were 100 evaluation indicators associated with school management, teaching, learning, and "quality education" generally. All basic education schools were required to meet the evaluation expectations. This project upgraded Tianjin's compulsory education schools' standards of both hardware and software. And at the end of 2008, Tianjin conducted what it called the "Future-Educator Cultivation Project" with the goal to recruit to the city respected principals and teachers from all over China, as well as to recruit "core teachers in rural areas." Tianjin's municipal government spent 20,000,000 RMB on the two projects. These projects received considerable attention throughout China.

Since the turn of the century, one of the most important issues in China may be the new curriculum reform. In 2001, the Ministry of Education published the "Outline of Curriculum Reform in Primary and Secondary Schools," initiating the most important curriculum reform since the Cultural Revolution. This reform is taking place during a period of great transition, as China moves from being a country with a great population to a great country with sophisticated human resources. As Qiquan Zhong (Zhong 2009) has observed, there are four key points. First, the curriculum is regarded not only as a "systematic organization of knowledge," but it also functions to cultivate students' personalities so that they can have a solid foundation for future development. Second, it emphasizes character education; third, it emphasizes a humanistic quality, especially mother-tongue teaching; fourth, it established a course called comprehensive practical activities to enable students to learn interdisciplinarity. Such a logical thread ran through the whole reform process: the core of educational reform is curriculum reform; the core of curriculum is classroom-teaching reform; the core of classroom-teaching reform involves the professional development of teachers.

In 2001, Ministry of Education determined that Dagang, a district in Tianjin, would serve as an experimental area to enact curriculum reform in primary schools. In 2002, two other districts—Heping and Hexi—joined the curriculum reform. And in 2003, all the primary schools in China joined the curriculum reform. In 2002, once again Dagang led the effort to reform curriculum, this time in junior high schools. In 2005, all junior high schools joined the new curriculum reform. Senior high schools joined in 2006.

On July 29, 2010, the Chinese government issued the Plan that provided the map for educational reform during the decade to come. The Plan's strategy was expressed in simple language, as a "stick-to human-orientation,

entirely implemented quality education." Cultivating local and schools' creativities were granted an important position in the Plan.

Due the dual impact of the centralized education system and the planned economy, schools in China had enjoyed little autonomy for decades. Charged to follow the instructions of their superior departments in the ministry disallowed the freedom to construct more school-based curriculum addressed to students' needs. But the government realized the consequences of a unified education management system all across China. It initiated curriculum reform. From 2001 on, local government and schools' autonomy and creativities have been emphasized. Because this reform was carried out in a top-down manner, there have been schools that used their freedom to maintain status quo. They did not inspire teachers' and students' creativity. But there are principals and teachers who realized the necessity of transforming China's education. These administrators and teachers tried their best to implement the reform in creative ways, mobilizing teachers' initiatives that focus on students' overall development and not just test scores. Although the number of these schools is not high, they are sparks of fire that indicate the direction of China's education reform. My research interest has been in conducting case studies on these schools.

## Turning Away from Following

Some schools are turning away from following state policies to becoming active creators as subjects of reform. These schools provide exemplary cases to observe the Chinese educational reform.

*The new curriculum reform empowers schools to develop school-based curriculum*. The curriculum reform established three administrative levels of curriculum management: national curriculum, local curriculum, and school-based curriculum. It is the first time that local educational authorities and schools were empowered by government to develop curriculum since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. Local schools were charged with transforming the historic—since 1949—situation of too much centralization. But many local schools felt no joy, they experienced only pressure when they received the reform. They had had no experience in curriculum development. Teachers had received no pre- or in-service training. Some schools, especially senior high schools, paid little attention to the opportunities of a school-based curriculum, not only due to inexperience but also because creativity is not an examination topic compulsory for entrance to universities.

Students also suffered from inexperience. Now there is a new form of curriculum called research-based study, emphasizing students' cooperation and problem-solving. It is different from project-based learning in that it is a subject that is officially stated in the curriculum documents and every school should include it in the syllabus. Take the New Curriculum Plan for senior high schools for example: research-based study is a compulsory subject, valued at 15 credits. It must be provided all through the three senior high-school years. "The purpose of a research-based subject is to pay attention to problems in social, economic, scientific and technological life, so as to develop students' abilities to solve problems and experience synthetically and to cultivate their humanistic spirit and scientific literacy through the process of self-exploration and practice."[4] All senior high schools in Tianjin joined the New Curriculum Reform in September 2006.[5]

During the past four years, I have been observing and providing guidance to Tianjin schools. I have also presided over a research project called a "Study of the Working Mechanisms of Research-Based Study in Schools." During the research process, I found "research-based study" still had a long way to go. Even though it is valued at 15 credits, because it is not a compulsory exam subject on the entrance examination to universities, most schools and teachers did not take it seriously. And those schools that did, faced difficulties: (1) many teachers lack experience in guiding students effectively during the students' study process, as it is an open subject without textbooks; (2) schools lack research knowledge; (3) students are studying for examinations, so they don't have enough time to do research-based study; and so on.

There are schools that took the opportunity to develop a school-based curriculum. In this process they helped teachers to develop curriculum, to transform their ideas of teaching, and to develop learning resources inside and outside schools. The role of the principal is central. Without an outstanding principal, it is almost impossible to transform the examination-based educational practice. Schools are the smallest but the most important unit in the practice of new curriculum reform. An outstanding principal is often a prerequisite to empowering the school faculty to develop curriculum. The necessary and sufficient condition for curriculum reform is whether schools have the willingness and capacity to change.

## Administrative Regulation and School Development

Because examination-driven education pressures students, in recent years more and more provinces have established administrative regulations to

force schools to not give too much pressure to students. For example, schools can no longer force students to study after school; students must have a one-hour exercise time each day during school time; schools can no longer force students to study on weekends and holidays. The first province to establish such strict regulations was Shandong, a coastal province in east China. The January 2008 actions taken by Shandong were called the "New Quality Education Policy." Other provinces followed. These regulations have not only ended certain practices, they have also encouraged others, such as more school-based professional training and more cooperative preparation for teaching among teachers who teach the same subject in a same grade,[6] and improving teachers' classroom teaching efficiency.

There have been principals who have force all teachers to use a certain kind of teaching model that they believed improved students' test scores. In recent years, certain junior and senior high schools have become famous for their "teaching models." Some even sell tickets to teachers who come from other provinces to observe these models in action. Pressuring teachers to use the models the principal prefers betrays the 2001 curriculum reform. It suppresses teachers' subjectivity and their academic freedom. That is nothing new. Until 2001, schools as the subject of educational reform did not exist. So with energy and emotion now flowing, perhaps it is inevitable that they may run without clear direction or even in wrong directions. In my view, action with some mistakes is preferable to staying passive. Actions and dialogues are the necessary ways of educational reform. Recently, researchers, principals, and teachers have been debating in newspapers and journals the matter of "teaching models."

## The Call for a Diversity of Schools Stimulates Innovation

Senior high schools are the ones seriously affected by examination-driven education. In 2009, the Ministry of Education called for senior high schools across China to become distinctive and diverse. On March 23–24, 2009, The China National Institute of Educational Research and Ameson Education and Culture of Exchange Foundation held a conference entitled "Sino-U.S. Seminar on Diversity among High Schools." About 400 experts and principals from the United States and China expressed views on the definition of quality schools and the schooling models that work. This conference started principals thinking about making their schools diverse. In the same year, National Office for Education Sciences Planning selected

100 research projects from the senior high schools all around China promising to facilitate the diversification of schools. The Plan published in 2010 stated that China must "facilitate senior high schools to develop diversely" during the next ten years. The provinces got busy working out their blueprints to encourage their high schools to develop diversely.

These administrative expectations for the diversity of schools succeeded in encouraging schools to become diverse. For me, I have mixed feelings toward top-down directed educational reform. On the one hand, if there is no governmental intervention, many schools will choose to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, schools may take part in the reform only superficially or continue management in a top-town manner. Those principals and teachers who responded to the call of reform actively and tried their best to obtain inspiration from theories and colleagues all over the world are, in my view, the vanguards of reform. Their schools or classrooms demonstrate vitality. In those schools we see movement among teachers and students from followers to creators.

## Community Engagement, In-Service Education

Schools must cooperate with their local communities in order to expand the space for activity in the newly developed school-based and research-based curriculum. In 2009, Tianjin started a project called the "Characteristic School" that would involve half of all high schools during the next future years. It started with three schools that quickly undertook cooperation with universities and research institutes. These schools employed scientists to serve as students' research advisors; they persuaded several university departments to open their labs to high school students. They established activity-based study in nearby mountain areas rich in research materials like soil and plants, encouraging research into local environment protection, air quality, the development of rural areas, and so on. Students travel to these areas with their advisors during certain times in the semester. Such cooperation emerged only after the new curriculum reform.

New curriculum reform is a multidimensional action that involves educational ideas, curriculum development, new textbooks, and so on. Reform asks schools to strengthen teachers' school-based in-service education that forefronts a concept of teacher-as-researcher. In order to support the new curriculum reform, and to help teachers survive its ambitious objectives, schools established centers for teachers' in-service learning. Schools undertook to guide teachers to conduct research while teaching. In order to arouse teachers' enthusiasm to reform their classroom teaching and

exchange reform experiences, some schools held events called "same lesson, different teaching" in which teachers from several schools in different provinces participated. These events provided opportunities for teachers to observe different ways of designing lessons and teaching. Other schools held events called "same lesson, same teaching plan" in which teachers participated, teaching the same lesson using the same teaching plan designed by all the members teaching the same grade. Teachers and experts observe how teaching method affects teaching efficiency. The participants become learning communities where they can learn from each other. These two kinds of in-service education events can promote the quality and depth of teachers' practice-based in-service learning.

## Internationalization and Localization

Well-funded schools have established sisterhood relationships with schools abroad. Some even have such relationships with schools from all the five continents. Students can go abroad to study short-term courses during vacations. In recent years, there have been many opportunities to study abroad, including an excellent teacher-training program conducted by the Education Bureau. There are also educational institutions that organize teachers to work abroad for a short term. These international experiences touch principals and teachers intuitively, providing them experience they have not had before.

New curriculum reform has occurred in the context of internationalization, so it is not only travel abroad that affects local practice, even Western curriculum research does. Internationalization is at the same time a process of localization, as ideas originating outside China become reconfigured locally within the context of curriculum reform. For schools, both localization and modernization of schools mean that they must look for distinctive and appropriate ways to express their own reform.

In China, schools are affected by the internationalization of curriculum research from several layers. First, on the level of theory, curriculum researchers are enhancing comparative study by making available to teachers a series of translated books, dissertations, and papers. Especially after the New Curriculum Reform started in 2001, Western theories of constructivism, instructional design, curriculum development, and learning styles have been among the most popular imported theories. There is an important series of translated books on new theory published by China Educational Science Publishing House. More than 30 books written by the most famous curriculum researchers from several countries have been

translated by the noted curriculum researchers domestically. This series of books themselves are symbols of multicultural and complicated curriculum discourse. These translated works broaden the horizons of Chinese curriculum theory and provide new research possibilities for curriculum scholars working in China.

These translated works became known to teachers in several ways. Several titles were listed as compulsory reading by pre- or in-service education or master's degree programs; others were stocked in school libraries. Although some teachers feel these theoretical works are difficult to read, there are others—principals and teachers—who read them avidly. These educators are leaders who keep learning and reflecting and who, in subjective terms, surpass themselves. They also register—in professional diaries—what they think and do in everyday practice. That said, many principals and teachers need to read more curriculum theory. Usually they pay more attention to test-preparation than they do to new theories of curriculum. In an effort to correct this situation, many schools hold a Reading Festival every year to encourage teachers to read more so as to enhance their professional development.

The truth is that the new curriculum reform is, in some measure, the result of internationalization. In the process of formulating the draft of the "Outline of Curriculum Reform in Primary and Secondary Schools" (2001) and the "Plan for Curriculum Reform in Senior Secondary Schools (Experimental)" (2003), experts traveled to Europe and North America to study reform in various countries. The intention was to bring home to China the best of curriculum ideas and practices internationally. In fact, the series of new curriculum reform texts was formulated by curriculum scholars, government officials, principals, and teachers in the context of internationalization. They were formed to integrate the international and the local. "Quality education," one principal told me, "means practicing the most outstanding of our traditions." What he is articulating represents the modernization of the outstanding traditions. A complicated conversation is underway when our own educational tradition, international curriculum theory, and practice converge.

Almost every school has supported a series of school-based experiences in support of curriculum reform, but it the problem is how to express these experiences. The discourses used by scholars and in the curriculum reform texts are far from the language principals and teachers use. In recent years, encouraged by some newspapers and magazines, principals and teachers are trying to create a kind of "practical discourse" that is expressive of their thinking about theory and practice in the everyday life of their school. This is the practical expression of the internationalization of curriculum theory in China.

During the decade of curriculum reform, information technologies have proliferated, influencing the ways schools organize teachers' in-service training and learning. First, schools shifted from their former patterns of reliance on teachers' self-learning and self-thinking to supporting teachers' learning in communities. Typical learning communities in schools include lesson-planning groups, research project groups, and groups associated with the same expert teacher workshop. Teachers belonging to lesson planning groups often teach the same subject in the same grade and discuss the curriculum criterion, including textbooks, the students, and teaching resources. Research project groups are temporary teams whose members gather to study a particular problem in a registered research project. Members divide research tasks among themselves as they discuss and share their views. Some schools establish expert teacher workshops and ask young teachers to act as apprentices so that expert teachers can help them in everyday practice, just like the master-apprentice relation in traditional handicrafts.

Second, schools reinforce teachers' learning from each other. Many schools support an "expert–young teachers pairing program," with the purpose of providing young teachers more practical help. Other schools establish a "school-based excellent-teacher training program," inviting advisors from universities and research institutes to work with would-be excellent teachers. Third, schools construct net-based learning platforms for teachers, putting online not only teaching materials but also creating chat-rooms wherein teachers can share material, exchange information, and discuss the problems they face. Schools ask teachers to subscribe to blogs on their school homepage so that teachers can learn from each other more conveniently.

These changes in teachers' in-service leaning influence their ways of working and thinking, and they are one of the most important signs that schools have become a reform subject.

## On Schools Becoming a Reform Subject

Now China is entering a new era, seeking to deepen its curriculum reform. The Plan points that "raising quality" is now the "core task" in curriculum reform. "Scientific" criteria of "quality" must be established that position the "overall development of students" and result in "more talented persons" that can address the "needs of the society." These are the "fundamental criteria" by means of which we can "measure" the "quality" of education. "Education must meet the needs of the development of our country and

society, follow the law of education and the law of the talent development, deepen the reform of instruction, innovate and explore more kinds of culture. Our 'ultimate aim' is to support the emergence of human talent that can succeed in the future."[7] To realize these aims, the schools must become a reform subject.

Since 1949, China has been a centralized country. Education has been centralized, too. For decades there had been only one teaching syllabus and one textbook for the whole country. Entrance examinations to higher education were standardized countrywide. It was impossible for schools to become a subject, to cultivate the subjectivity of administration, faculty, and students. Though schools tried many ways to subjectivate the state curriculum with agency and innovation, it was not easy to change the usual practice. In many schools, principals and teachers' lack of consciousness of themselves as subjects was the main obstruction in the process of educational reform.

"There is only one criterion by which to evaluate an educational reform in China," Bingqi Xiong asserted. "Has the power of government increased, stayed the same, or decreased? If government increases its power, then the so-called reform must be anti-reform; if government maintains its power as before, then it is fake-reform; If government decreases its power, then it is real reform" (Xiong 2010).

More autonomy for schools is the precondition for schools becoming reform subjects. Without the agency and creativity that subjectivity can allow, more reform plans will not work. Empowerment of schools is the no. 1 issue. It's true that many principals and teachers dislike autonomy; they are accustomed to obedience. Doing what they are told is easy. Government should select those teachers who have educational ideals and feel the reform spirit to be principals. Principals should emphasize in-service learning, institutional improvement, and expert supervision.

As a reform subject, schools should pay close attention to actual teachers and students. During 30 years of educational reform in China, abstract concepts occur in the reform documents: "All for Students!" "Quality Education," "Overall Development of Students," "Cultivate Students' Subjectivity," and so on. But after all these years of reform, the corresponding reality of these slogans is insufficiently strong. In fact, some schools are worse, as economic development becomes an obsession and functionality and instrumentalism rule the day. These "abstract concepts" are yet to be made "concrete." For Pinar, the concrete is endangered by the abstract: "The idea becomes larger than the living species who conceive it. The idea becomes more real than the concrete; it becomes a source for explanation and, worse, action. As ideas become more "real" than concrete human beings, the capacity to sacrifice the latter for sake

of the former is more possible and likely" (Pinar 1994, 104). We say we work for "all for our children" but we disregard the differences among children and provide them uniform education, just like the production line in factories.

In recent years, there have been some schools that are famous for their school-based reform, but some of their reform measures provide teachers and students more freedom, more opportunities to fulfill their potential abilities or listen to their inner voice. Many teachers have less freedom than before in those schools where the principals drew up the reform plan, sometimes even fixing exact teaching steps for teachers to take, requiring all teachers to follow a certain "teaching model." In such schools there is still no soil for the vitality and creativity of teachers' subjectivity. What the schools should pay close attention to is the concrete teachers and students on their own campus. All of the reform measures must concern the healthy development of each individual. Only when this happens, can we say that schools have gained reform subjectivity.

For me as a full-time educational researcher, I have been doing my best to help schools realize their potential and make schools a better place for children. I have several strategies. First, I keep close contact with principals and teachers; I have more than 50 principals' e-mail addresses and telephone numbers. I invited several schools to join a project of mine that called "Reading Together with Yuting." ("Yuting" is my given name.) Each school chose one teacher who loves reading to be the "liaison person" for his/her school. I add their e-mail addresses to the list of contacts in my e-mail box. Every "liaison person" adds their colleagues' e-mail addresses to the list of contacts in their own e-mail box. Regularly I send notices of curriculum theories, school stories, and case studies, accompanied by short messages. The teachers who serve as liaison send these to the teachers in his/her own school, inviting them to read the materials that seem relevant to them, at their convenience. Second, I collect conference information and solicit contributions from educational magazines and newspapers, which I also distribute to my colleagues in the schools. Keeping close contact with the outside world is very important for schools to develop their own subjectivity. Third, I devote myself to conducting case studies in schools and at the same time help them devise professional development programs appropriate to their own situations. I eschew any indoctrination of so-called right or efficient methods or strategies. I believe that researchers should stand behind and alongside teachers if they are to help them. We should not stand in the center to "teach" the teachers. Schools are the most complicated places to work in the world. We must all collaborate with each other so as to surpass ourselves in the process of becoming creators, not followers.

## NOTES

1. Tianjin is a municipality directly under the Central Government, which is only 30 minutes to Beijing by high-speed railway, with an area of 11,000 sq km. In 2010, its population researched 12,280,000.
2. In 1985, the Central Committee of the Communist Party's decision concerning educational reform was published. It decreed nine-year compulsory education and transferred the responsibility and management of compulsory schooling to local governments.
3. Tianjin Educational Committee (2007). Working Report on Promoting the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education. Unpublished internal report.
4. Ministry of Education (2003). Plan for Curriculum Reform in Senior Secondary Schools (Experimental).
5. New Curriculum Reform in senior high schools started in 2004 and four provinces joined the reform in that year.
6. There are many schools with more than 5,000 students in China; there are often more than 30 teachers who teach the same subject in a same grade.
7. The Central Committee of the Communist Party, the State Council. Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020).

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# Chapter 3

# The Question of the Textbook in Curriculum Reform

## An Autobiographical Account

*Kang Changyun*

I was born in 1967 in the city of Qufu in Shandong province, the hometown of Confucius, the great philosopher and educator in China. This was the year the Cultural Revolution broke out; I spent my elementary school in the turbulence. In 1978, my last year in the elementary school, Deng Xiaoping regained political power and China reregulated the education system, resuming the national higher education entrance examination. Like most Chinese students, I strived to board the examination train when it was my turn to sit. Unfortunately, I did not do well enough in the first year to go to a good university. I summoned the courage to re-sit the exam in the second year. I was admitted into the early childhood education program in Shandong Normal University. This exam had rewritten the life track of my ancestors who, generation after generation, had been peasants, surviving through farming. I departed from the countryside where Confucius had resided and adventured to the capital city of the province, then to Beijing, the capital of China. The frustration I felt at the university entrance exam left me with a permanent psychic scar. Even till I was middle-aged, I was frequently haunted and awakened by the nightmare of the exam.

Upon graduation, I was assigned to a vocational college in a rural area in Jinan, Shandong province where I taught in early childhood education programs. Two years later, I passed the national graduate examination and

was admitted into the early childhood education master's program in the Department of Education in BNU, specializing in early childhood psychology. After graduation, I was retained by the university and worked at the BNU Press. By chance I started to engage in the state level K–12 (kindergarten to grade 12) education curriculum reform program and thus began a momentous association with curriculum.

## Early Childhood Education Reform: 1990–2000

Textbook publishing was my entrance to curriculum studies. During my tenure at BNU Press, I was soon promoted to be the director of early childhood education editorial office in charge of the publication of children's educational theory picture books and kindergarten textbooks. In 1990 when I started my master's program, China had just embarked on a state-level reform of early childhood education. The year 1989 saw the issuing of Early Childhood Guideline by the MoE with the theme of that reform as "for the development of every child." Throughout my three-year master's program, I followed my supervisors in participating in the research work for this program, which was led by Madam Zhu Muju, then the director of early childhood education department at K–12 education division in the MoE. The curriculum belief—"for the development of every child"—was thus imprinted in my mind.

During this period I chaired the publication of "Kindergarten Objectives and Curricular Activity," a series of textbooks edited by Madam Wang Yueyuan, a famous early childhood educator and practitioner in China. The series was prepared for all levels of kindergarten classes (in China, there are three levels of classes in kindergarten, divided by age groups), and included teacher resource books as well as student textbooks. The principle of this textbook series is evident in its title: on one hand; it places great emphasis on educational objectives but on the other, it draws on activities to replace the primacy of knowledge in the curriculum. It was indeed a remarkable breakthrough in terms of the curriculum system that had been organized by the transmission of knowledge. It applied Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, requiring distinctive educational objectives for each activity. This series of textbooks was widely adopted in Beijing and in a large number of provinces and cities in China. Once I happened to turn on a TV and caught on screen an image of a boy running after a passing car in a vast grass field in Inner Mongolia. A book dropped from his schoolbag accidentally, and that book was the textbook I had published!

In Western countries, the textbook may not be commonplace in kindergarten. In China, however, although officials and theorists say they oppose using textbooks and teaching material with very young children, the fact is that most kindergartens still depend on textbooks. This "textbook-dependent curriculum culture" is a feature of the Chinese school curriculum. In China, the textbook has played a crucial role in the process of curriculum implementation.

## Textbook Vortex: 1997–2005

In 1997 I was promoted as assistant president of BNU Press, holding at the same time the directorship of K–12 education department. My responsibilities expanded from kindergarten textbooks to include the entire primary and secondary school curriculum. At that time, the main project in the K–12 education editorial office was the publication of the 5+4 textbook. My work also involved two related issues: the school and the textbook administration systems, which are two representative topics in the management of curriculum centralization in China.

Chinese centralized management structure is evident its schooling system. Ever since 1949, China had been copying from former Soviet Union its 6+3 schooling system: six years of primary school plus three years of middle school (which comprise the compulsory education period), followed by three years of high school and then higher education. Since the 1980s, a number of scholars, represented by BNU, started to question this rigid centralized schooling system. The 5+4 schooling system was born at that time, that is, to shorten the primary school by one year and move that to the secondary school. Scholars argued that this system would increase students spending time in the secondary school so that they can better adjust to adolescent school life, and hence to enhance the education quality. Another principle rationale for this schooling restructure was that 5+4 system would help deal with the adolescent behavior caused by prematurity of the children. The pros and cons of these two schooling system are in dispute in the academic field even today. However, such an academic issue was institutionalized by certain leaders and had been changed constantly by different leaders. Since the 1980s, the 5+4 system has been implemented and has achieved favorable outcomes in some areas. Very soon, though, merely due to several high-level leaders' preference for standardization, it was reverted to the 6+3 system. I experienced in person the protest from those administrators and teachers whose schools were organized according to the 5+4 schooling system. I also tried to keep the 5+4 textbook version

issued by BNU Press. Looking back now, the fight in front of tremendous political power and individual will was like a flash. It would disappear into history eventually.

Another unique issue was textbook management. Since the foundation of People's Republic of China in 1949, textbook management followed a "one syllabus, one textbook" model, that is, the syllabus was issued by the MoE, with textbooks being compiled and published by PEP, a subordinate organization to the MoE. This single series of textbooks was adopted in all K–12 schools in China. Such a model of textbook adoption represented a rigid centralized curriculum management system, which had lasted since 1949. The early 1980s saw the transition from "one syllabus, one textbook" to "one syllabus, many textbooks" under the direct regulation of the MoE. Textbooks designed for the 5+4 schooling system at BNU Press was one of the eight series supervised by the state.

Starting in 1997, I was responsible for the publication of 5+4 schooling textbooks at BNU Press. At that time China was starting a new round of curriculum reform. The 5+4 system textbooks had been compiled according to a previous national syllabus; as a result, it was time for this set of textbooks to be phased out. One of my mandates at the press was to protect its economic interests; therefore I organized a revision of the textbooks to reflect the principle of the curriculum reform at the same time. In order to increase the usage of these textbooks, I led my team traveling around the experimental districts to offer a variety of supporting workshops. This experience enriched me with the firsthand knowledge on curriculum implementation at the grassroot level.

Curriculum in China is structured by its textbook-orientation, which is evident through successive curriculum reforms. China proclaims that before this current round, there had been seven curriculum reform programs ever since the founding of the nation. Referenced above, the basic model—"one syllabus, one textbook"—meant that every round of reform would start with a new set of teaching syllabi released by the MoE, followed by the publication of new textbooks published by the PEP. What happened next was textbook training all over China. While MoE represents the dominant authority, PEP represents enormous economic interests. In China, all levels of examinations are textbook-orientated; as a result, PEP constitutes the largest academic authority. The eighth curriculum reform program—launched in 1999—is aimed at overcoming such a textbook-orientated curriculum reform model and to implement a systematic reform compassing curriculum goals, structures, content, implementation, assessment, and management. Despite this scale of ambition, what reform could not escape was powerful political and economic interests.

In China, textbook management occurs according to a series of steps, including textbook compiling, inspection, and selection, all under the direct control and administration of the MoE. In China, curriculum reform implies the replacement of textbooks. The eighth curriculum reform had led to the reallocation of all types of investments and benefits, in particular the economic. Proposing "multiple syllabi, multiple textbooks" meant the encouragement of multiple presses to publish textbooks according to the curriculum standards newly issued by the state. Idealist reformers were determined to break the monopoly of the PEP. An organization affiliated directly with the MoE, the PEP is a powerful interest group with its administrators assigned by the MoE. It has a complicated association with the MoE. From the outset, the leadership team of China's eighth reform had become embedded in this political vortex of powerful political and economic interests. Against ever greater difficulty, reformers have been struggling to achieve their aims.

Even in the early stages of the eighth reform, noteworthy achievements were made in terms of the diversification of textbooks. The key leader of this round of reform, Madam Zhu is also in charge of textbooks at the MoE. She took a clear stand supporting the diversification of textbooks. Against tremendous pressure, Madam Zhu encouraged several textbook editorial teams to apply for the textbook compiling projects and encouraged multiple presses to participate in the publication of textbooks. After a short period of ten years, there are now at least two sets of textbooks on every subject now available to local schools. In some subjects, there are dozens of options. In 2001 when 38 state-level curriculum reform experimental districts were allowed to select their own textbooks—the first time in Chinese history—textbooks published by the PEP lost their dominance. In addition to the PEP, over a dozen textbook presses began to publish textbooks for primary and secondary schools. BNU Press (where I was still working) succeeded remarkably in this competition. Making good use of the opportunity created by the participation of BNU experts in the reform, the BNU Press published a series of high-quality textbooks and became an even more influential textbook publishing institution in China.

The diversification of textbooks was a substantial step forward in this round of curriculum reform in China. At the same time, certain interest groups, in defending their own economic interests, resorted to political and economic measures, putting pressure on the reform and even personally abusing reformers. As an advocate of the diversification of textbooks, I chaired the compilation of a whole set of new K–12 textbooks, which became a most representative textbook series embodying the principle and spirit of the reform. As a result, I was under pressure from various sources. In 2005, I made a final decision to leave this place of chaos and went

abroad to advance my learning and research. My departure did not affect the continuing battle over textbook adoption. Ten years later, the diversification of textbooks in China, even though at one point a fact, is now facing an even more difficult situation. Previous progress is now in jeopardy, as the publication rights of ideology-dominated subjects like Chinese language, arts, history, and politics is now under the jurisdiction of the central government. Textbooks for these subjects are to be compiled by the state and published exclusively by the PEP.

I had been drawn into the vortex of the textbook controversy, experiencing in person the textbook-focused curriculum reform battlefield, caught among dominant political authorities, economic interests, and rather weak academic influence. In this vortex, I was passionate and confident, but I faced failure. The cause of textbook diversification, for which many educators have been striving, though successful at one point, was finally defeated by enormous economic and political interests. I cannot help but feel frustrated and place my hopes on the future.

## Experiencing the Eighth National K–12 Education Curriculum Reform Program: 1999–2005

The year 1999 saw my active participation in the eighth K–12 education curriculum reform program since the founding of People's Republic of China, still ongoing in China. This program is also regarded as the most radical and systematic reform in history.

At the state level, the reform program was directly chaired by Madam Zhu Muju, the vice chief of the Department of K–12 Education in the Ministry of Education, China. A graduate in BNU's early childhood education program, Madam Zhu is a scholar and government official who had studied in Japan. A reformer, she is passionate and ambitious, especially important because like other reforms worldwide, the early stages of China's eighth reform were particularly difficult. First, there were limited human resources and financial support from the MoE at the state level. Even more challenging, the principle of the reform was not fully acknowledged by the administrators at the MoE nor "on the ground." Against all odds, with her extraordinary courage, foresight, and sagacity Madam Zhu devoted herself to reform.

I have been a supporter of Madam Zhu ever since 1990 when I was studying for my master's degree in early childhood psychology, a specialization that enabled me to appreciate the key principle of the reform: "for

the development of every student." I had devoted myself to reform and had become a key member of the leadership team at the initial stage. As a result of my efforts, the BNU Press provided substantial support to the reform. While working closely with the leadership team, my understanding of curriculum, and in particular my understanding of curriculum reform—its complexity and the interplay of various factors—was tremendously refined. At the same time, my knowledge of curriculum studies became deeply integrated with my colleagues on the team.

During this period, I was able to experience in person every detail of the state-level curriculum reform, together with its hardships. At this early stage, it was a time for the formulation of reform guidelines. The national curriculum reform leadership team, under the direct guidance of Madam Zhu, was charged with the drafting of K–12 Education Curriculum Guidelines and the design of a new curriculum structure. Dozens of curriculum standardization groups—comprised of experts nationwide—were assembled according to grades and subjects. To encourage extensive participation in the curriculum decision-making process, consultations and opinion-collecting meetings were convened for all sectors of society, with progress reports sent regularly to the minister and to related departments in the central government. The nationwide curriculum experiment program was launched. In the MoE, only three office staff were in charge of a project that involved more than 200 million primary and secondary school students all over China. My responsibility was to lead my team to undertake various organizing, coordinating, and logistic supporting events and projects. Between 1999 and 2003 I was so heavily involved in these events and projects that I worked round the clock. My little son was hardly able to see his father and his memory of me is that "my Dad's job was to attend meetings."

With the advancement of the reform, Madam Zhu initiated the establishment of university curriculum research centers and set up in succession a dozen of such centers at normal universities all over China. These centers functioned as bridges between government and academic communities. As a bellwether in China's teacher education domain, and thanks as well to my proactive advocacy and communication efforts, at BNU was established the very first Research Center for Basic Education Curriculum, jointly supported by the Basic Education Department in the MoE and BNU. I was appointed the founder and executive deputy director of this center. Soon, the center became the headquarters of this round of nationwide curriculum reform program. The BNU center played a leading role among all the research centers in China.

On one occasion I had to report in person to Vice-Premier Li Lanqing, then the executive Vice-Premier of the State Council in charge of

education. As one of the four-member team from BNU, together with the other three BNU colleagues (one of whom was Yuan Guiren, the current minister of Education and at that time the president of BNU), I reported to the vice-premier on the challenges of the reform, in particular focusing on the relationship between the curriculum and the textbook. I argued that the curriculum and the textbook are concepts at two different levels as the textbook is subordinated to the curriculum. (At that time, several high-level Chinese officials equated reform with improving the quality of textbooks.) I argued that one version of textbooks must not be allowed to comprise the curriculum. It was heartening to witness the change of central government's policy on curriculum reform after our report. One week later, Vice-Premier Li called an important meeting to adjust the direction of the reform. As a result, a series of new curriculum policies were announced, signaling a new stage of the reform, including the encouragement of a variety of textbooks supported by the idea that the textbook is part of the curriculum, not equivalent to the curriculum.

As the executive deputy director of the BNU Curriculum Center, I shouldered two main responsibilities. One was to organize the participation of BNU scholars, by way of applying for reform projects, to the state curriculum reform program. For the first time in the history of BNU, the research center I led became a platform for hundreds of BNU faculty members to participate in the state-level curriculum reform program. My second responsibility, in the capacity as the executive deputy director of the editorial committee, was to develop a set of new textbooks compiled mainly by BNU scholars, textbooks representing the spirit of this round of reform. A group of young faculty members at BNU enjoyed the opportunity to become textbook authors and editors. They came of academic age engaged in the practice of reform.

My own academic specialization has no direct association with curriculum. Drawing upon my background in early childhood education and psychology, I recast my identity as an administrator and undertook a number of research projects, including curriculum development and implementation, including a study of textbook development, a study of the joint collaboration among universities, local government, and the schools on the implementation of curriculum reform. These research projects and practices provided me important opportunities to reflect upon curriculum issues. In recent years, three of my edited or coedited studies of curriculum reform have been published, contributing to the establishment of my identity in the curriculum field.

Individuals are indeed the key factors in the reform. At the very initial stage, the national reform was a platform for a small number of people. I was among them. To some extent, these individuals were striving to shape

the fate of the reform. No matter who the reformer is, however, and no matter what position he or she holds, the reformer is playing a political role. (This may be more obvious in China than elsewhere.) The reformer becomes subordinated to a certain interest group. As a result, the fate of individual reformers is subject to the final results of the rivalry among various interest groups.

Scholars have been playing far more significant roles in this reform than in any previous one. Suspending work on their own specialized projects, a large number of outstanding scholars have devoted themselves fully to this reform. Their efforts and collective wisdom have enabled the enactment of this reform; in return, this reform has transformed their lives and destinies. Professor Liu Jian is one most remarkable representative. Formerly an outstanding young faculty member in mathematics education at BNU, Liu Jian was a key organizer and designer of this reform program ever since the very early stages. He has devoted himself passionately to reform for more than ten years, a most valuable period of time for any scholars. However, he is not appropriately acknowledged by either the academic field or the political circle. Representing the interests of the curriculum and student development, scholars eventually become victims of powerful political and economic interests. Curriculum reform should not be regarded as a normal state of curriculum development; instead, it is a special period of time of radical and dynamic transformation. It is during reform that the pulsating movements of the curriculum can be more easily grasped.

I am now far from the reform battle that is still ongoing, although I maintain continuous communication with those colleagues still at the front, colleagues with whom I had worked closely in those days. A decade of reform has changed my life and destiny. That decade has left me with a lifelong opportunity for reflection and deliberation over the character of curriculum and its reform.

## Life Across Cultures (since 2005)

Like in other countries, the curriculum reform in China too faced incredible difficulties. Madam Zhu Muju anticipated these, once commenting that "curriculum reform is a cause of grave-digging." In 2005, under various pressures, I decided to leave the frontier of the reform and made an academic visit to the University of British Columbia in Canada (UBC). This half-a-year visit changed my life, disconnecting me from the reform still underway. In Vancouver I transformed myself from an editor, practitioner. and reformer to a cross-cultural researcher.

During my visit in Canada I met Professor Gaalen Erickson, the former director of UBC's Center for the Study of Teacher Education. Professor Erickson showed great interest in curriculum reform in China, and he shared with me his long-term research experience in teacher education, emphasizing the improvement of curriculum practice by way of collaborative action research among teachers. I was so refreshed that I decided to experiment this model in China. Although the Chinese government had advocated three-level administrative action and school-based teacher research, given the ambitious scale of reform and the limited professional support accorded it, what followed was often simplified, top-down administrative implementation. In practice, then, curriculum reform in China was centralized and top-down, driven by government authority. In 2005, our—Professor Erickson and my—research project was launched at the Beijing Zhongguancun No.4 Primary School. From there it rapidly expanded through a teacher professional development network to hundreds of schools all over China, including Inner Mongolia and Shandong Province. The name of this Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded research project was "LDC in China" (Learning and Development Community in China).

Professor Erickson's insight regarding teachers' professional development has taught me a great deal. My collaboration with him altered the course of my research. From 2006 through the present moment, I have been engaged in the collaborative research with teachers focused on teachers' learning and development communities. My research agenda has refocused from state-level curriculum reform to the domain of grassroot teachers, investigating a model of curriculum implementation rooted in teachers' collaborative action research. Its aim is to promote teachers' professional development that strengthens the independence of the curriculum. I realized that the breakthrough of curriculum reform will occur at the teacher and school level. No matter how brilliant a blueprint, reform relies on teachers' appreciation of it, their needs and acceptance of reform, all of these issues to be articulated through teachers' understanding and professional development. Reform is a time-intensive process that cannot be accomplished by individuals' passion or through short-time "revolutionary" transformation, which admittedly are, at some special stage, crucial. China has an excellent teacher corps, a profession full of pioneering spirit and devotion to duty.

Our research has revealed that there are no fundamental distinctions between Chinese students and their Western counterparts. National difference lies in our models of teachers' professional development, as well as in Chinese school and curriculum cultures. We are making ongoing

efforts through extensive and profound cross-culture exchanges to explore these differences as well as the similarities between Chinese and Western teachers and students. We realize that such cross-cultural understanding is the most effective way to promote teachers' professional development, and as a result, lasting improvements of curriculum practices.

An optimum curriculum reform should be a balanced combination between the "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches. The challenge confronting curriculum development in China is how to emphasize the participation of grassroot practitioners in reform, establishing decentralized curriculum decision-making practices while drawing upon the advantages provided by China's unique centralized administration system. This dual focus frames our encouragement of government *and* teacher-practitioners to become the true implementers and seeders of the curriculum development.

## Back to Tradition with an Open Mind

As noted, I had been born during the early period of the Cultural Revolution in the city of Qufu, the hometown of Confucius. I was awarded the PhD degree in education from BNU. I had not gained much knowledge of Chinese traditional culture from either my K–12 or higher education. When I left my motherland and began to introduce myself and my country to the colleagues aboard, I started to trace my own identity. Gradually I realized that whether one's homeland is small or large, a nation or a culture, one needs to maintain its distinctiveness and tradition so as to exemplify the value of existence. Although China lags behind in terms of economic and scientific development, my country proudly possesses long-established cultural traditions and a cultural wealth that matches favorably with any other country. Not only has Chinese traditional thought, associated with Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, exerted significant impact on education in the past, they are still influencing curriculum studies in China. They will continue to do so in the future.

From a historic point of view, the research work of any one individual is a connecting node in the intellectual history of that discipline, which carries on from the past and links forward with the future. Chinese contemporary curriculum theorists are currently engaged in national rejuvenation and radical social transformation. They are charged with the historic mission of this era. Situated at an unprecedented time for the Chinese nation, and working in the context of internationalization, curriculum studies specialists are in an exceptional position to draw on the Golden Mean wisdom

in Chinese tradition, to accent differences, and to seek their own space for Chinese identity.

While we emphasize Chinese distinctiveness, in an era of internationalization and globalization it is also important to advance, with an open mind, dialogue between the Chinese and Western culture in our respective curriculum studies fields. Chinese curriculum studies should be rooted deeply in our own long-established culture and education tradition. At the same time it should endeavor to seek a balance between national tradition and culture and the Western experience. Curriculum studies in China remains in an early stage, but scholars should become actively involved in the exchange and collaboration with Western counterparts, with the aim of establishing a genuine, equal, open, sustainable dialogue. Chinese scholars have the proven capability to engage in dialogue worldwide and to reflect critically on the curriculum development experience and lessons learned from the West. We will not blindly follow or uncritically accept. In response to the sophisticated curriculum practice evident in China today, Chinese scholars, working from their own rich Chinese cultural traditions, should establish a field of curriculum studies that is marked by its Chinese distinctiveness and excellence.

# Chapter 4

# Curriculum Research in China

*Cong Lixin*

Besides curriculum theorists, many other people, such as officials in governmental departments, editors of publishing houses, and parents of students, always study curriculum according to their own demands. However, these shall not be included in this paper. Curriculum research introduces the curriculum as a special topic and labors to make a systematic and theoretical description. That is what we theorists do.

"China's Curriculum Research" appears to be an explicit research topic. Before writing this essay, however, I felt quite hesitant: Is this essay related to actual curriculum research or to studies conducted under special curriculum theories? All research needs clear coordinates of time and space. Therefore, I will set aside the differences implied by the above two questions and include "China" and "Curriculum Research" in the same coordinate system. Then I will sort them.

## Intellectual Histories

China is a country with a time-honored civilization. During thousands of years, ancient China formed its traditional education and accumulated rich experience, including curriculum research. However, until the end of nineteenth century, China had not formed a distinctive domain of education theory, let alone its own curriculum theory.

Modern Chinese education, like modern society, started from the end of nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. From that period,

Western educational ideas and theories began to spread in China. The earliest modern education that I can reference is *Pedagogy* from the Japanese Sensaburo Tatibana; in 1901, the famous Chinese scholar Wang Guowei translated this book. Later a large number of Western education works were introduced into China from Japan. In the process of translation, China's researchers altered the original works according to the national conditions at that time. While the original works all related to Japan's education, translators were able to introduce many Western ideas, among them the pedagogy of Herbart (Song 2001). At this stage, Chinese curriculum theory was not separable from Western pedagogy. The curriculum theory that Chinese scholars accepted was mainly from European pedagogy.

During this historical period, the main theme of China's curriculum practice was modernization. The imperial examination system had just been abolished, whereas study of the traditional classics still existed. For example, from famous "Presented School Regulation" to the curriculum of "Confucius Worship and Classics Reading" during the reign of Yuan Shikai, these curricula could keep pace with the Western scientific curriculum.

From 1920s to the late 1940s, Dewey's theories were translated and introduced to China, which had social repercussions. In Dewey's pedagogic theory, curriculum content became the important part. He proposed to implement "activity curriculum" in his experimental school, almost in a diametrically opposite way to Herbart. However, Dewey attracted widespread interest in China.

Other curriculum theories were also successively introduced to China. The first monograph of the United States, an important book from Bobbitt (*Curriculum Development*) was translated by Xiong Zirong and published by the Commercial Press in 1943. During this period, the power and influence of curriculum research in China were relatively weak, but scholars always paid attention to the academic developments of developed countries. The education departments in some universities and normal colleges established curriculum studies programs for undergraduate students, while some Chinese scholars began to write the curriculum monographs, such as Cheng Xiangfan's *Introduction to the Curriculum Theory of Primary School* (Shanghai Commercial Press, 1923), Xiong Zirong's *Principles of Curriculum Development* (Shanghai Commercial Press, 1934), Sheng Langxi's *Evolution of Primary School Curriculum* (Zhonghua Book Company, 1934), Li Lianfang's *Comprehensive Curriculum Theory of Primary Grades in Primary School* (Zhonghua Book Company, 1934), Wang Fenggang's *Curriculum Theory* (Wuhan University Press, 1939), among others. From 1840 to 1948, Chinese scholars compiled over 35 monographs on curriculum topics, while several hundred papers were produced (Qu 1998).

Modernization was the main task of curriculum practice. At this time, there were diverse attempts to change curriculum practice. Prominent among them were the efforts of some in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou, and other cities to introduce Dewey's "activity curriculum." Several schools offered experimental and elective courses. Political turmoil and war undermined efforts to improve education. Curriculum theory and practice developed slowly.

After New China was founded in 1949, the whole society began to learn from the Soviet Union: political development, economic development, culture, and education. Within the circle of education, China studied the "pedagogy" whose chief advocate was Soviet educator Kaiipob, taking this theory as guidance for educational practice. This theory is a complete system, composed of four parts: basic theory of education, moral education, teaching methodology, and management. The core part is teaching methodology, while the relevant curriculum research is developed on the basis of teaching methodology and planning. The textbook was the curriculum.

The main features of this curriculum theory were: (1) curriculum is targeted as teaching content; (2) curriculum research shows a strong tendency toward simplification. The simplification of Kaiipob's pedagogy forefronts the subject curriculum; (3) the curriculum is controlled centrally. Consequently, only a small number of people are concerned about the curriculum research.

After New China was founded, the import of curriculum research (except from the Soviet Union) was stopped abruptly, so the connection to Western educational research was severed. However, during this period, Western curriculum theories entered their most important stage. Unfortunately China had no chance to consider these ideas. Beginning in the late 1950s, however, concepts of pedagogy from the Soviet Union began to be criticized in China. During the Cultural Revolution, pedagogy was completely denied due to political causes rather than for academic reasons.

After New China was founded, basic education was greatly developed. But owing to frequent political matters, the process of development was not smooth. Moreover, the "modernization" target was seldom mentioned, while independence of curriculum itself was not respected. Curriculum was reduced to a political tool.

## Present Circumstances

In the 1980s, as China implemented the policy of reform and opening up, just like other fields, the education field eagerly learned from Western

developed countries. Regarding curriculum research, theorists translated many Western curriculum theories: for example, PEP in 1983 translated and published the "Curriculum Research Series" (1983), and in 1994, People's Education Press translated and published Tyler's famous work *The Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (half a century later than the United States). Moreover, Liaoning, Shaanxi and other publishing houses also published a large number of translated curriculum theory books.

During this period, curriculum research conducted by Chinese scholars began to appear. The early works were Chen Xia's *Curriculum Theory* (People's Education Press, 1989), Liao Zhexun's *Curriculum Studies* (Central China Normal University Press, 1991), Shi Liangfang's *Curriculum Theory* (Education Science Press, 1996). Several normal universities in China established "Curriculum Theory," "Curriculum Design," "Curriculum Evaluation," and other courses for undergraduate and graduate students.

In 1997, China's largest educational research academic community, the Chinese Education Society, established the Professional Committee for Curriculum Theory, replacing the previous Professional Committee for Teaching Methodology.

During this period, China's basic education developed rapidly under the banner of the "modernization of education." The curriculum broke through its long-term but single curriculum structure. Several civil reforms (involving cooperation between primary or secondary schools and universities) started to introduce "elective curriculum," "activity curriculum," and "comprehensive curriculum." Government began to implement several reforms that institutionalized these experiments. The most influential curriculum reform was decreed in 2001 by the Ministry of Education, absorbing the earlier civil reforms. This curriculum reform advanced notions of school-based curriculum, research study (activity curriculum), the elective course system, and so on. There were many disputes concerning the theoretical basis and implementation of this reform, but I will not discuss those here.

## The Future

I believe that curriculum theory and research will enjoy a broad and prosperous development in China. However, if we hope curriculum theory and research enjoys a sound development and long-term academic life in China, we face the following questions.

First we must solve the question of pedagogy. Several scholars who have studied the educational theory divide it into two major factions, that is, "Germanic" and "Anglo" educational science. "Germanic" pedagogy was emerged early, whereas the word "pedagogia" had already appeared in ancient Greece. While "pedagogia" entered Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, German, and Russian tradition, it didn't enter English. The first pedagogic work is *On Pedagogy* from the German Immanuel Kant. Herbart can be regarded as the first educational theorist. It could be said that from Herbart came the educational aspiration of logical thinking, generated to analyze and understand issues of education as well as trends. After time, logical thinking and rational analysis structured the education research tradition. This tradition experienced three major decompositions: independence of teaching methodology, the emergence of experimental pedagogy, and appearance of several "secondary subjects." (Huang 2007)

"Anglo" educational science is different. "Educational science" was firstly used in English-speaking countries (with Anglo-Saxon language cultural traditions). The main feature of this tradition is that educational science and other subjects influence each other. It seems an open system and has produced a large number of practical educational theories. Because the ancient Greek sense of "pedagogia" was absent in the Anglo tradition, the word "pedagogy" was reserved for theoretical research. If we want to express this in English, we have to use the word "theory." However, it is important to note that "educational theory" in English is a theory of educational practice. Regarding their differences, it can be said that the German tradition explores principles, whereas the Anglo (including American) traditions studies the individual case. While the Germans analyze phenomena from principles, the Americans deduce theory from phenomenon (Huang 2007).

Perhaps this conclusion seems to some to be too simple, but in many translated works we can see the above distinction. The "Germanic" tradition has been strong and has enjoyed a long life. It forms the basic views and principles of education in China, here known as the Principles of Pedagogy. In China, questions of teaching methodology and many other secondary subjects are the subsidiary subjects under the umbrella term "Pedagogy."

Do we follow these traditions and regard them as the curriculum theory of secondary subjects under the framework of "Pedagogy"? Or do we invoke the Anglo-American model, thereby ignoring the long-term pedagogic principles of China, substituting for them Anglo-American partial curriculum theories as educational science? We cannot avoid this question as we face the future of China's curriculum research.

In my opinion, the existing principles of pedagogy in China constitute the foundation for the future development of curriculum theory. Pedagogy always seeks ultimate questions and their answers, questions and answers that are central to curriculum research. If curriculum and teaching methodology deviate from the principles of pedagogy, they will be vague and superficial. Regarding the differences between "Germanic" and "Anglo" educational theories, some have suggested that education and curriculum are two levels of concepts, upper and lower. Education is the upper concept, whereas the curriculum is lower concept. But some curriculum researchers seem to raise the curriculum theory to the same status as the educational theory, or even replace it with curriculum theory (Huang 2008). Even if the long-established principles of pedagogy have nothing good to offer, it is still impossible for us to completely cut off their relations with curriculum research, because in China this pedagogy has already penetrated into the core of the entire society.

Second, how will we coordinate the relationship between curriculum and teaching methodology? If the New China had not been established, China's curriculum research would be different now. Both "Germanic" pedagogy and "Anglo" educational science are foreign goods imported into China. After New China was founded, politics was "one-sided," so the learning and instruction were also "one-sided." China followed the pedagogy of the Soviet Union. Although there were great differences between European pedagogy and Soviet pedagogy in their politics, they still had the same academic origin, that is, the academic tradition of "Germanic" pedagogy.

Pedagogy is the most important part of the academic tradition of education in China. It was teaching methodology that was always responsible for explaining, describing, and guiding the tasks of classroom instruction. Pedagogy had deep roots and enjoyed wide-ranging influence. Educators were familiar with pedagogy, with questions of teaching methodology. Teaching methodology formed its own unique theoretical system. Of course, it was imperfect and still needed to be developed. In the 1980s when curriculum theory reentered China, the social and educational environments were quite different from that of 1920s when it had first surfaced. Now curriculum theory had to face teaching methodology, the descendant of "Germanic" pedagogy.

Whether a discipline achieves its own independence and obtains others' recognition mainly depends on the irreplaceable nature of its research object and the significance of its research results. Pinar interviewed us concerning these questions, calling for accounts of curriculum research in China. For me, there is one question: What is the significance of the independent curriculum theories in China? In several decades, we always

take instruction theories (including the curriculum studies) to explain and guide the basic educational practice. However, the United Kingdom and the United States take curriculum theories (including the instruction studies) to undertake the same tasks. The formation and development of two disciplines are mostly subject to educational system and academic tradition of the nation. Just like while dining, Chinese people are accustomed to using chopsticks, while Westerners use knives and forks. Both methods meet the needs of dining. To cite another example, Chinese people wore robes in the past, whereas Westerners wore business suits. Both met the basic needs of clothing: covering the body, keeping warm, and meeting aesthetic needs. Perhaps the differences between curriculum and instruction theories are not important. What is important is what we should do in classrooms.

Is curriculum theory unnecessary in China? Of course not, and those who are familiar with the history of China's teaching methodology are clear about this. For a long time, although the theoretical system of teaching methodology includes the discussion of curriculum, it was still limited. There was no absolute distinction between teaching methodology and curriculum theory, but the curriculum was relatively independent. Owing to complex historical reasons, curriculum research was simple and poor. Since the 1980s, however, curriculum practice has achieved many breakthroughs, but this legacy of simple and poor research is even more significant. In recent years, many scholars appear to respond to new problems and new explorations on various curriculum researches, which receive widespread attention. These prove that both curriculum research and curriculum theory enjoy wide opportunity for growth. As long as we respect reality and observe national conditions, we will be able to open up new areas of curriculum studies, and continue to enjoy great academic achievements.

Third, how will we handle the relationship with Western curriculum theory? Due to political and historical reasons, China's social situation is different from that in Western countries. Education is no exception. In my opinion, attention to research from Western scholars is necessary, but after translation and introduction, when we carry out more in-depth discussion, how do we ascertain their significance for China? This question will become even more important as internationalization proceeds.

Since the last century, postmodernism has swept across the Western academic establishment, and the field of education has not been exempt. This ideological trend challenges the usual concepts and propositions in the field of curriculum research: reconstruction of concepts, understanding curriculum, universality of knowledge, instrumental rationality, scientism,

essence of education, and so on. These new ideas and perspectives have not only high academic value, but also strong significance for practice. These reflections are not groundless, but their profound and real social roots are the result of highly developed modernization in Western countries. As a consequence, they can cause strong repercussions and discussion in the Western world. However, the actual social conditions for postmodernism do not exist in China; there is a "time difference." Chinese society is still in the process of modernization. Modernization remains incomplete. Before the completion of that historical mission, if we lack enough consciousness, postmodern thought can ally with premodern thought, thereby obstructing China's modernization.

As relatively pure theoretical research, it is a very valuable that we study the forefront of curriculum research in developed countries. However, the exact interpretation of these theories is significant to China's education, especially when facing a variety of specific issues in practice, such as establishment of policy and specifying measures of reform. We need to carefully judge imported theories according to China's national conditions. In my personal view, if the Chinese scholars simply adopt results from Western countries, making similar judgments and criticisms of the curriculum of basic education in China, it is very inappropriate. An ancient Chinese saying is relevant here: "Making the past serve the present, making foreign things serve China." There is no exception for curriculum research.

Since the 1980s, China's basic education has experienced the popularization of compulsory education and development of secondary education. New demands of curriculum theories have emerged. For example, when China maintains a centralized system of curriculum, and continues to increase the local and school autonomy of curriculum, local curriculum and school-based curriculum appeared. In addition to the traditional curriculum, for example, there now must be research on the activity curriculum, the integrated curriculum, STS courses, and so on. While the first two may be past in the developed countries, they now have a strong presence in China. Because this presence is strong it makes urgent demands on curriculum research. Indeed, it creates an unprecedented good opportunity and condition for China's curriculum research.

We must address the demands of curriculum development in China's basic education as well as our inheritance of traditional teaching methodology, all the time absorbing the results of contemporary curriculum theory. China's curriculum theory shall form its own unique research style and theoretical system, and greet the future with an exuberant vitality.

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# Chapter 5

# Integrating Elementary Mathematics into Curriculum Studies

## A Personal Course of Study in Curriculum Studies

*Ma Yunpeng*

It has not been a long course, the undertaking that is modern curriculum studies in China. A few scholars started to pay attention to curriculum issues in the 1980s. Before then, however, curriculum was as a branch of pedagogy or instruction. In the 1980s, Chen Xia and Zhong Qiquan published works on the curriculum. They introduced different schools of curriculum thought from foreign countries but did not systemically address curriculum issues in China. The real start of scholars of curriculum studies occurred in the early 1990s. Departing from the so-called uni-syllabus, many began to pay close attention to curriculum and textbooks taught in precollegiate education reforms. Curriculum issues entered researchers' agendas.

I started my research on curriculum and pedagogy in the 1980s. Then I proceeded to the more specialized fields of curriculum theory and implementation. From late 1980s to the early twenty-first century, theory and practice in Chinese curriculum reform has received widespread attention, stimulated by new rounds of curriculum reform of precollegiate education. The reform launched in late 1990s was by far the largest and most influential curriculum movement. As a curriculum researcher, I have witnessed and participated in the reform. My experience included studying

theoretical issues, involvement in curriculum development, and experience in and study of implementation processes. Through such wide-ranging experience I was able to improve my theoretical understanding, identify and solve practical problems, communicate with teachers and scholars in various fields, enrich my comprehension of educational and curricular issues, and contribute to the theories and methods of curriculum studies in China.

## Elementary Mathematics Curriculum and Pedagogy

In 1979, I started teaching the course Elementary Mathematics Pedagogy in the Department of Education at Northeast Normal University (NENU). At the same time, I conducted research on curriculum and pedagogy in elementary mathematics. These were not easy tasks for a novice teacher who had just received a bachelor's degree in mathematics. I was not a qualified teacher. The Cultural Revolution had just concluded. Professors of elementary mathematics pedagogy were in short supply. Unable to recruit an experienced teacher with a PhD, the university had no choice but to hire me. Since then, in order to do my job, I have been studying educational theory, methods, and issues in elementary mathematics curriculum and pedagogy. Additionally, I visit elementary schools for more than two months every year, auditing courses, talking to teachers, and accumulating elementary mathematics teaching experience and case studies.

In 1984 Professors Hu Mengyu, Brenda Lansdown, and Arthur Powell held a 28-day training program on elementary mathematics and science inquiry methods. I participated in the entire program. I was impressed by their inquiry methods and the application of Cuisenaire Rods in teaching. I became one of the first researchers who practiced this learning tool (Cuisenaire Rods) in China. Starting the next year, I organized experimental studies of applications of mathematics learning tools in elementary schools in Changchun and Jilin. I also wrote and edited textbooks and published research material. In 1988, I completed my master's thesis: *An Experimental Study of Applications of "Mathematics Rods" in Elementary Mathematics Teaching*. Published in 1989, *How to Use Rods in Elementary Mathematics Teaching* enjoyed nationwide attention.

During the period (1985–1988) of my master's study (under the supervision of Professor Wu Jie) at NENU, I discerned connections between

elementary mathematics teaching and pedagogical theory. I studied curriculum issues. As there was at that time no academic discipline of curriculum studies, curriculum issues were considered part of studies of teaching content; they were subsumed within the field of pedagogical theory.

I worked as vice principal of the NENU-affiliated elementary school from 1989 to 1994. Instead of conducting academic research, administration was the core of my work. This administrative experience played an important role in my future professional course in curriculum and pedagogical studies. During those five years, I designed and organized a series of experimental studies of elementary education comprehensive reform. I worked with elementary administrators and teachers on curriculum and pedagogy issues. Administrators and teachers shared their experience with me. I achieved notable research results and accumulated rich experience in elementary curriculum, pedagogy, and teachers' professional development.

## PhD Study in Hong Kong

From 1996 to 1999, I studied for a PhD degree at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. During this period, I studied curriculum theory and research methodology. Over time, I became interested in curriculum implementation and evaluation. I was able to access the latest research findings in curriculum studies while pursuing the PhD degree. Before PhD study, I focused primarily on the subject content of elementary mathematics. Moreover, at that time very little scholarly material in English was accessible in China. As a consequence, issues in curriculum studies were barely examined. With extensive holdings in English language materials, the Chinese University of Hong Kong provided an environment very conducive to learning. With my supervisor's guidance, I gradually turned my research focus toward curriculum studies. Clearly, more systematic study of curriculum was necessary. Over time, I built solid foundations in both curriculum theory and research methodology.

### Curriculum Theory

During this period, I systematically studied books and articles of curriculum scholars who are influential, among them the works of Denis Lawton, Michael Fullan, Elliot W. Eisner, John D. McNeil, and Lee S. Shulman. I especially focused on the areas of curriculum development,

implementation, and evaluation. My interest in curriculum implementation emerged. At that time, few researchers in China were paying attention to curriculum implementation. I sensed that curriculum implementation had the potential to become a critical research area. Fullan's work on educational reform implementation, teacher participation in curriculum decision-making, and school culture as well as Shulman's elaboration of teachers' personal-practical knowledge influenced my conceptions of curriculum implementation.

Fullan's views on educational reform implementation have had significant impact on my subsequent research. Fullan proposed several working assumptions:

- Do not assume that your version of what the change should be is the one that should or could be implemented. On the contrary, assume that one of the main purposes of the process of implementation is to *exchange your reality* of what should be through interaction with implementers and others concerned.
- Assume that any significant innovation, if it is to result in change, requires individual implementers to work out their own meaning.
- Assume that conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable but also fundamental to successful change.
- Assume that people need pressure to change (even in directions that they desire), but it will be effective only under conditions that allow them to react, to form their own position, to interact with other implementers, to obtain technical assistance, and so on.
- Assume that effective change takes time.
- Do not assume that the reason for lack of implementation is outright rejection of the values embodied in the change, or hard-core resistance to all change. Assume that there are a number of possible reasons: value rejection, inadequate resources to support implementation, and insufficient time elapsed.
- Do not expect all or even most people or groups to change.
- Assume that you will need a *plan* that is based on the above assumptions and that addresses the factors known to affect implementation.
- Assume that no amount of knowledge will ever make it totally clear what action should be taken.
- Assume that changing the culture of institutions is the real agenda, not implementing single innovations. (Fullan 1991, 105–107)

Regarding curriculum evaluation, I also studied the work of D. L. Stufflebeam, Eisner, and Robert Stake. Their work laid solid foundations

for changing values in evaluation and for examining and solving practical curriculum issues through multiple evaluation methods.

## Curriculum Research Methods

Informed by graduate studies and inspired by China's curriculum reform, I decided to choose elementary mathematics curriculum implementation as my central research topic. I would employ qualitative research, in particular the case study approach. I studied qualitative research through Michael Q. Patton's *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Patton 1990) and other works. Robert E. Stake's *The Art of Case Study Research* (Stake 1995) and other works helped me design case studies, including how to distinguish between the instrumental and the intrinsic case study, how to state research questions, and how to collect and analyze research data.

Employing qualitative paradigm and case study approach, I conducted in-depth case studies in four elementary schools located in both urban and rural areas. The study investigated issues of elementary mathematics curriculum implementation. Conducting field research in each school for approximately one month, I studied 28 teachers, observed 35 classes, interviewed 58 persons, participated in group lesson planning 5 times, and reviewed school documents, teachers' lesson plans, and students' homework. I organized, categorized, and analyzed research data in accordance with curriculum implementation theories and methods. Adopting the perspective of teacher participation in curriculum decision-making, I analyzed the characteristics of elementary mathematics curriculum implementation as well as the factors influencing curriculum implementation in terms of teacher's knowledge, school culture, and teacher's beliefs. My doctoral dissertation, *Exploring Curriculum Implementation: A Case Study of Elementary Mathematics Curriculum Implementation*, became one of the earliest empirical research studies of curriculum implementation in China.

My PhD experience in the Chinese University of Hong Kong played a key role in my study of curriculum theory and in mastering curriculum research methodology. The systematic study of curriculum theories helped me generate comprehensive understanding of curriculum issues. In-depth studies of curriculum implementation helped me grasp the values, research paradigm, and important research directions in this field. I was able to learn and apply research methods as well as conduct in-depth investigations

of practical problems. This education in theory and methodology would serve me well in my later research.

## Curriculum Reform in China

In 2000, China undertook basic education curriculum reform. It was my good fortune that I could participate in the entire process of developing and implementing this curriculum reform. I first participated in the design of mathematics curriculum standards. My mathematics background and prior experience in teaching and researching mathematics curriculum and pedagogy helped me contribute to mathematics curriculum development. From October 1999 to March 2001, the committee reexamined and redesigned the mathematics curriculum through survey research, material analysis, discussion seminars, and through other forms. A new set of mathematics curriculum standards was developed. The concepts, structure, and methods embodied in the standards have drawn extensive attention and have had significant impact on the entire basic education curriculum.

Since the launching of the new curriculum reform in 2001, curriculum implementation and evaluation have received wide attention. Entrusted by the MoE, I have evaluated curriculum implementation four times since late 2001. I also have assessed high-school curriculum implementation twice. My major work in each evaluation included designing the overall evaluation plan; developing questionnaires for teachers and students; generating interview protocols for teachers, administrators, and students; taking field notes of classroom observation; analyzing data; and writing reports. What follows are general accounts of the third evaluation in 2004.

From November 22 to 26, 2004, the MoE research and evaluation team conducted the third evaluation of curriculum implementation in provincial and experimental districts. The team visited seven provinces and municipalities, especially provincial districts that had become experimental districts in 2003 and 2004. The team investigated more than 50 elementary and middle schools, audited more than 140 classes, organized more than 120 discussions (including discussions with education administrators, teaching and research staff, principals, teachers, and students), and distributed questionnaires to teachers, middle-school students, and elementary students (1,400 copies to each group).

On the one hand, the evaluation team aimed to grasp how education departments carried out their experimental work. Such work included drawing on the experience of national experimental districts, policy support for school curriculum innovation and experimentation, resource

support, professional support, teacher training, and communication with the public. On the other hand, we aimed to understand the circumstances of curriculum implementations in these schools. The circumstances included practices of school administration; teachers' instruction, and students' learning, including principals' and teachers' attitudes toward and understanding of the new curriculum reform; classroom teaching reform; students' attitudes towards the reform; and student's performance. This comprehensive evaluation employed multiple methods, including questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews, field trips, and document analysis.

The evaluation results played a major role in nation's education decision-making and in advancing school curriculum implementation. Based on the evaluation findings, the research publication—"Basic Education Curriculum Reform: Implementation Process, Characteristic Analysis, and Promotion Strategies"—was published in *Curriculum, Textbooks, and Pedagogy* (2009, No. 4). The article was reprinted in the *Xinhua Digest* (2009, No. 14). The article created a stir nationwide.

## Current Circumstances of Curriculum Studies

The field of Chinese curriculum studies has developed rapidly during the past ten years, in sharp contrast to the past few decades. With the continuous increase in number of international exchanges, this field is gradually moving toward a leading position internationally. The field of Chinese curriculum studies has exhibited the following characteristics in recent years. First, research has increased exponentially. With the progress of curriculum reform, more and more research has focused on curriculum. Taking curriculum implementation as an example, from 1990 to 2010, 451 articles with "curriculum implementation" as the theme or keyword were published in major national education journals. Of these articles, 17 percent were published ten years ago; 83 percent were published between 2001 and

**Table 5.1** Number of articles on curriculum implementation published in each year and their proportion to the total

| Year | 1990–1995 | 1996–2000 | 2001–2005 | 2006–2010 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Articles | 2 | 15 | 166 | 268 | 451 |
| Percentage | 0.44 | 3.33 | 36.81 | 59.42 | 100 |

2010 (Table 5.1). This indicates that the degree of attention on curriculum implementation has been increasing rapidly during the past ten years.

Second, the scope of curriculum research has been enlarging. Research has shifted from focusing solely on theory development to combining theory and practice. Practical problems of curriculum reform have drawn the attention of many scholars. These include curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation. More and more research is focused on issues that are closely related to practice, including school-based research, textbook design, resource development and utilization, and curriculum and pedagogy in the different academic disciplines. Meanwhile, studies of international curriculum theory and methodology are no longer only introductory. Collaborative research projects with foreign scholars as well as field research in other countries are more common.

Third, the quality of research has been improved. Multiple research methods have been applied, including both quantitative and qualitative studies. Research methods such as survey, experiment, ethnography, narrative inquiry, action research, observation, and interviews were employed in varying degrees. The publication of this research has definitely improved the overall quality of curriculum studies in China.

Fourth, researchers can be said to be associated with diverse groups. The development of research teams exhibits a trend of diversification. The number of researchers who conduct conceptual research is increasing. Curriculum research teams in universities and research institutions are expanding in size. More than a dozen universities offer PhD degrees in curriculum studies and more than a hundred universities offer masters' degrees. Many in-service teachers joined curriculum research teams.

Figure 5.1 is a summary of the 451 articles on curriculum implementation. As we can see, most studies on curriculum implementation were conducted by researchers at post-secondary and research institutions. However, 16.77 percent of researchers are elementary and middle-school teachers;

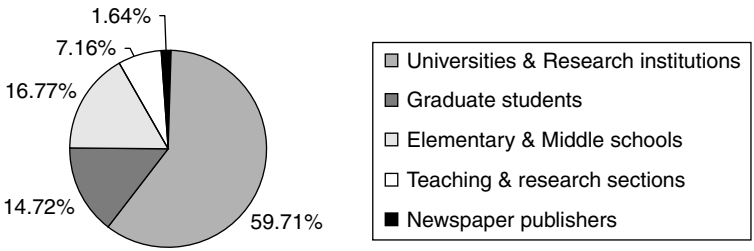


**Figure 5.1** Categories of authors of articles on curriculum implementation

14.72 percent are teaching and research staff. Together, more than 30 percent of the authors of these publications are from these two areas.

Fifth, international exchanges are increasing. Communication between Chinese research institutions and scholars and non-Chinese institutions and scholars is increasing rapidly. More and more Chinese scholars enjoy opportunities to attend major international conferences. Take the International Congress on Mathematical Education (ICME) as an example. Hundreds of Chinese scholars attended ICME-9 in Japan 2000, ICME-10 in Denmark 2004, and ICME-11 in Mexico 2008. At ICME-11, Chinese scholars held an exhibition of Chinese mathematics education, featuring the history and present development of mathematics education in China. I was a member of the exhibition team. Meanwhile, China hosts international seminars, inviting internationally renowned scholars to give lectures in China. For example, NENU has held international seminars in education every year since 2001. The themes include rural education reform, curriculum studies, teacher education, and school innovation. Supporting by the government and by the institution, many scholars and graduate students have been abroad for short-term or long-term academic study. These exchanges play a very important role in broadening the scope of and improving the quality of research in Chinese curriculum studies.

More than 30 years have passed since I first became engaged in mathematics education and curriculum studies. In retrospect, I would say my career has kept pace with Chinese Reform and the Opening Policy. It was closely related to Chinese education reform. In fact, my path was inseparable with Chinese curriculum reform. Moreover, my research was also influenced by international trends in research and reform. Every step signified an enlargement of my research interests. This is the story of one individual's career in curriculum studies. In the future, I trust that my path in curriculum studies will become even wider.

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# Chapter 6

# Growing with Postmodernism
## A Story of Curriculum Studies in China

*Zhang Wenjun*

## Introduction

In the summer of 1994, I became a PhD candidate, supervised by Professor Zhong Qiquan, in the Institute of International and Comparative Education in East China Normal University. As a candidate, the topic of PhD thesis became my major concern. Professor Zhong was in Japan as a visiting professor during the first year I was his student, so that I had time and space to do whatever I liked. I could read any books and journals I wanted. During the reading of different texts in other fields, especially literature, philosophy, and psychology, the word "postmodern" caught my attention. The term appeared frequently in the texts I read, but infrequently in works in the field of education. I began to wonder why.

It seemed obvious that postmodern thought could—in fact, should—influence the field of education. After all, under the framework of postmodernism the very nature of human beings—if there was still a "nature" of human beings from postmodern perspectives—had changed. Now there were no such concepts as "subjectivity," "linear progress," or the "whole person." How this dramatic shift in understanding human reality would reshape education seemed to me a compelling question.

Although Internet was already available in China by 1994, very few had access, and even fewer could afford to use this service. There was no search engine like Google or Baidu. I did not know how to use Internet at

that time. So I went to the National Library in Beijing, searching for the books and journal articles about postmodern and postmodernism. There I found quite a few books concerning the topic. From the National Library I searched for references through ERIC and other data banks. The fact that numerous books and articles on postmodernism and education had been published amazed me, encouraging me do even more research on the topic. I wrote to Professor Zhong and received his permission to conduct research on postmodernism and education, especially on postmodern perspectives on curriculum.

In 1997, I completed my PhD thesis, which was published under the title *Postmodern Education* in Taiwan in 1998. The year before, I had published an article titled "On the Postmodern Perspectives about Curriculum." Because I hadn't found Chinese literature on this subject in this field at that time, I assumed that I was the first person who had studied postmodernism in the curriculum field in China. I was wrong.

## The Seeds

Composed by Zhang Weicheng, the first paper on education and postmodernism—titled "Art Education and Postmodernism"—was published 11 years ago before my 1997 paper. The author was editor of *Journal of Hei Longjiang Financial College*, in which the paper was published. Not a specialist in the educational field, he called for a renaissance of art education, identifying the difficulties and problems that faced art education, suggesting solutions to these problems. He announced happily that "when we feel lost, 'Postmodernism' is knocking at our door!" (Weicheng Zhang 1986, 42). He concluded that art education was starting a golden age, and that a foreign influence was necessary for the advancement of art education in China. While modernism had failed, postmodernism could succeed, remaking art education in China with its pluralism, open orientation, recognition of popular arts, and emphasis on traditional art's values. The only paper published on postmodernism and education during 1986–1990, it anticipated the influence postmodernism would have on Chinese academics.

Outside the field of education, there had been even earlier publications, including one titled "What is Postmodern Novel" in 1980 by Dong Dingshan (1980). But according to the Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, the first paper on postmodernism was published by *Journal of Social Science Abroad* in 1982 by Yuan Kejia (1982), under the title "About Postmodernism." There are 2 papers on postmodern

or postmodernism published in 1982, 4 in 1983, 2 in 1984, 3 in 1985, 10 in 1986,12 in 1987, 13 in 1988, 27 in 1989, and 23 in 1990. Most of these introduced postmodernism to literature, architecture, and the arts. Introduction and interpretation are the main modes of research. Postmodernism became a "hot spot" in academic world. Various postmodernists were invited to lecture at Chinese universities, among them Fredrick Jameson, who spoke on "Postmodernism and Culture" at Beijing University in 1985. Numerous books and papers were translated from English and other languages into Chinese during that time. Several Chinese scholars in several fields published books on postmodernism.

It was the Open Policy in 1978 that allowed foreign books and ideas to enter China. After a long period of information control, people became very curious about all sorts of new ideas from foreign countries, especially those from Western countries. Compared with the literature and arts field, the field of education was more conservative. Accompanying these new ideas and theories were political movements in China. In 1986 there was the Against Capitalist Thought, and in 1989 there was the June Fourth Movement, which inspired professors and students to consider unprecedented possibilities. In the meantime, the task of modernization was the main theme advocated by the government. Most educationists were eager to contribute to this grand campaign rather than conduct research emphasizing deconstruction.

From 1990 to 1996 there were no papers published with "postmodern" in the title, at least not coupled with "education" or "curriculum." But in 1997 there was a veritable explosion of journal articles on postmodernism in the field of education. While the 1983 Zhang Weicheng article was the first, in part because it was published in the *Journal of Hei Longjiang Financial College*, few educationists noticed it. By the end of 1997, there were several papers published, including my "On Postmodern Perspectives about Curriculum" (Wenjun Zhang 1997). Three papers appeared in the same volume in *Comparative Education Review* in 1997, each written by a staff of Comparative Education Research Center at BNU. Yu and Xu's "An Introduction to Postmodernism and Contemporary Educational Thoughts" outlined the possibilities of postmodernism for educational thought, activities and research (K. Yu and Xu 1997). "Postmodernism and Higher Education" analyzed different postmodernist concepts and their possible implications for higher education (Shi 1997). "Curriculum Theory toward New Century" introduced Patrick Slattery's *Curriculum in the Postmodern Era* by comparing it with Ralph Tyler's canonical "principles" of curriculum development (Qi 1997).

A philosopher composed "Postmodern Conditions in Higher Education Fields," published in *Research on Teacher Training*. It analyzed

the characteristics of postmodern condition in the higher education field, recommending a critical attitude toward the influence of postmodern and postmodernism (Zheng 1997). My paper "On Postmodern Perspectives about Curriculum," published in the *Journal of East China Normal University*, explored different approaches to curriculum, with an emphasis on works by William Pinar, William Doll, Nel Noddings, and David Griffin (Wenjun Zhang 1997). Although my paper was published about one month before the others, I have to acknowledge that all five papers constitute "the first," in that every author assumed that he or she was the first person publishing in education concerning this issue.

Nineteen ninety-seven was also the year in which Hong Kong was returned to the Peoples Republic of China. The breaking of old political boundaries might have encouraged editors to publish those papers. Almost 20 years of rapid economic development had followed the Open Policy, and the role of China's exam-dominated education in selecting the proper elite to direct this economic development was strongly criticized. A sentiment was brewing to advance new, different, and even subversive educational proposals. In the summer of 1997 I finished my PhD thesis, which was published by YangZhi Culture Publisher the next year (Wenjun Zhang 1998). This was the first PhD thesis on postmodern thought in education, which was acknowledged as a milestone in the field (X. Zhou 2010).

## The Trees

In 1998, eight papers on postmodernism and education were published, among them an essay on the postmodern paradigm in curriculum studies (H. Zhang 1998). In 1999, a study of postmodern perspectives on curriculum appeared (C. Li 1999). In the meantime, the Ministry of Education was preparing a nationwide curriculum reform. Professor Zhong Qiquan was appointed as the leading specialist charged with drafting the curriculum reform. Several of his former students were selected to participate in the process, among them Zhang Hua, Cui Yunhuo, You Baohua, and me.

From 1999 to 2001, the government released several documents that launched the reform. These included an Action Scheme for Invigorating Education Towards the 21st Century in January 1999, The CPC's Decision on Deepening Education Reform and Enhancing Suzhi (Qualities-Oriented) Education, 1999; CPC's Decision on Development and Reform Basic Education, Feb. 2001; and an Outline for Basic Education Curriculum Reform, July, 2001.The Outline for Basic Education Curriculum Reform marked the beginning of the most profound, largest-scale, most thorough,

and complete curriculum reform in the history of the Peoples Republic of China.

This reform—"For the Development of Every Student, for the Revival of the Chinese Nation"—represented the strategy of the Chinese government to improve the happiness of the students and the competency of the nation. The new curriculum aimed at moral and values development, social responsibility, basic knowledge, skills for lifelong learning, creativity, physical and psychological well-being, healthy aesthetic tastes, and healthy life styles. It is acknowledged that only a student-centered, democratic curriculum can produce more creative talents to compete with other countries in a "knowledge economy" in an era of globalization. With the emphasis on "constructive learning" and "reflective teaching," the new curriculum reform welcomed fresh ideas on and practices of curriculum and teaching.

Now research on postmodern curriculum was encouraged. During 2000–2004 there were 66 journal papers, 1 PhD thesis, 12 MA theses, and 98 journal papers on postmodernism and education. Postmodernism was interpreted as signaling a paradigm shift in curriculum studies (You 2000; X. Wang 2002a), a conceptual shift that coincided with the New National Curriculum.

What was postmodern curriculum and how to understand it became an important concern in the context of national curriculum reform. The PhD thesis "Curriculum Studies: From Modern to Postmodern" by Wang Xia was published as a book in 2003 (X. Wang 2002a). Wang analyzed the history of modern curriculum studies, and criticized the mechanism, factory, and rationalistic models of modernist curriculum studies. By pointing out the fundamental problems the modernist curriculum paradigm had failed to resolve, she suggested that postmodern curriculum studies could contribute to curriculum reform in China. From Wang's perspective, the reconceptualization movement in the United States was the beginning of postmodern curriculum paradigm, which provided an excellent exemplar for the curriculum innovation in China (X. Wang 2002a).

Moreover, the implications of postmodern curriculum studies for curriculum reform in China were extensively discussed (X. Wang 2002b; Z. Zhou and Zhang 2004). The MA dissertation "Postmodern Curriculum and Its Pertinence in China" tried to offer a constructive evaluation of postmodern curriculum and specify the pertinence of postmodern curriculum to China. It emphasized the relationships between postmodern curriculum studies and Chinese traditional cultures, pointed to theoretical and practical actuality of the Chinese curriculum, and proposed possibilities and strategies to infuse postmodern curriculum thought into the new curriculum reform in China (L. Zhang 2003).

The papers published during 2000–2004 discussed general ideas of postmodern curriculum theories or one of the postmodern curriculum scholars, and the implications of the epistemological shift of postmodern curriculum studies from curriculum management to the relationship between teachers and students, as well as curriculum development and curriculum reform itself. Most researchers were professors, PhD students, or MA students in higher-education institutions.

Postmodern curriculum studies became a very important discourse not only in curriculum studies but also in the overall field of education in China. If I can use the metaphor of "seeds" to reference postmodern curriculum studies before 1997, the basic research on postmodern curriculum studies and its implications had grown into a tall tree by 2004, accelerated by the process of implementation of the new national curriculum. Postmodern thought influenced the process of its implementation deeply. "Although no one said postmodernism was the basic theoretical foundation of new national curriculum, the postmodern orientation was obvious," Zhou Xianfeng (2010, 19) pointed out.

The process of implementing the curriculum reform in a nine-year compulsory education level had five phases: (1) September 2001 saw the launch of pilot programs in 38 national experimental districts, with 3 additional national experimental districts (in Zhejiang Province) joining at the beginning of 2002, which added up to 41 national experimental districts; (2) September 2002 saw pilot programs in 500 provincial experimental districts; (3) by September 2003, revisions of the new curriculum were underway; (4) by September 2004, implementation of the new curriculum now involved some 65–70 percent of pupils; and (5) by September 2005 there was countrywide implementation. Accompanying the process of implementing the new curriculum, more and more school leaders, teachers, and administrators began to know about postmodern curriculum studies. Postmodern curriculum studies had arrived.

## The Flowers: Blossoming of Postmodern Curriculum Studies during 2005–2010

In 2005, the New Curriculum for nine years of compulsory education level (from grades 1 to 9) had been implemented all over China. Studies on postmodern and postmodernism in the field of curriculum had increased during this period. During 2005–2010, there were 417 journal papers, 2 PhD dissertations, and 18 MA theses. On postmodernism and curriculum,

there were 255 journal papers, 1 PhD dissertation, and 11 MA theses. There were 169 journal papers and 10 MA papers. This research exhibited different dimensions and various approaches.

One common dimension was that researchers now made efforts to compose domestic postmodern discourse instead of merely introducing and clarifying the concept as imported from abroad. The first effort in this regard was "Curriculum and Culture: A Postmodern Perspective," wherein Hao Deyong (2002) used the metaphor "cocoon" to criticize Chinese traditional curriculum culture from a postmodern perspective. A new curriculum culture was endorsed. The 2005 book *Postmodernist Curriculum Theory* converted postmodern curriculum theory into a Chinese curriculum discourse. Exploring postmodern theories and perspectives on curriculum, Jin Yule and Yu Ze Yuan (2005) showed the way to construct a postmodern curriculum practice by combining the Chinese traditional philosophy of Taoism to curriculum.

Yet more reflections and critiques appeared after 2005, including a very fierce dispute on the values of postmodern curriculum studies for China's new curriculum reform. In "Some Queries about Doll's Postmodern Curriculum Theory," Yu Huiui and Liu Yaowu (2006) argued that although Doll's perspective provided new insights, it had its own limits, given its critical and antitraditional features. The authors reviewed Doll's perspective from four aspects, among them educational objectives, teaching processes, curriculum content, and evaluation, all from a framework of Taylor's modernist curriculum development model. Other scholars even characterized postmodernism as "Non-Marxist" (B. Wang 2006), declaring that "postmodernist curriculum studies have obviously advanced curriculum theories internationally, but these curriculum theories are very disputable, especially their practical value" (B. Wang 2009, 8). The new curriculum reform was imagined as a reform that "neglected" knowledge, "misled" by those scholars who had absorbed postmodernism in their curriculum development thought (C. Wang 2006). The severity of the criticism led to a dispute between Professors Zhong Qiquan and Wang Cesan, and between their disciples.

The third and most flourishing area of scholarship and research concerned subject-specific curriculum and teaching. Although there were 30 papers published on postmodern and teaching before 2004, most of these dealt with the general implications of the postmodern condition or postmodernism to teaching. From 2005, more and more papers were published in every school subject, focused on different elements of teaching. For instance, 32 were focused on postmodernism in Chinese language curriculum field, 18 on mathematics education, 35 on moral education, 31 on teaching of English field, and 10 on other subjects.

The Chinese language curriculum area was one of the earliest subjects addressing postmodernism, with 30 papers and 2 MA theses on postmodern topics composed from 1979 to 2010. A paper published in 2002 focused on the implications of William Doll's postmodern curriculum perspective for Chinese teaching, a paper which highly embraced his perspective. "Doll's postmodern 4R curriculum perspective and his ideas about relationship between teachers and students," Xu Bing (2002, 35) concluded, "can be used directly on Chinese language teaching." There were four papers published in 2003 and 2004, suggesting that interest in this topic was rising. In 2005, nine papers were published on postmodernism and Chinese language teaching. An enthusiastic embrace of postmodernism in Chinese language teaching was expressed in each paper, within which a paradigm of postmodernist Chinese language teaching was claimed (X. Zhang 2005). The purpose of Chinese Language Curriculum had been redefined, now highlighting the construction of values and meaning, conversation between students and texts, and the recreation of the texts (H. Li 2005). From this perspective, knowledge is grounded in the everyday lifeworld and its ultimate purpose is to discover the implied meanings and values of the phenomenal world. The postmodern transformation of the Theory of Knowledge requires Chinese as a school subject to face its own features, to return to the realm of the lifeworld and there to search for ways of transforming Chinese language education (Cheng 2005). From 2006 to 2010, there were 15 papers and 1 MA thesis on postmodernism and Chinese language teaching, attending to topics such as Chinese language teachers from the postmodern perspectives.

Not all these papers approved of postmodern perspectives on Chinese language teaching. On the basis of recognizing postmodernism as the theoretical foundation of Chinese language teaching in New Curriculum Reform, Wang criticized postmodern Chinese language teaching as leading to relativism, skepticism, and the vulgarization of Chinese language learning, creating disorder in the relationship between Chinese language teachers and students. "The post-modern course theory is introduced to China at the critical stage of basic education reform," Wang Haidong (2008, 92) allowed, "which is a necessity for Chinese education academic field. As the fundamental theory of new curriculum reform, it has unique characteristic in education of Chinese as mother tongue, and also set a trap for it."

In mathematics education, there were 15 papers on postmodernism from 1979 to 2010, 12 of which were published after 2005. The first one published in 2002 analyzed the new math curriculum's objectives, content standards, and curriculum implementation recommendations from the postmodern multiple intelligences perspective; it also examined the

implications for teaching, evaluation, and textbook writing (G. Zhang 2002). However, this work was conducted from a multiple intelligence rather than a postmodern perspective.

In 2005, the postmodern features of the new mathematics curriculum in grade 1 through grade 9 compulsory education level were probed. It reviewed the major views of postmodern curriculum and revealed expressions of postmodern curricular thoughts in the Curriculum Standards for Mathematics emphasizing the openness of systems, ambiguity and diversity, complicating and constructive reality, curriculum goals and power relationships, all in order to help to realize the Curriculum Standards for Mathematics (Song and Ma 2005). After the publication of this paper, teachers began to explore how to organize postmodern mathematics classes (Chen 2005).

In the same year, Xie Mingchu explored the influence of postmodernism on mathematics, especially on the values of mathematics philosophy and postmodern mathematics thinking. He suggested that mathematics education in China should combine the features of postmodernism, such as ethno-mathematics, gendered and political elements of math education, and emphasize the importance of mathematics in students' real life. He also sought the legitimization of postmodernist math education as a substitute of traditional school math education (Xie 2005).

Moral education is also an important area of postmodern discussion, with 41 papers published from 1979 to 2010, 35 of which were published after 2005. Although the challenges of new century and the transitions from modern to postmodern conditions had been addressed in moral education area in 2002 (Yi 2002), more reflections on the status of moral education from postmodern perspective appeared after 2005. A comprehensive analysis was provided in 2006, pointing out that the current modernist moral education emphasized certainty, knowledge transmission, the significance of the teacher's role, and a quantitative stress on good deeds. From the postmodern perspective, moral education should pay more attention on the dynamic dimensions of moral formation, the flexibility of moral construction, emergences during the moral education process, the equality of moral relationships between teachers and students, and moral education related to student's lives and postmodern conditions (Hou 2006). Since the publication of this analysis, how to organize a postmodern moral education has been broadly discussed, and not only at the primary and secondary education level, but in higher education vocational education as well. There were experiments in the implementation of postmodern moral education that focused on students' actual experiences, emphasizing the use of metaphors, dialogue and conversation, and equal relationships (Zhao 2008).

In English curriculum area, there were 31 journal papers and 1 MA thesis related to postmodern perspectives, most of these focused on teaching English in higher education institutions. In the basic education English curriculum area, there were papers discussing mutual understanding, the context of the texts, creativity, integration, unexpectedness, flexibility, value perspectives of curriculum, cultural differences, gender understanding, and real experiences of students from postmodern perspectives (Hongqin Yu 2007; Liu 2008).

Since 2005, the postmodern condition and postmodernism have also been discussed immensely by physics teachers, chemistry teachers, biology teachers, arts teachers, music teachers, physical education teachers and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) teachers. The role of teachers, ways of organizing classes, processes of learning different subjects, the content of knowledge and experiences, the objectives of teaching and learning, the relationship between postmodern perspective and curriculum standards of each subject: these topics have been discussed from the postmodern perspective and examples provided by teachers.

## Where Are the Fruits?

In this paper, I have sketched the history of postmodernism in curriculum studies in China, especially as postmodern thought intersected with the development and implementation of China's New National Curriculum. Using CNKI as my main resource, and postmodern-postmodernism as the key searching variables, this sketch is far from complete. Unacknowledged are the many translated books and papers from North America, Europe, and elsewhere and related conferences. Also unacknowledged are many specialized papers on poststructuralism and curriculum, curriculum understanding, dialogue and curriculum, ethnicity and curriculum, caring, feminism and curriculum, and other new possibly postmodern trend in curriculum studies. The story would be very long if I tried to write the whole of it. While fragmentary, this paper does provide a glimpse of postmodern thought in China, and in curriculum studies specifically. Although the seeds were transplanted from Western curriculum studies, the growth of postmodern curriculum studies in China became intertwined with the demands—from government, parents, and educators—of reforming the curriculum.

The field of curriculum studies in China had been interrupted and lost its voice gradually in 1949, with the establishment of the new

socialist country: the People's Republic of China. The authoritarian political system and the government's insistence on solidarity structured curriculum as an instrument for realizing the ideal society. Only one set of voices appointed by the government was needed. All the school curricula and textbooks had been developed by the designated publishing house—the People's Education Publishing House—and then distributed to all schools all over the country. Curriculum studies by scholars and teachers were not necessary; instead, the research on how to implement the only set of curriculum became the only task for the scholars and teachers.

It was the Open Policy in 1978 that encouraged experiments in economic development and educational reform based on research and reflection. The process of curriculum policy became somewhat more decentralized, and localities began to make their own decisions in the development of curriculum materials. The high tide of curriculum and instruction reform surged in China, starting during the late 1980s. "When curriculum implementers have the power to make their own decisions in curriculum development and curriculum construction," Zhong Qiquan and Zhang Hua (2003, 263) pointed out, "the importance of curriculum theory becomes obvious."

Gradually the curriculum studies field became an independent field with an attendant increase in research production. And along with the national curriculum reform and questions regarding it posed by parents, teachers, and educational administrators, the introduction of foreign research on curriculum became very urgent. It was in this context of reform and driven too by the pressures of globalization that the postmodern perspective of curriculum caught the attention of Chinese curriculum researchers and became a popularized as a perspective.

That popularization did not occur overnight but took place over a period of time. As reviewed in this essay, different authors published the "first" papers at approximately the same time, and teachers in the various school subjects began to notice similar implications during the same years. These coincidences not only mirrored the solid needs of reality, but also showed the formation of postmodern discourses and the influence of discourses on reality (if we understand this phenomenon from Foucault's discursive theory).

Postmodern perspectives, postmodernism, and postmodern curriculum studies are now very familiar terms among researchers, educational administrators, and teachers. With popularization came criticism, and controversy has occurred especially concerning the implications of postmodern perspectives for curriculum and teaching. The controversy remains unresolved, but what has become clear is the necessity for Chinese scholars and

teachers to develop their own "homegrown" curriculum studies instead of importing foreign curriculum studies, including postmodern curriculum studies.

It is hard to say that the seeds, trees, and flowers of postmodernism has borne visible fruits in curriculum practice. From my perspective, this would constitute local and domestic postmodern curriculum discourses addressing China's curriculum context, phenomena, problems, and solutions. While there is consensus that Chinese society is indeed postmodern, only when postmodern curriculum studies are rooted in the actual educational practice in China that we can say postmodernism has borne fruits. It is now time for our curriculum academics and teachers to ask "Where are the fruits?" How can we make our efforts fruitful in developing China's own curriculum discourse?

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# Chapter 7

# The Development of Curriculum Ideologies and the Present Circumstances of Curriculum Studies in China

*Zhou Huixia*

The development of curriculum studies in China represents a long course: from ancient[1] ethical and moral education to modern educational systems, several curriculum reforms during the contemporary period, and now the new curriculum reform in precollegiate education. Curriculum objectives, curriculum contents, curriculum patterns, and curriculum structures have all shifted during these various developments of curriculum. The development of curriculum exhibits the historicity of the curriculum and its changing features over the times. Over time, the curriculum has provided a more comprehensive educational medium for the people's development.

## Ancient Curriculum

The aspirations of ancient Chinese curriculum were "knowing inter-person relations"[2] and enlightening the world through education. The curriculum was a comprehensive system. The principal part consisted of the study of Confucian classics cultivating a humanistic spirit. Skills of archery, skills of horsemanship, skills of music, and skills of arithmetic were all secondary

subjects in the curriculum system. The secondary subjects originated from the "six skills"[3] in the Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771BC). Its foundation was solidified by Confucius' "six classics."[4] The principal curriculum content was established during the Western Han dynasty (205BC–8AD) and its structure was formed in Tang dynasty (618–907AD) (Zhong 2002). There was no unified curriculum system during the dynasties. The ancient curriculum was centered on moral principles, educating people to conduct themselves in society and in relation to others.

Ancient Chinese curriculum did undergo certain changes: from six skills in pre–Qin dynasty period to "six classics" in the spring and autumn period, then to dismissing all the other schools of ideology while revering only the six classics, and finally to Four Books and Five Classics. The Four Books: were *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Analects of Confucius*, and *Mencius.* The Five Classics were *The Book of Poetry/Songs*, *The Book of Change*, that is, I-Ching, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Rites*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals. The Book of Music* was lost; six classics became five. The specialties or disciplines of the school curriculum took form during the Xia dynasty, the Shang dynasty, and the Zhou dynasty (2033–249BCE). Skills of rite, music, archery, horsemanship, calligraphy, and arithmetic were basic disciplines. These constitute the earliest disciplinary curriculum structure in ancient China, that is, the six skills. The six skills consisted of elementary and advanced skills. Skills of rite, music, archery, and horsemanship were considered advanced skills, which belonged to advanced school curriculum. Skills of calligraphy and arithmetic were elementary skills, which belonged to elementary school.

In ancient China, "advanced school" was similar to the contemporary post-secondary school. Elementary school was advanced school's preparation phase. Although historical materials showed different school ages for elementary school students, most started elementary school at the age of eight. When students were 15 years old, they moved to advanced schools. "Elementary school" in Chinese is "Xiaoxue." In ancient China, it also refers to "basic knowledge," which means the study of Chinese characters or literacy. To attend elementary school in ancient China meant learning the Chinese character, gaining literacy, of which calligraphy was integral part. The skills of rite and music fell into the category of political, patriarchal, ethic, and moral education. They became the "head" of the six skills. The skills of archery and horsemanship fell into the category of military and physical training. The skills of calligraphy and arithmetic were in "general knowledge" category. Therefore, such a curriculum system covered both civil accomplishments and military prowess.

Confucius modified the school curriculum based on the original "six skills" so that the curriculum could cope with new social trends. Through

organizing and reconstructing ancient books, he formulated the six classics: *The Book of Poetry/Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Rites*, *The Book of Music*, *The Book of Change* (i.e. I-Ching), and *The Spring and Autumn Annals.* These constituted curriculum content. There was a sequence in learning the classics. *The Book of Poetry/Songs* was to be learned first, following by *The Book of Rites*, then *The Book of Music*. The skills of calligraphy and arithmetic were still taught in the elementary school curriculum; they were considered the fundamentals for advanced school (Huang 2006).

Although Confucius had developed the "six classics" curriculum system during the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476BC), the "six classics" were not the official curriculum, they were taught in only one school among the hundreds of schools of that time. After the "burning of books and burying scholars/intellectuals alive" during the Qin dynasty, the school of Confucius and the "six classics" suffered. Confucian teaching and the Confucian classics had not become orthodox until Dong Zhongshu proposed that we "dismiss the hundred schools, [and] revere only the Confucian [one] as dominant ideology." This view became accepted by Han Wu, the emperor during the Han dynasty (205BC–8AD). The Confucian classics became the formal and official curriculum.

Dong Zhongshu institutionalized Confucian curriculum content. He established the "five classics doctor system" in which the title "doctor" (a teaching official whose duty was teaching and instruction) was conferred upon Confucian scholars who had mastered *The Book of Poetry/Songs*, *The Book of Music*, *The Book of Change*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Rites*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. A doctor had 50 students or disciples. Dong Zhongshu also set up Tai schools, similar to the "advanced school" and contemporary post-secondary schools.

Even though dynasties changed and Buddhism and Taoism appeared, Confucian teaching still held a dominant position during the 1,000 years following the Han dynasty. The "five classics" remained the official curriculum. During the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279AD), responding to the ruling class' demands for an updated schooling, Zhu Xi created a new comprehensive system that "invited" Buddhism into Confucianism; Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism were combined together. This became known as Neo-Confucianism. Neo-Confucianism became the official teaching. From then until 1905—when the imperial examination was abolished—the Chinese official curriculum was the "Four Books and Five Classics." The "Four Books" were considered more important than the "Five Classics" in curriculum content. "Knowing inter-person relations and abandoning material desires" had always been the mainstay of education in feudal society.

Throughout 2,000 years of China's ancient education, the country's official curriculum maintained unity and continuity. The curriculum had practical value in politics and in caring for the people's lives. However, the singularity of its knowledge system and limitations of its teaching made it the target of education reform.

## Modern[5] Curriculum to the Founding of the People's Republic of China

The arrival of Western learning and the subsequent conflicts between Western ideology and traditional Chinese teaching were the final and the heaviest blows to Chinese traditional Confucianism. The cannons and warships of Western empires forced China to learn from the West. "Learning from foreign tribes their special skills in order to restrict them"[6] was the purpose of learning from the West. "Chinese learning for the essence, Western learning for practical use"[7] became the principle of curriculum selection in schools. The Westernization Movement brought machines and systems; meanwhile, new technology and new disciplines were adopted under the idea of "bring-inism."[8] In addition, the Westernization Movement also prepared and incented the New Cultural Movement.[9] It was a long and painful process moving from Chinese "learning for the essence" to Western "learning for practical use."

## The 1903 Gui-Mao School System[10]

China launched a new school system in early twentieth century. Disciplines considered as conducive to making the country wealthy and strong were added into school curriculum system. New schools appeared during the late Qing dynasty. In 1903, Zhang Zhidong was assigned to organize and develop *Zou Ding Xue Tang Zhang Cheng* (Emperor Authorized School Regulations) in Beijing. The regulation was approved by the Qing Royal Court in January 1904; it was called *Gui-Mao School System*. It was the first officially decreed and implemented nationwide school system in Chinese education history. Its establishment ended the tradition that "education has no regulation, school has no system" of the past thousands of years of Chinese history. Meanwhile, it institutionalized a fundamental model and frame for the modern Chinese school system.

The Gui-Mao School System consisted of 22 regulations including learning affair guidelines, general school administration rules, examination guidelines, award guidelines, and various school regulations for different levels. It regulated in detail a wide range of aspects in education: from Meng-yang school to Tong-ru school;[11] from regular education, teacher education, to profession education; from assigning teachers to school administration; from school tenets, educational objectives, admission rules, learning duration, curriculum setup, pedagogy, facilities, school building, to exams, and even awards. The Gui-Mao School System embodied the slogan "Chinese learning for the essence, Western learning for practical use." It stressed that Confucianism ethics nurture students' morals and behavior. Western ways of learning, technology, and skills were supplementations. The Gui-Mao School System also emphasized strict discipline and administration. The curriculum system centered on moral education. Both elementary and secondary schools considered cultivating individual moral character as the primary in their curriculum. Schools stressed studying the Confucian classics courses in order to cultivate individual moral character. However, schools were different in terms of educational objectives and students' specializations, which broke down the unified traditional educational objective: education of elite officials.

The Gui-Mao School System undermined the Confucian classics' dominant position, including other subjects in the school curriculum. In the middle school for example, while the curriculum included cultivating individual moral character, studying Confucian classics, and Chinese letters/characters, it also included foreign languages (Japanese, English/German, French, Russian), history, geography, arithmetic, natural history, physics and chemistry, law and financing, drawing, and gymnastics. There were 36 class periods per week but only 9 class periods were reserved for studying Confucian classics.

The Gui-Mao School System prescribed that university should obey the emperor's guidance, maintain an upright tendency, and educate generalists as tenets. Universities were obligated to prepare sufficient number of people with appropriate skills for appointment to various positions. Universities had to offer eight subjects. Positioning Confucian classics at the top of all subjects was a kind of compromise, as the system altered the traditional academic structure by calling for the study of four subjects: the Confucian classics, study of history, study of various scholars, and the study of keywords and articles. The system set up the foundation for classifying faculties in modern academic institutions. After the founding of Republic of China in 1912, university faculties were reclassified as arts, science, law, commerce, medicine, agriculture, and engineering.

The shift from the "study of four subjects" to the "study of seven faculties" was accomplished.

## The 1912 School System

The Ren-zi[12] School System (also known as Republic of China School System) was decreed in 1912. The Ministry of Education announced several school regulations in succession. The most distinctive feature of the Ren-zi, Gui-chou School System was the removal of Confucian classics and the enhancement of professional education, which was considered as a significant breakthrough in the modernization of the Chinese curriculum.

## The New School System in 1922

The New School System in 1922 adopted the "six-three-three" grade structure from the United States. While reforming the schooling system, education associations around the country together formed a New School System Curriculum Drafting Committee. The committee focused on launching the curriculum reform. In June 1923, *A Middle School and Elementary School Curriculum Standard Compendium* was issued. The compendium included the following: first, class period was calculated in minutes. It stipulated that during the first two years of elementary school, the total class minutes per week could not be less than 1,080 minutes; the total class minutes per week of the second two years cannot be less than 1,260 minutes; the total minutes of the last two years cannot be less than 1,440 minutes. Second, cultivating individual moral character was cancelled as a subject from the elementary school curriculum. Citizen and hygiene were added. Handcraft was modified as public art and drawing was recast as visual art. Later, hygiene, history, citizen, and geography were amalgamated into social science. Nature and gardening was added. The subject of Chinese characters was changed to Chinese language. Gymnastics became physical education. Third, junior high school subjects included citizenship, history, geography, Chinese language, foreign language, arithmetic, nature, drawing, handcraft, music, physical hygiene, and physical education. Senior high school included Chinese language, foreign language, life philosophy, social issues, cultural history, general science, and physical education. Ordinary subjects were classified as science and arts. The arts subjects included special Chinese language, basic psychology, basic ethics, and either nature or

mathematics. Science subjects included trigonometry, geometry, algebra, analytic geometry, and two subjects from physics, chemistry, and biology. Professional subjects were categorized as agriculture, industry, commerce, teacher education, and housekeeping. There were several elective subjects. Fourth, middle schools should employ course selecting system and course credit system. Although the compendium was not officially issued by the government, it was implemented all around the country due the representativeness and authority of the United Education Associations. With "Chinese learning for the essence" as premise, concepts of science and democracy were vigorously promoted. Scholars such as Tao Xingzhi heavily introduced Dewey's education concepts to China and put the concepts into practice. Ideas of professional education started to draw people's attention.

## Curriculum after the Founding of the Peoples Republic of China

The development of Chinese precollegiate education curriculum was consistent with the development of the New China's society. From a historical view, curriculum development in China could be categorized in the following phases. First was curriculum in the Socialist Transformation Phase (1949–1957). After the founding of the People's Republic, China followed the Soviet Union, including in education. The curriculum system was the typical knowledge-based curriculum: emphasizing knowledge courses but neglecting activity subjects, emphasizing compulsory subjects but neglecting elective subjects. The curriculum lacked balance between curriculum and society, curriculum and children (Cao 2005).

Second was curriculum in the socialism construction phase (1958–1965). After 1957, the relations between China and Soviet Union broke down. Meanwhile, the political atmosphere in China was in the "Great Leap Forward."[13] The direction of curriculum development changed. Knowledge curriculum was under severe attack. School curriculum was considered as divorced from production, from reality, and from politics. It was stressed that schools should be integrated with social work. The most distinctive feature during this phase was that curriculum was converted to political education and production, education for labor. The curriculum emphasized labor and politics. Many schools reduced their knowledge courses and implemented a "half working–half learning" school format. Many middle schools and profession schools built factories in the schools.

During the Cultural Revolution[14] (1966–1976), the curriculum went into chaos. The curriculum was highly simplified, politicalized, productionized, and laborized. For example, Chinese and politics were amalgamated

as Mao Zedong's thought; music and art were collapsed into revolution literature and art. In sum, curriculum during the Cultural Revolution phase rejected the earlier knowledge curriculum went to the other extreme of social practice, rejecting theoretical knowledge and employing only learning from direct (political and laboring) experience.

After the Cultural Revolution, curriculum was in a recovery phase. Class periods were increased; curriculum structure was improved, elective courses were added; contemporary content was added; and curriculum difficulties increased. Curriculum ideology was returning from one extreme—focused exclusively on practice—to a knowledge curriculum. However, the return to the knowledge curriculum also created tendencies to overemphasize basic knowledge and skills, and intensified the role of examinations. China amended the curriculum in 1985, 1986, 1990, 1992, 1993, and 1994. Chinese basic curriculum reform stepped into a new phase—toward depth and breath—by the mid-late 1980s.

In June 1999, the Central Committee of CCP held the Third Conference of National Education and issued *The Decision on the Reform and Development of Basic Education*. *The Decision* decreed the reform of curriculum system, structure, and content; the establishment of a new basic education curriculum system; ending the divorce of curriculum from social development and students' actual situations. *The Decision* initiated a new series of curriculum reform. By the fall of 2005 fall, the reform was fully under way.

## Present Circumstances

The objectives of new basic education curriculum reform centered around nurturing humanity. According to State Council's *The Decision* and *Curriculum Guidelines*, the objectives of the reform were to support students' patriotism and collectivism, teaching them to love socialism, to inherit and carry forward the fine Chinese national and revolutionary traditions. Students should abide by the country's laws and social ethics. Students would gradually come to possess the correct worldview, life philosophy, and values. Students should show social responsibility and strive to serve the public. Students should demonstrate creativity, practical skills, scientific and artistic skills, and environmental awareness. Students should possess fundamental knowledge, skills, and methods for lifelong learning. The curriculum should enable students to build strong bodies and healthy mental qualities, to develop healthy aesthetic tastes and life styles, and to become a new generation with aspiration, ethics, literacy, and discipline.

The curriculum guidelines point out that the reform should change the former curriculum structure of overemphasis on subject knowledge, of offering too many subjects, and lacking conformity. The nine-year curriculum should be designed to emphasize consistency in subjects and class period proportion. Comprehensive subjects should be built into the curriculum in order to meet the needs of students in different regions. The curriculum structure should be balanced, comprehensive, and elective.

Children and youth construct their intelligence based on their life experience and learning experience. Overemphasizing logic within the academic disciplines but neglecting students' experience was harmful. Therefore, the reform made an important modification on previous curriculum structure. The new curriculum stressed comprehensiveness, which, on the one hand, organized content according to students' experience; on the other hand, it paid attention to the inner logic of each school subject. "Science" and "History and Society" were added to junior high school curriculum. Art was embedded throughout the precollegiate education curriculum.

In addition, Comprehensive Practical Activity was established as a compulsory course in the reform of curriculum structure. Comprehensive Practical Activity included information technology (IT) education, inquiry-based studies, community service and social practice, and laboring skill education. It aimed to enhance students' creativity and practical skills, to strengthen the connection between schooling and social development, to end schools' divorce from society, and to cultivate students' social responsibility. The reform of curriculum structure also stressed curriculum's balancing and selectivity. Such changes were expected to cultivate each individual's healthy development.

The *Curriculum Guidelines* emphasize the deletion of redundant, difficult, obscure, outdated content in the curriculum and correct the overweighting of textbook knowledge. It aimed to enhance the connection between curriculum content and students' life as well as ensure strong social and technological development. Curriculum content should attend to students' interests and experience. Necessary fundamental knowledge and skills for lifelong learning should be embedded in curriculum content. The new content should increase students' motivation and initiative. Necessary fundamental knowledge and skills for lifelong learning were carefully selected; whereas the fundamental knowledge and skills within each discipline were diluted. The relations among modern society's needs, disciplined development, and student development were considered in selecting and organizing curriculum content.

Conceptions of learning also shifted in the reform. The *Curriculum Guidelines* decreed de-emphasizing passive learning, rote memorizing,

and mechanical training while encouraging students' active participation, inquiry, and practice. It aimed at cultivating students' ability to collect and process information, acquire new knowledge, analyze and solve problems, and communicate and collaborate effectively. Long term spoon-fed learning made students introversive, passive, and submissive. It smothered creativity. Such learning negatively affected all-round development. Change of teachers' ways of teaching is one prerequisite for improvement in students' learning. Therefore, we consider that changes in teachers' instructional actions and improvement in students' learning approaches as critical indicators of the success of the reform. In a certain sense, these are the key factors.

There were also shifts in administration decreed by the reform. The *Curriculum Guidelines* required decentralization of curriculum administration, decreeing that a three-level system—nation, local, school—be implemented in order to enhance curriculum flexibility for local schools and students. Schools should promote local social and economic development. The curriculum should be more adaptable and diversified. In order to increase curriculum's adaptability to different areas and schools, the state, local authorities, and school must construct curriculum together. Local administrators should plan, explore, and administer local curriculum in light of state curriculum regulations. With teachers' increased capability in curriculum designing, school curriculum development will have a diversified and promising prospect.

The implementation of the new curriculum has created a new atmosphere and brought new dynamics to teaching and learning. It institutionalized "knowledge and skills, process and method, attitude and value" as the "three dimensions" of learning. The classroom format is shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered in which teachers are facilitators. Teachers no long assess students only via their test performance. Students are evaluated comprehensively through various aspects. The so-called low-achievers in previous curriculum receive more human solicitude. An equal, democratic, interactive, teaching and learning format is being constructed.

The new curriculum reform has problems. Its theoretical basis is judged by some as unclear or inappropriate; reform plans are incomplete; traditional culture is missing. There are also some issues in research. For example, state's policies and experts' interpretation are often mixed and being confused; research perspective was unitary. Influenced by traditional teaching ideas, teaching habits, and teachers' knowledge structure, problems emerged in curriculum implementation. There are also problems in teacher education; classroom teaching is not fully consistent with the reform agenda; curriculum resources are distributed in an imbalanced way due to regional disparity; the curriculum assessment system is incomplete, and so on. These are the challenges we face.

## Conclusion

The Chinese curriculum has undergone many changes during its 2,000 years. In ancient times, we focused on moral education. In early modern times, we were forced to study the educational ideologies of Western countries. We learned much. With the educational innovations at the end of Qing dynasty, our curriculum system became more and more advanced. In 1904, the promulgation of "the Gui-Mao School System" provided a new frame for our education system. In 1922, the installation of yet another new education system ended the chaotic condition of Chinese schools following the revolution of 1911. It symbolized the success of education reform during the New Culture Movement. It showed that the focus of education had shifted to the ordinary people and their basic education. Education now cultivated individual talents as it addressed the needs of society, harmonizing the two. The new education system in 1922 symbolized the building of new curriculum system for modern times.

There have been five different periods of curriculum development since 1949. These were: (1) the establishment of socialism, (2) the consolidation of socialism, (3) the chaotic "Great Culture Revolution," (4) the emergence from chaos, and (5) the present period of full recovery. We have undergone eight curriculum reforms during the following periods: 1949–1952, 1953–1957, 1958–1965, 1966–1976, 1977–1984, 1985–1991, 1992–2000, and 2001 to now. The present curriculum reform is widely regarded as the most radical reform since 1949. We can find both successes and failures in this reform. With the deepening of this curriculum reform, no doubt we will encounter more problems at both conceptual and system levels, but we are strong-minded people.

## Notes

1. In Chinese history field, the term ancient refers to the period before 1840. "Modern refers to 1840–1949," during which China was in semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism system; "contemporary" refers to 1949–present after founding of the People's Republic of China. Although in this Chinese literature field such terms refer to different eras, in this chapter the author uses the definition in Chinese history field. (Translator's note).
2. One of the key figures in Confucianism, Mencius proposed this objective of ancient Chinese education. "Knowing inter-person relations" emphasized five relations: there should be affection between parents and children, obligations

between monarchs and his subjects, distinction between husbands and wives, order between the elder and the younger, and trustworthiness among friends. (Translator's note).

3. These were the skills of rite, music, archery, horsemanship, calligraphy, and arithmetic. (Translator's note).
4. The major books include *The Book of Poetry/Songs*, *The Book of Music*, *The Book of Change* i.e., I-Ching, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Rites*, *and The Spring and Autumn Annals*. (Translator's note).
5. The concept of "modern" references two periods: early-modern ("近代), from 1849 to 1919, and modern ("现代"), from 1919 to the present. (Author's note).
6. This was the slogan of the Westernization Movement during the late Qing dynasty, 1636–1912, proposed by Wei Yuan. (Translator's note).
7. Proposed by Zhidong Zhang, a famous official in the Qing dynasty. (Translator's note).
8. "Bring-inism" was proposed in 1934 by Lu, Xun, an influential writer, thinker, and revolutionary in modern China. Instead of mimicking everything from the West, he argued, the Chinese should selectively bring in things that suited the Chinese situation and adopt them with dignity.
9. From 1915~1923 (see chapter 1), this was a movement initiated by a group of Chinese intellectuals who had received their education in the West. The movement criticized traditional Chinese culture and advocated "science" and "democracy." It is not only a conflict between traditional Chinese culture and Western culture, but it is also is a confrontation between Marxism and the pragmatism of John Dewey, who spent two years in China during this period. (Translator's note).
10. Gui-Mao is a year's name in the Chinese calendar. The school system proposal was approved in 1904, a "Gui-Mao year." (Translator's note).
11. Meng-yang school is similar to Kindergarten and Tong-ru school is similar to graduate school in North America. (Translator's note).
12. Ren-zi was also the name of a year in the Chinese calendar.
13. This was an economic and social campaign of the Chinese Communist Party, reflected in planning decisions from 1958 to 1961, which aimed to use China's vast population to rapidly transform the country from an agrarian economy into a modern communist society through the process of agriculturalization, industrialization, and collectivization. Mao Zedong led the campaign based on the Theory of Productive Forces, and intensified it after being informed of the impending disaster from grain shortages. (Translator's note).
14. The Cultural Revolution was designed to purge capitalist thought from the country. It was instituted by Mao Zedong in order to further advance socialism within the nation. Doing so involved major changes to the political, economic, and social nature of China, often through violent means. (Translators note).

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# Chapter 8

# From 1980 to 2010
## The 30-Year Course of My Study and Research

*Liu Jian*

## I

In 1980, when I was 16, I started[1] my post-secondary education in the Department of Mathematics, BNU. It was then—at the early stage of China's reform and opening up policy—that a variety of academic ideas from abroad began pouring into China. In the first five to eight years of my life at BNU as a student and later as an employee, I read almost all the articles of every journal in the fields of philosophy, social science, psychology, and education available in BNU's library. I took several hundred thousand notes and attended every academic lecture and seminar that I've heard of. I cannot believe that I am a student from math department. A key question haunted me: How on earth are human thoughts generated? Where are human's inspirations and creativities coming from? With such questions, I stepped out of the ivory tower and have been walking through, till the present day.

My first article was published in *Journal of Potential Science*. The theme of the article,[2] which I feel is unbelievable even today, is a discussion of the internal connections between physical mechanisms of the human brain hemispheres, image thinking, and abstract thinking. I was 22 years old. Later, two or three more articles were published in *Education Theory and Practice* and *Psychology Exploration* on this theme.

At the same time, I was exploring theories and practices in precollegiate math teaching and learning. In articles that were published in *General Mathematics Journal*[3] on the topics of math education objectives, math curriculum structures, and cultivation of math thinking competence, I pointed out that in order to reform the math curriculum, students must be guided to experience the "process of math thinking," that is, to experience "the reasonable inference stage (mathematize the problem), the deduction and proving stage (organize math materials via logic), application of math principles" and in order to "stimulate the student's interests in math, develop induction and generalization competencies," and "creative thinking." At this time, such a set of contentions was unprecedented in Chinese math education. In China, the national mathematics teaching syllabus was conclusion-oriented, as curriculum objectives emphasized math knowledge and skills, and the competency requirement was limited to arithmetic and logical inference competencies.

In 1989 my colleagues and I coauthored an article about math textbook in reform that was published in *Education Studies*,[4] the most prestigious educational journal in China. The article pointed out that math textbooks needed to shift from processes of "seclusion" to those that "open-up." The paper used empirical data to depict the characteristics of secluded and opened-up textbooks respectively. The "open-up" textbook should focus on the process of knowledge generation and development, pay close attention to students' life experience, lay out textbook content in terms of math thinking, emphasize methodology and competency rather than math knowledge, and demonstrate the content through scenarios rather than through principles, definitions, inference, examples, and problems. The essay contended that the "open-up" textbook prioritized student needs as the point of departure. The content selection, system organization, and the concrete forms of narratives were all based on student needs, which was the most significant characteristic of "open-up" textbook. Therefore, textbooks should not only serve as a platform demonstrating math logical structures, but also a wonderland for students to explore the secrets of mathematics.

These ideas summarize my major learning and research experience during the 80s of the last century, which established solid foundations for my future development. Today, when I look back, I believe that the pursuit of questions like "How human beings think, how is math knowledge generated, how to set students as the point of departure in considering every educational issue" embedded a kind of educational idea (math education), and reflected an educational philosophy in my blood—how to make children the center of school education and thereby humanize education. One could say that I completed my "thinking enlightenment" during that first

ten-year period. After 20 years, that is what I am most pleased with and most proud of.

## II

In November 1989,[5] as proposed by the well-known math educator in China, Mr. Xiaoda Zhang, I coordinated the ten-year special project "A Prospect of 21st Century Chinese Mathematics Education: Theory and Practice of Popular Mathematics" (21CME), funded by the National Philosophy and Social Science Youth Foundation. I was 25. The project preparation started in 1989. The project proposal was approved and the research infrastructures were put in place in 1992. School experiments began in 1994 and the project was completed in 1999, a full ten years after the proposal.

The 21CME research findings were published into one book: *A Prospect of Chinese 21st Century Mathematics Education*.[6] A series of research papers were published. In addition, a set of experimental mathematics textbooks were issued, framed by these new perspectives. In 1999, there were almost 20,000 school students using these experimental textbooks. The publication of these findings generated the school of popular mathematics. This school proposed views that were considered revolutionary, namely that (1) everyone could learn functional math; everyone could master math, and (2) the Chinese math education system should be rebuilt with popular mathematics ideas.

The primary strategy focused on the curriculum. The math curriculum should popularize math and link math to life. The curriculum should encourage students to discover, understand, and apply math in their daily life experience. The math curriculum in compulsory education would become "a pump that boosts one's confidence" rather than "a sifter that eliminates pupils."

The curriculum of popular math was organized around the principal math thinking and approaches that emphasize number and symbol senses, concepts of space, ideas of optimizing, concepts of statistics, relations and formula, awareness of estimation, inference, and applications. The basic math processes, math thinking, and the functions of methods in math were reflected through number and arithmetic, quantity and measurements, space and diagrams, statistics and probability, formula and relations, and practical math activities. The new curriculum deleted contents that were dislocated from social needs, deviated from the development of mathematics, and conflicted with effective intellectual activities in real

life. Such contents, which include the four fundamental operations of arithmetic, miscellaneous arithmetic problems, complicated multinomial transformations, and Euclidean geometry based on pure axiom system, constituted the culprit responsible for students' low confidence and underachievement in math. The math curriculum aimed to "cut the branches and strengthen the trunk," "delete the redundant and keep it simple," and "highlight the essence of math."

The "popular math" textbooks attempted to create a "narrative model" that consisted of real-life scenarios, mathematical modeling, explanations, and future application. These textbooks used popular and lifelike approaches to embody math thinking, gradually cultivating students' math thinking through observation, operations, thinking, communication, and applications in simple problem situations and thus promoting the awareness of application, feeling the joy of math creation, and enhancing confidence in math learning.

The research process and results of this work had significant impact in China. In 1997, the 21CME project was awarded the First Rank Award of Excellent Research in Philosophy and Social Science in the consultation and report category. In 1998, the project was given the Ministry of Education Post-secondary Institute Basic Education Research First Rank Award.

Commissioned by the MOE in March 1999, I organized a "Math Curriculum Standards Research Team" based on the 21CME project. The team's work proceeded in three phases, conducting (1) preliminary study (later known as "Chinese paradigm" in curriculum standards development), (2) comprehensive study, and (3) drafting standards. After ten months of research, discussion, debates, and hearings, the team attempted to reach consensus on the nature of compulsory math curriculum, the key reform concepts, curriculum objectives, content standards, and implementation. In March 2000, the *National Math Curriculum Standards* (the Draft) was published by BNUP. Issued in 40,000 copies, the Draft invited suggestions from the entire nation. "A Gift to Children for the New Millennium" was printed on the first page.

Even today, when we read the Draft, we still can feel our heartbeats. Comparing with the previous math teaching syllabus, the Draft completely abandoned the three-centered educational ideology: namely, that education should center on disciplinary knowledge, teachers, and classroom. It also completely abandoned the former Soviet Union's teaching syllabus that had been used for almost 50 years since the founding of the Peoples Republic of China. The Draft broadly adopted the research findings of 21CME project. The value orientation of the Draft positioned the purpose of education as the development of students for the healthy and happy

growth of children. The Draft played an influential role in promoting the development and publishing curriculum standards in other disciplines.

In 1997, at the 21st Century Chinese Basic Education Curriculum and Pedagogy Symposium hosted by BNU, I presented a series of views based on my research data. In summary, I argued that the strengths of Chinese pupils in mathematics, which are rudimentary knowledge and skills, can be achieved by computer, whereas the essential competences (application, creativity, confidence, and attitude), which cannot be accomplished by computer, were often seriously neglected. Western precollegiate math education neglected systematic math knowledge and sophisticated arithmetic skills (which could be made up through computer technology), attending instead to the "musts" of future society. We should learn about the merits of Chinese culture, which is the soil of Chinese math education. We should, moreover, discover the demerits of Chinese culture, which could clarify the directions and internal motives of math education development.

With regard to pedagogy, I argued that there are two basic models, one of which is deductive. The characteristic of this deductive model is that teachers constitute the center of education. Concepts are the point of departure. The center is on knowledge acquirement and skill training through definitions, principles, rules, formulas, and practice. The other model is inductive. In this model, learners constitute the center of education. Facts are the point of departure. In short, children's experience is the center. Students draw conclusions and generate rules through observation, operation, practice, thinking, and communication. This model underlines the experience of math through activities, processes of math re-creation, and the connections between math and daily life.[7]

These research findings became reflected in the math curriculum standards and the practices recommended for the math curriculum reform. In addition, the findings set solid theoretical foundations for my work in the following decade (2000–2010) including a new round of national curriculum development, curriculum standard making of each subject, and new curriculum implementation.

## III

In August 1999,[8] I was assigned to work for my current organization: the National Center for School Curriculum, and Textbook Development in the Ministry of Education. I am in charge of curriculum reform. My duty is to research, plan, and coordinate the development, experiment, and implement of the new curriculum. Twelve years have passed since I started

serving in this position. In the section that follows, I chart the course of the past ten years of curriculum reform from three aspects: (1) the formulation of national curriculum standards, (2) the advancement of teachers' professional development, and (3) my reflections upon curriculum reform process.

## (1)

The new curriculum reform has achieved at least four significant breakthroughs in the formulation of curriculum standards.

1. The way to recruit members of the Curriculum Standards Panel has changed significantly. During the past 50 years (except for the ten-year cultural revolution), national education administrative units authorized one leading institute or several well-known experts in the field to formulate curriculum standards. Now it is by bidding. Experts organize their own teams and submit applications. Applicants pass three rounds of review. Anonymous, the first round focuses on the team leader. The second and third rounds review team structure and their plan. After three rounds of review, the team signs an authorized contract. This revised procedure provided opportunities for young scholars to be considered for the development of national curriculum documents at the turn of the century. Most are still actively involved in the curriculum reform.
2. The "Chinese paradigm" was generated during the development of curriculum standards. In the past, the authorized "teaching syllabus development" panel usually followed the political leaders' intentions. The panel held several symposia, revised the previous teaching syllabus, and then submitted it for administrative approval.[9] At present, curriculum standards development teams need first to conduct research on five fundamental areas: (a) investigations of the current curriculum implementation in its discipline, (b) a brief description of the current research in its discipline, (c) a comparison and analysis of international curriculum in its discipline, (d) a literature review of learning theories in its discipline, and (e) a brief historical overview of its disciplinary curriculum. In addition, a curriculum framework is generated through discussion. Finally, the team drafts—then edits—the curriculum standard. Such a procedure was drawn from the successful formulation of math curriculum standards.[10]
3. The consultation and decision-making processes are more democratic during the development of curriculum standards. The

formulation of curriculum standards involved consultations with not only university professors but also teachers with firsthand experience in precollegiate education (K–12) from ten representative regions. Moreover, we asked for suggestions from 67 entrepreneurs of state-owned or joint ventures. The entrepreneurs were identified by Shanghai Modern Education Research institute. We also solicited advice from democratic parties. Panel members reviewed every single suggestion and replied. Then suggestions and feedback were archived for future reference.

4. The decision-making procedure of curriculum panels has changed over time. In the past, a team of experts worked together for a short period of time. One or two authoritative experts made decisions whenever encountering serious debates within the group. In the new curriculum reform, there are 42 expert panels all together. In place is a new organizational culture that values democracy, equality, conversation, and negotiation. When we encounter difficulties in organizing our work, we prioritize national interests. When we debate over academic ideas, we orient ourselves by our commitments to student development.

These four changes constitute the core organizational culture in which the nation's curriculum standards are formulated. In retrospect, this organizational culture laid the groundwork for a quality curriculum that endures over time.

## IV

How can curriculum standards be realized in every classroom? The key is to reconceptualize the concept of curriculum implementation from "passive execution" to "mutual adjustment." How can teacher initiatives and creativities become the core of the new curriculum? There are almost 10 million elementary and secondary school teachers. Many need minimal qualifications; their professional skills need to be improved. It is almost impossible to provide every teacher with decent professional development. Even after every teacher becomes competent to implement the new curriculum, it is unlikely to expect its exact implementation. More sensible is to regard the project of implementation as an opportunity for teachers' professional development. In making "training" part of teachers' welfare, we also make the process of implementing the new curriculum a "cradle" for teacher's growth.

Such a conception of teacher development requires the establishment of school-based systems to support this new teacher development culture. In 2002, we proposed to widely establish the "school-based teacher development system" in curriculum reform trial regions. Although teachers' development requires professional support, it depends on the individual's practice and reflections. It also depends on collaboration among colleagues. The depth and width of individual teachers' reflections as well as collaborations among colleagues, in our experiences from ten years of experimenting, are proven to be closely related to teachers' professionalism and the culture of the teachers' working environment.

The Internet connects reformers. Given the huge number of elementary and secondary teachers, the fundamental nature of the reform, and the necessity for teacher training, large-scale teacher professional development faces numerous challenges. The challenge is to find a sustainable approach with Chinese characteristics that encourages all teachers to improve constantly. To grapple with that challenge, in 2005 we established a teacher development system based on an information technology platform. I served as the project coordinator. The project was funded by the private sector. In three years, the website enjoyed 17 million hits every day. Our experience has shown that teacher online learning encourages democratic and conversational collaborations among colleagues. No matter whether teachers were in remote or urban areas, no matter whether they were teachers or experts, every participant could communicate seamlessly. Internet has catalyzed the communication among teachers and theorists and other stakeholders. Such a learning culture nurtured every teacher's heart and permeated into every educational site: the very nature of this online learning platform exposed teachers to a collaborative learning experience, encouraging an interactive teaching approach in place of a dictating one.

The "school-based teacher development system" and "Internet-based teacher development" have significantly promoted the national Professional Learning Community of specialists and teachers. It accelerates the implementation of the new curriculum reform. When the new curriculum was under fierce attack from various stakeholders, the school-based teacher learning culture stimulated educators to persist in the pursuit of their educational ideals. The force of bottom-up implementation makes the implementation of the new curriculum irreversible.

## V

Since the day it was born, the new curriculum has faced strong opposition. In April 2011, a Chinese journal named *Educational Science Studies*

published a 17-page essay titled "Chinese Curriculum Reform: A Journey in Danger of Losing its Direction." During the 2005 meetings of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), almost a hundred mathematicians and scientists together proposed to stop math curriculum standards trials. These delegates also appealed to the public in the *Guangming Daily* and in *Mathematics Bulletin*, alleging that the new math curriculum standards had damaged the math system in use for thousands of years. Now both teachers and students struggled with math. The quality of math education in China, they concluded, had been undermined severely.

Since 2003, I have replied to such charges. My basic article is titled "Curriculum Development: Cases from China." Several versions have been published in different venues. In this article, I document my reflections on the ongoing curriculum reform.

Reflection 1: What is an environment conducive to the conduct of curriculum studies? The brewing process of the new curriculum has taken place long before the implementation (1996–2000), which features mostly grassroots support and the absence of top-down administrative interferences. Such a process, therefore, created a healthy environment for academic studies. Many were searching for revisions of Chinese basic education curriculum in the new century, revisions supporting the revival of China and the development of every student. Such common vision united many, and inspired research teams and teachers at work. In the discussions around curriculum reform, especially when the government firmly authorized the curriculum reform, we heard different, even opposing voices, which is an indicator of social progress and academic vitality. How do we establish legal procedures that guarantee that the majority are the decision makers, not a few authorities? How do we ensure that every five or ten years, the curriculum and its implementation are comprehensively investigated and evaluated? We need to establish a sustainable curriculum development system. It is the core of the curriculum reform that we construct an equal, negotiable, and conversational academic culture among our government, academia, and public media. Such a culture has far-reaching historical significance for national rejuvenation.

Reflection 2: What's "new" about the new curriculum? All the previous curriculum reforms after the founding of the Peoples Republic of China focused on changing "concrete" or organizational forms, among them increasing/decreasing class hours, updating teaching content, adjusting teaching requirements, and replacing old editions of textbooks by one or several new editions. These changes in physical forms enabled us to experience the "visual impact" of new curriculums from a variety of angles. To some extent, they represented the "new" in new curriculums. If we use

shooting as a metaphor, these were bullets that scattered, dispersed over the peripheral areas of the target.

As a student under 18, one has to acquire humanity's existing civilization during six, nine, or even twelve years using one single learning approach: listening, memorizing, receiving, imitating, and repeating. What are the long-term consequences of such a learning approach upon a growing child and the entire nation? How to teach is more important than what to teach and how to learn is more important than what to learn. The new curriculum aims at changing teaching methods, learning approaches, assessments, and administration. These bullets fall closer to the center of the target.

The most essential aspect of the new curriculum, however, is the establishment of a new curriculum culture, a new classroom culture, a new teacher development culture, and a new administration culture. We hope to support a democratic, open, scientific, equal, conversational, negotiable, and constructive partner relationship among students and teachers, between teachers and administrators, and between schools and society. We hope that the curriculum reform will influence schools and that schools will influence the next generation by infusing a more advanced culture into the society. We believe that children who come of age in an environment that blends both western and eastern cultures will enjoyed heightened self-esteem and confidence, and that their responsibility, collaborative awareness, and creativities will be developed. Children's school life should be happier, their personalities more integrated, and their minds broader. Of course, such curriculum reform cannot be achieved in three or five or even eight years. It might need 20 or 30 years or even longer.

Reflection 3: How do I assess today's education in primary and secondary schools after ten years of implementing the new curriculum reform? In those regions and schools that have made great efforts in the implementation of the new curriculum, we see that the new curriculum has brought real changes to schools, classrooms, teachers, and students. Teacher-student relations are more harmonious; classroom atmospheres are more democratic; students receive more respect; curriculum contents are closer to student experience; acquiring knowledge is not the only objective of learning anymore; school and teacher initiatives and enthusiasms are being developed; teacher professional development has enjoyed unprecedented improvement.

Nationwide, however, we must recognize that teachers still pay most attention to knowledge acquirement and skill training, teaching one lesson after another, assigning one day's homework after another, administering one test after another. Many teachers and students still only care about high school entrance or college entrance exams, and related academic subjects.

Although old contents were reduced and simplified, teachers remain fond of complicated, deep, and difficult content. Rote memorization has been reduced. Classrooms are less rigid. However, interactive, inquiring, practical, experiential, and collaborative classrooms are not to be found everywhere. Alex, a student from Payton High School, Chicago, United States, visited China in August 2011. After auditing math lessons in two of our best high schools, he wrote on his blog—"They spent most of their energy on practicing math rather than inquiry and discovery." Schools, classes, and students are ranked based on their performances in various exams organized by local educational administrations and departments.

## VI

A curriculum reform in these senses was meant to happen in China's history. I happened to become involved, which was a huge loss to my personal academic development during the past ten years. However, this is no regular reform. This reform is crucial to the fate of the nation. I encourage myself and my colleagues by pointing out that if there was no confusion, distress, or loss, then the reform could not be said to be under way. If there were no problems and challenges, then the reform could be said to be staying at the surface; if there were no argument or opposition, then the reform had not touched the heart of the problem. Real reform must come with system reconstruction, with impacts on traditional culture, and the touching of the people's heart.

Facing these challenges, therefore, we must be confident, accept and insist on the correct views, and strive to enact such views into practice. We must be bold enough to abandon incorrect opinions and admit mistakes. The most important competence that reform requires is the distinguishing of right from wrong.

## Notes

1. In the 1980s, the first ten years of my career, my question was, "How on earth are human thoughts generated?" As I stepped into my research career, I combined my question with my research interest in youth math learning.
2. In issue 6.
3. In issue 3 in 1987 and in 2 in 1990.
4. In issue 4.

5. During the second ten-year period of my career—1989–1998—I coordinated the project A Prospect of 21st Century Chinese Mathematics Education; during 1999–2000, I coordinated the development of National Mathematics Curriculum Standards in Compulsory Education (Trial Version).
6. In two volumes, 1992 and 1995 respectively.
7. I published a version of this paper in *Disciplinary Education* 1 in 1998.
8. During the first decade of twenty-first century—the third decade of my work—I was fully focused on planning, organizing, and promoting the new round of Chinese national precollegiate educational curriculum reform. This ten-year period was a "roller coaster ride," the track like a sinusoid in Mathematics.
9. In the late 1980s, I experienced the entire process of the development of the 7th edition math teaching syllabus.
10. I chaired that team. The procedure was then exported to other curriculum standards development teams in other disciplines.

# Part II

# The Exchanges

# Chapter 9

# The Exchanges with Alicia de Alba

*William F. Pinar*

I organize my summaries of the exchanges[1] by individual members of the panels, devoting a chapter to each, emphasizing their dialogical character. These are individuals speaking with other individuals, colleagues, scholars, intellectuals asking and answering questions that are at once personal, regional, national, international, yes transnational, as each site of exchange expands (and contracts) as it acknowledges and on occasion incorporates the specificity of the other. Each of these scales of exchange is threaded through the individuality of the panel members and the project participants.

I was struck not only by the intellectual range of the exchanges, but also by their style. Informed by a professionalism that seems to me self-consciously cosmopolitan—and not only due to the international participation in this specific project but also, I speculate, by our awareness, as professional educators, of our embeddedness in the "global village"—these questions (often of clarification) and answers (usually of explanation) were provided with diplomacy and careful candor. Cosmopolitanism hardly requires courtesy,[2] but the ethical engagement with alterity starts with clarification of difference. One cannot disagree with what one does not comprehend.

Summarizing these exchanges renders concrete the abstraction "internationalization." In addition to gaining a glimpse of actually existing individual scholars and appreciating the situatedness of their "complicated conversation," it is necessary to depersonalize these exchanges and attend to the concepts that inform curriculum studies in China. In doing so, concepts become detached from those who express them, freeing them

to circulate, encouraging additional questions of clarification, efforts at reformulation, on their own terms and as they might influence curriculum development and research in other countries, even worldwide.[3] Individual scholars hardly disappear but their concepts do not coincide with their professional personae.[4]

While cosmopolitanism commits us to juxtaposing the abstract and the concrete, these exchanges I organize more arbitrarily: by individuals in alphabetical order. This sequencing scrambles the ideas—they occur in not necessarily logical or historical order—as it preserves the spontaneity of the exchanges, which occurred over a period of a year or longer, and not according to any formal schedule or required duration. Panel members and participants engaged each other as each other's schedules and moods allowed, sometimes with weeks (and on occasion months) interceding between question and reply. The exchanges between some were extended, others not. Due to these lapses in time and differences in duration, it is attentiveness to text that creates continuities of conversation. While I intended a second set of exchanges—follow-up questions and replies—the renowned Alicia de Alba fell ill during that period. In this chapter, then, we read the questions and commentaries of the first round only.[5] They are also "first" in another and unintended sense, as they pose fundamental questions not only for curriculum studies in China, but also for the field worldwide.

The primacy of the particular sounds through these exchanges, perhaps especially so in the questions posed by Alicia de Alba, who was quick to acknowledge the background—sometimes national, sometimes intellectual, at times personal—of the question she was posing, acknowledgement that enabled the scholar-participants to respond in likewise fashion. Whether asking about the classroom in China after the reform or about the roles played by textbooks or mathematics, Alicia de Alba was posing profound theoretical questions concerning the character of culture and its artifacts, its conveyance in institutionalized and internationalized conversation, its situatedness in national (including intellectual) history, in global politics, in what the future portends. Simultaneously concrete and abstract, then, the exchanges with Alicia de Alba strike me as also an exemplary case study in cosmopolitanism.

## Chen Yuting

"What is the importance of the debate over 'teaching models'?" Alicia de Alba asked Chen Yuting. What do you mean by "diversity"? "Does your use of it reference diversity within China or worldwide?" Third, what "do

you think about the 'Plan' [the reform], specifically the 'empowerment of schools'?" Finally, de Alba asked if Chen finds any relationship between the current reform and postmodernism.

"Thank you so much," Chen Yuting began her response, "for inspiring me to think more deeply on the important issues which we are undergoing now in China. I am trying my best to answer your questions, although I find it very difficult to express myself clearly, partly due to my poor English and partly because due to cultural differences."

"Teaching models" has indeed become a widely used phrase during the last ten years, Chen explained, and "most of these have been designed by the schools themselves." The phrase itself (teaching models) derives from the new curriculum reform initiated by the Ministry of Education in 2001 that advocated "democratic, interactive classrooms that emphasize lived experience and the existing knowledge of the students." In 2001, Chinese classrooms were still dominated by traditional teaching practices, such as "telling-memorizing." Teachers were "reluctant" to change and principals were unsure how to "lead." It was a kind of double bind. How could principals ensure that students' examination results would "rise rapidly" while achieving the requirements of the new curriculum reform? Teachers were also conflicted: not only had they attended traditional schools, they had also been trained to teach traditionally and in fact they did so. But now they were directed to teach in "democratic-interactive" ways while at the same time "teaching for examinations," preparation for which required, they felt sure, teaching by "telling and memorizing."

In these conflicted circumstances, there were principals who tried to design "teaching models," that is, a set of "teaching procedures" that teachers could "follow" in their own classrooms. Teachers were instructed to follow these whether they wanted to or not. Usually the models were designed according to the time segments allocated to various teaching-learning exercises. One of the "most famous" teaching models during the last seven years has been the one associated with the Dulangkou Middle School, a rural middle school in Shandong Province. This school became "famous" for its "three-three-six" teaching model. The first "three" in the sequence denotes the three characters of the model. These include: (1) arousing students' enthusiasm for the learning exercise to be completed in a discrete amount of time, (2) enabling students to complete different assignments at different levels of complexity, with "excellent" students tackling the most difficult learning tasks, and (3) teaching more knowledge at a "fast pace," because "students are supposed to learn more during class." The second "three" denotes that classroom teaching is "a kind of self-directed learning" with "three learning modules: (1) pre-learning before class, (2) demonstrating in class what students have prepared, and (3) feedback.

"Six" means that there are "six steps" in one class: (1) expressing what was learned in pre-learning before class, (2) establishing clear and definite learning objectives for that specific class, (3) studying by cooperative learning, (4) demonstrating what students learned in earlier stages, (5) reinforcing important knowledge, and (6) evaluating. This "three-three-six" model also has another name: the "10+35" model. That is, in a 45-minute class, teachers can lecture for no more than 10 minutes; the remaining 35 minutes is reserved for students to "learn by themselves" or in "groups."

Using such teaching models, Chen continued, school leaders "can easily observe or even control the teachers' teaching," but what they are observing is "only" the "general classroom atmosphere" or "specific teaching steps." Directed to "take actions without adequate theoretical or practical preparations," Chen reported, "many teachers follow the reform instructions without questioning, without making adjustments according to their circumstances and professional judgement." This "way of reform," she notes, "cannot bring real change to the reality of 'teaching for examination.'"

The popularity of "teaching models" at the school level of reform indicates to Chen Yuting that a "dilemma" exists in efforts to reform the "traditional classroom." While schools have been given "more freedom" to "design their own ways" of reform, many fail to respect or cultivate the "subjectivity of teachers." Many continue "top-down" management because they believe it to be the "most efficient." Moreover, many teaching models are designed so that students can achieve "higher scores" on examinations. "Inquiring" or "making experiments" are "not valued." Instead, students are asked to do more "pre-learning" and/or "more homework," and their after-school time is then increasingly occupied. There is insufficient time for students to pursue their own interests. "To conclude," Chen wrote, "I think the past ten years has been a period of trial-and-error. It is understandable that teaching models have been designed for all teachers in one school." But Chen looks to the future, not the past: "It is better to move on than to remain on the spot."

Like the phrase "teaching models," Chen explained, the concept of "diversity" has also been used widely in China during the past "several years." Usually it references the "diverse development" of senior high schools, as prescribed in the "official documents." There are, generally speaking, two types of senior high schools in China. Usually "separated," one type is the technical school; the other is the "ordinary" senior high school. "This year [2012]," Chen continued, the Ministry of Education published "opinions on promoting diversified development of ordinary senior high schools." In it, the ministry advocated "local control," the "diversification of talent training," and it required each senior high school to become more "student-oriented."

Senior high schools are "ranked" and students enter "the corresponding one" according to their "final examination results" at the end of their nine years of "compulsory education." All senior high schools, "no matter where they are" or at what level they are ranked, "teach for examinations." With such objectives, senior high schools are "developing homogenously" and therefore "students' creativity is not easy to cultivate." Given these circumstances, the Ministry of Education called for "diverse development" of senior high schools. "Diversity" now is "mainly characterized" by "different philosophies of schooling," and "strategies" designed to "make the philosophy come true." As examples, Chen Yuting cited the Rizhao No. 1 Middle School in Shandong Province that proposes to construct a "harmonious and generous educational culture," and the Tianjin Foreign Languages School, committed to "open education." The ministry's call for the "diverse development" of senior high schools in China encourages principals to "think more locally," and in "school-based" terms. This constitutes, Chen suggested, "big progress," considering the "homogeneous development" that was characteristic of the past. "As an educational researcher who works closely with principals and teachers," Chen told de Alba, "I have been working very hard to encourage conversations that enable them to think more critically about their teaching traditions."

## Cong Lixin

In Mexico, Alicia de Alba tells Cong Lixin, we have a "serious problem" between "national culture" and "traditional culture." In Mexico, the problem is not "awareness." It is a "cultural, political, economical, ideological, educative and specifically curricular problem." Such a complex problem requires "cultural contact." She asks for Cong's comment. China's cultural traditions "always influence" Chinese researchers, Cong replies, "even when they are unaware of it." She allows that cultural complexity and the tension it produces "always arouse my interest and thinking," but that "finally, what I pursue is its explanation and interpretation insofar as it affects the status and development of Chinese education."

## Kang Changyun

Finding the paper by Kang Changyun "interesting" and "important," Alicia de Alba began this exchange by pointing out that in Mexico textbooks are

"a nodal issue too."[6] Since 1960, textbooks have been "free" for "all" students in Mexico. In many instances, textbooks were the "only books" in "many" Mexican homes. Acknowledging Kang's assertion that "textbooks must not constitute the curriculum" as well as his conclusion that the fate of textbooks, and by implication that of the current curriculum reform in China, depends in part upon the "outcomes of rivalries among various interest groups," Alicia de Alba's first question was: "Can you develop your conception of curriculum in an explicit way?" Acknowledging Kang's association of cultural identity with national pride, her second question concerned cultural identity: "Do you think possible and suitable to work on identity and cultural issues in a wide way, furthering the national pride?"

"Many thanks for your response," Kang began, "I appreciate you taking your precious time to read my paper and share your thoughts with me." He added: "In my view this itself is an important contribution Professor Pinar is making through this SSHRCC[7] project, that is to nurture and promote meaningful intellectual conversations among scholars worldwide." Kang's courtesy continued: "Thanks particularly for your encouragement and those insightful questions, which are thought-provoking big questions as well. I hope you will find my attempt below helpful and your further comments are sincerely welcomed."

Kang acknowledged that "compared with textbooks, curriculum is a broader concept." The curriculum references the "whole system" of K–12 education, in which the textbook is "only a 'node' of the more inclusive concept which would include curriculum objectives, curriculum structure, curriculum standards that confine the content." For Kang, "textbooks present the content, as well as inform evaluation and management." Kang suggested that a "diversity of textbook options should be made available for students and teachers." The provision of textbook options represents, he continues, "an essential condition" in the "realization of any curriculum reform objectives." For decades, he notes, there was a monopoly on textbooks. "My essay," Kang wrote, "is an effort to describe the various kinds of difficulties and challenges Chinese reformers face as they attempt to transform the situation." The current reform has challenged this monopoly on textbooks, which means it has challenged the inherited economic interests that comprise the monopoly. It was no surprise, then, "to witness the strong protests from those interest groups." Even when the economic dimension of the textbook is "hidden" and completely "invisible," its impact is "enormous." The "advocates" of the current reform, "more often than not," were "scholars" with "limited knowledge and experience in handling such conflicts." Because they were focused exclusively on the "educational" aspects of the curriculum, they were "predestined to lose the battle." In addition to its "educational" aspects, curriculum also exhibits

"economic, political and even ideological dimensions."[8] Reformers' inattention to these must lead to "ultimate failure," with the reformers themselves becoming "sacrificial offerings." Kang concluded: "An inclusive understanding of the multi-dimensional properties of the curriculum is one of the most important revelations that Chinese scholars could draw from this particular reform case."

Responding to de Alba's question concerning culture, Kang affirmed that it is "undoubtedly" is one of the key elements of curriculum. China has a "long established history in educational theory," with the "concept of curriculum appearing first during the Tang Dynasty," then "explicitly articulated by Zhu Xi, a Confucian scholar in the Song Dynasty." Subsequent generations of scholars developed the concept into a "system based on the unique educational practices" of ancient China. Since 1949, as a result of the "excessive influence" of the former Soviet Union and the "devastation" brought by the ten-year Cultural Revolution, Chinese scholars "almost stopped" their study of curriculum. It was not until the 1980s that the "dialogue" with Western colleagues was "resumed." While Kang is encouraged by the efforts Chinese scholars have made to learn from their counterparts worldwide, "what I would strongly advocate is that Chinese scholars should cherish and benefit from the valuable cultural heritage of the ancient Chinese." He cautions against "any indiscriminate and uncritical copying or following of others' theories." Kang believes China has "entered an era of national rejuvenation." It is now witnessing an "unprecedented" curriculum reform with "unprecedented achievements" and "exceptional educational practices." Chinese scholars "should foster a mentality of openness and confidence," Kang continued, enacting the ancient Chinese wisdom of the "Golden Mean," with "all rivers running to the sea." While engaging in research and dialogue internationally, our "aspiration," Kang asserted, is "to carry on Chinese distinctive education and curriculum traditions," we work to "establish curriculum concepts" that will bear the distinctive marks of Chinese culture and history.

## Ma Yunpeng

"It is interesting for me," Alicia de Alba began her exchange with Ma Yunpeng, "that you had worked with the applications of Cuisenaire Rods in elementary mathematics teaching. I did too." For a "short time," at the beginning of her academic career, she had worked with children in a mathematics laboratory. Praising his essay, de Alba asked Ma: "Could you

explain what is the meaning of *effective change* in the relationship between curriculum and society?"

"Effective reform," Ma replied, "especially educational reform, is closely related to social development." Educational reform is a "product" of "social development." Social change "needs correspondent educational change." The current reform encourages the cultivation of students' "creativity" as well as their "practical skills." Among the reform's curricular objectives are "information technology" and "environmental awareness." These, Ma pointed out, are "directly related" to "social progress and development." Social acceptance—including parents' acceptance—is a prerequisite to the implementation of the reform. "For example," Ma explained, the reform promotes a "comprehensive evaluation" of students but "society"—and specifically "parents"—tend to focus "exclusively" on the College Entrance Exam. In fact, this aspect of contemporary Chinese curriculum reform—"comprehensive evaluation"—is meeting with "great resistance."

Then Alicia de Alba asked: "Do you think the reform of mathematics curriculum plays a central role in the current development of China? Why?" Ma replied: "Because it is considered a crucial parameter of human development, the discipline of mathematics has become a central subject in recent decades." Despite its curricular centrality, Ma does not regard the subject as addressing "directly" the matter of "China's development." Subjects such as science, technology, and economics play more "central roles" in China's development, Ma suggested, because these subjects have "direct" and "visible effects" on social and economic development. Compared with these subjects, mathematics plays only an "indirect role."

## Zhang Hua

Responding to the essay by Zhang Hua, Alicia de Alba expressed her "congratulations" for a such "systematic and supported historical and theoretical document." From it, "I have learned much about curriculum studies in China." Questions followed: "Could you please explain and develop more the idea of internationalization?" It is "valid" for all countries, and, if so, "why?" Then de Alba posed her second set of questions: "You have said that Liang recognized three typical cultures in the world: Western culture, Chinese culture and Indian culture. Do you consider that these are all there are? Or are these the three cultures that informed curriculum research and development in China?" Next, de Alba asked Zhang Hua: "Could you develop more the idea of cultural communication?" Then: "Do you consider that the core of relationship amongst

cultures is Western-Eastern?" Finally, de Alba wrote: "Let me tell you that I am especially interested in the presence of China's traditional background in current curriculum reform and movements because in my country, Mexico, we have a complex relationship in curriculum field with the original cultures. So, I would like to know the next: In the current reform what is the presence, significance and importance of China's traditional cultures in its curriculum field, especially vis-à-vis its relationships with its Western influences?"

Zhang Hua thanked Alicia de Alba "very much for your enlightening questions!" From your "wonderful comments and questions, I have touched and appreciated the great fascination of Mexican culture. Meanwhile, I understand myself better."[9] Zhang Hua starts with de Alba's question concerning the "meaning and idea of our common cause of Internationalization," specifically her question concerning its character and its appropriateness for all nations.

"I think internationalization and democratization are two sides of one coin," Zhang explained, "and they are dependent on each other." He defines internationalization as "the principle of democracy applied to the international relations." Referencing John Dewey's notion of democracy, Zhang Hua defined "democracy as the sharing of common interests" through "liberal interactions among different social groups." Internationalization, then, requires "respect" for "cultural uniqueness, complexity, and differences" as we "increase" the "sharing of interests," and "promote interaction and cooperation" among "all" countries and cultures. That, Zhang Hua concluded, is the meaning of "cultural democratization." He cautioned: "If the principle of democracy were overlooked and destroyed, 'internationalization' would deteriorate into cultural invasion or international autocracy." Democratization must be "extended" internationally. "Otherwise it will be incomplete or even false." Zhang Hua concluded that "the integrity of internationalization and democratization is the fundamental meaning of cosmopolitism, and the basic philosophy guiding our international relationships. It is valid for all nations."

This idea is not unprecedented, Zhang Hua pointed out, noting that "John Dewey fully realized the relationship between internationalization and democratization." Nearly 100 years ago, Zhang continued, Dewey acknowledged that science, commerce, and art "transcended" national boundaries. These endeavors are, Dewey noted (1916, 103), "largely international" in "quality" and "method," as they involve "interdependencies and cooperation among the peoples inhabiting different countries." Paradoxically, Dewey (1916, 103) noted, "national sovereignty has never been as accentuated in politics as it is at the present time." Zhang Hua notes that "in today's era of information, the "conflict" between

"internationalization" and "national sovereignty" intensifies. This intensification of "paradoxical" tendencies constitutes for Zhang "the main problem" that "threatens world peace." He emphasizes that "the meaning of our cause—internationalization of curriculum studies—is not limited to curriculum field. It is an organic part of the project 'for the better world.'" He asked: "How to do it? I think John Dewey's suggestion is still strong and effective." Again Zhang Hua referenced Dewey:

> The emphasis must be put upon whatever binds people together in cooperative human pursuits and results, apart from geographical limitations. The secondary and provisional character of national sovereignty in respect to the fuller, freer, and more fruitful association and intercourse of all human beings with one another must be instilled as a working disposition of mind. . . . This conclusion is bound up with the very idea of education as a freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims. Otherwise a democratic criterion of education can only be inconsistently applied. (1916, 105)

Guided by this vision of realizing social aims through the freeing of individual capacities, Zhang recommended: "Let's carry out more and more cross-cultural communications and cooperative research work in curriculum field." This also means, Zhang suggested, that "we should help our students develop international literacy or cultural democracy in order to create a freer and more peaceful world."

The second question Alicia de Alba posed concerned Liang's cultural typology—Western, Chinese, Indian. Specifically, she asked about their typicality, and their roles in curriculum studies in China. In 1921, Zhang began his reply, "the last Confucian"[10]—Liang Shuming—published his most famous book: *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies*. It was in this book that he invoked notions of Eastern, Western, and Indian cultures. The "main aim" of Liang Shuming's notion of cultural typology, Zhang explains, is to "emphasize" the "uniqueness" and "specific values" of "each culture." Historically, Liang Shuming was writing against the "pessimism" concerning Chinese traditional culture that had become commonplace after the "fierce invasion" of Western culture. While the "main representative" of cultural conservatism, Liang Shuming was no "narrow-minded conservative." He appreciated that "the national" depends on "the international," that we are "obligated to respect" the "uniqueness" of "national culture" as we "learn" from cultures worldwide. These three cultures are "examples," not the only cultures in the world. "I think it is impossible to list all the cultures in the world," Zhang Hua appreciates, "because cultures are fluid and ever-changing, not fixed like mineral deposits."

Responding to Alicia de Alba's third question—"Can you develop more the idea of cultural communication?"—Zhang Hua elaborated "my idea" on cultural communication along "three levels." On the "axiological level," Zhang suggested, cultural communication is, "essentially," the "seeking" of "cultural democracy." On the "epistemological level," cultural communication conveys "interculturality" and "intersubjectivity." Here, Zhang referenced the work of Edmund Husserl. On the "methodological level," communication is "cultural dialogue," or "complicated cultural conversations," as he referenced Pinar's term.

Concerning de Alba's fourth question—did he think the movement of cultures is from West to East?—Zhang's answer was short: "No, I don't." In Mexico, he wondered, is the main problem the relationship between Western and Mexican culture: "Am I right, Professor Alicia de Alba?" In China, he explained, since the 1840s, the "main problem" has been the relationship between Western and Eastern cultures. The long-term project is twofold: (1) "How to deal with the conflict" of these cultures while (2) "fully incorporating" the "best parts" of Western cultures, "especially the spirits of democracy and science," into Chinese traditional culture. This will preoccupy the Chinese, Zhang thinks, for "the next a few centuries." Its scope and duration are not intimidating, however: "I believe we can complete this work, just as Chinese people successfully incorporated Buddhism and Islam into Chinese culture during the past 2,000 years."

Responding to Alicia de Alba's last and "inevitable" question—about the relationship between cultural traditions and curriculum field—Zhang Hua acknowledged that "the role of Chinese traditional culture had been growing less and less influential after its illegitmation since 1949." It was "during this period" that the "Chinese curriculum field disappeared." Today, however, Chinese traditional cultures are becoming "more and more important." First, the wisdom traditions, especially Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, have "metaphysical meanings" for Chinese curriculum field. Indeed, "they are the intellectual base for understanding curriculum." They can provide "axiological ideals (social and life ideals), epistemological foundations (including cognitive styles), and methodological enlightenment." Second, these Chinese wisdom traditions also have "concrete meanings." For example, Zhang continued, many Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist classics can be converted into school subjects and activities for students to explore. From Confucius to Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, and many other Confucians, the experience of curriculum development and teaching can be reconceived, reactivating ancient wisdom so it becomes "today's educational experience and wisdom." Third, Western cultures and Chinese national culture can

"interact and cooperate with each other," and "form a mutual beneficial relationship."

Then, as if to illustrate that last point, Zhang Hua asked: "You mentioned, Professor Alicia de Alba, you have a complex relationship in the curriculum field with the Mexican original cultures. I wonder: how and why? How can one creatively interpret traditional cultures to meet present needs is important for the reconceptulization of curriculum studies. I think we can learn from each other in this point." It is on that point that Zhang Hua concluded: "Again, thank you so much for your wonderful questions and comments."

## Zhang Wenjun

"I have been interested in postmodernism since late 1980s," Alicia de Alba began her exchange with Zhang Wenjun. "Let me tell you that for me it has been a very significant opportunity to learn your perspective." She continued: "In your chapter you reference Hao Deyong's use of the metaphor 'cocoon' to criticize Chinese traditional curriculum culture from a postmodern perspective." De Alba asked: "Why, do you think, that from postmodernism perspectives is it possible to criticize and analyse the core problems of Chinese culture as well as the core problems of Western culture?" Do many researchers in China work on such problems, she asked.

Zhang Wenjun explained that Hao Deyong used "cocoon" as a "metaphor of cultural development and self-restraint." Various cultures, he had argued, incorporate ideas and practices and then spin them together, weaving their cultural threads thicker, stronger. "During this process," Zhang continued, "cultures constantly seek more power and control, and finally achieve hegemony, at which point they become conservative, closed, exclusive, even arbitrary." Hao Deyong's "cocoon" metaphor could serve as a "parable" of Foucault's concept of "discourse." Like the episteme, various moments and cultures coalesce into distinctive phenomena; Hao provided a genealogy of medieval, modern Western, and Confucian cultures, construing them as distinctive discursive formations.

Zhang Wenjun answered Alicia de Alba's second question by affirming that there are many researchers and educators working on/with postmodernism. But because postmodernism is no "simple and consistent theory," she adds, "it is difficult to do postmodern research and achieve status among mainstream curriculum academicians." There is, then, "no fixed group" of researchers working on postmodernism in China.

## Zhou Huixia

"I have enjoyed your paper," Alicia de Alba told Zhou Huixia. "It has meant for me a great opportunity to learn about education and the curriculum field in China." Alba found "especially interesting" the section in his chapter on "ancient" curriculum in China, specifically the idea of "knowing inter-person relations" from Confucianism. The "five relations" and the "six skills" communicate a "very important, strong and humanistic concept of education and I would like to know more." Alba wondered if Zhou has found any Western perspectives that can be "linked with Confucianism?" In the second section, she continued, focused on curriculum during 1840–1949, "you wrote that 'the Westernization Movement also prepared for and incentivized the New Cultural Movement (1915–1923)' and you also talked about the Chinese intellectuals who went to West to study." Alba asked: "Do you think the Westernization Movement had had a direct influence on education during the Cultural Revolution?" Finally, referencing the conclusion of Zhou's essay, Alba noted that "you affirm that 'the new curriculum reform itself has some problems: its theoretical basis is unclear or inappropriate; reform plans are incomplete; traditional culture is missing, etc.'" She asked: "Could you explain in which senses traditional culture is missing? Why this is important in the current era?"

"Thank you for your questions to my paper," Zhou began, "I cherish very much these opportunities for intellectual exchange. I will attempt to respond your questions according my understanding." Regarding Confucianism and Western perspectives, Zhou suggested that "both systems contemplate and explore the value of life and the ultimate meaning of world. They could learn from each other." Both systems position humanity "at the center," and "reality" is the departure point for understanding, in contrast to "theology." Both systems express "positive attitudes towards life," including a tendency toward philanthropy. Zhou quoted Confucius: "One who wishes to establish him/herself should help others to do so; one who wishes to succeed should help others succeed." She added: "Western humanism advocates individual liberation and freedom, believes in powers within people, and celebrates the perfection and nobleness of human nature."

Confucianism's influence in the West can be traced to the eighteenth century, Zhou continued. In the twenty-first century, with the establishment of Confucian schools, "all around the globe, another wave of Confucianism went West." From late sixteenth through the eighteenth century, there were many translations of Chinese cultural documents—including Confucian—in Europe. "Most" of these translators were

missionaries in China. Leibniz and Montesquieu were among those European philosophers who "highly appreciated" Confucian morality, but "the one who discussed and praised Confucianism the most was undoubtedly the Enlightenment thinker, Voltaire." In fact, Voltaire was regarded as the "European Confucius" due to his "great admiration."

The influence of Confucianism in Europe, Zhou continued, was threefold. First, Confucianism "shared many similarities with ancient Greek philosophy and Christian culture in terms of ethics and moralities." This enabled Westerners to appreciate Confucian ethical and moral doctrines. Second, Confucianism was praised in the West because it advocated a "moral, civil, and humane politics." It emphasized "keeping society in harmony through moral exhortation." Its endorsement of patriarchy, Zhou continued, "ensured the long stability and safety of society." Third, despite its patriarchy, Confucianism "opposed" any "hereditary system" and "supported meritocracy." Its tendency to "value people" and "devalue the monarch" positioned people as central to any political system. Quoting the well-known phrase—"water can carry a boat and can capsize it as well"—Zhou pointed out that a monarch "should implement benevolent politics and rule people with morality." He believes that "such propositions are compatible with democratic politics in which the bourgeoisie pursue equality and human rights."

Zhou suggested that Confucianism cannot be said to exert "direct influences on Western educational ideas," but it might influence them "indirectly" due to the "strong connections between Confucianism and Western democratic politics." As an example, Zhou cited Dewey's "proposition" that education plays an "important" role in "constructing a democratic society," a view that "shares common ground" with "officialdom is the natural outlet for good scholars" and "running nation by morals" in Confucianism.

Responding to de Alba's question concerning a connection between China's Westernization movement and the Cultural Revolution, Zhou said there was none. Launched by progressive aristocrats of the feudal landlord class, Zhou explains, the Westernization Movement aimed to "improve and empower the nation." During the movement, advanced ideas in Western cultures were imported; many Chinese students were sent abroad to study. "This," Zhou continues, "is the beginning of modern Chinese education." The movement failed due to the "corruption" and "degeneration" of bureaucrats in landlord class.

During the Cultural Revolution, Zhou reminded, the proletariat was overemphasized, as "intellectuals were forced to work in factories and on farms, learning from workers and farmers." Those who read Western classics were condemned as "bourgeois" and it was claimed that they "suffered

from physical and mental humiliations." Many were isolated from their families and loved ones, and many teachers were separated from their students. During the Cultural Revolution, education science was repudiated as an essential academic discipline; in schools academic terms were shortened arbitrarily; forms of teaching changed and teaching plans were ignored; exams were cancelled. The curriculum was in chaos, and all of this occurred in the name of education reform.[11] During these "ten years of chaos," education was "greatly damaged," as educational institutions at all levels descended into a "state of anarchy." New untrained teachers violated the principles of education science, as teaching and learning fell into "total chaos."

Responding to de Alba's question concerning the current curriculum reform, Zhou asserted her belief that what is key is the extent to which "principals can actively and correctly lead the reform implementation," and to what extent "teachers can actively participate in the reform," a participation that depends in part upon "teachers' understanding of and passion for the reform." The extent to which teachers are "actively involved" in the reform is influenced, Zhou believes, by "traditional culture." By this phrase Zhou is referencing, she says, to Chinese tendencies to affirm the "collective" over the "individual," the preference for "constancy," the authoritarian demand to "respect and value officials," and the acceptance of the "mediocre" in traditional school cultures. Each of these impacts teachers' capacities for participating in the current curriculum reform.

For Zhou, the current curriculum reform represents "the most fundamental change of educational concepts since the founding of the Peoples Republic of China." Traditional ideas of learning "should be changed," she affirmed. "Students should be the center of learning." People's "traditional" educational ideas constitute "obstacles" to "thoroughly implementing new curriculum concepts." To promote the effective implementation of the reform, Zhou suggested, teachers "should be guided" to establish "correct attitudes," they should abandon "traditional school culture." Replacing these should be "positive school cultures" characterized by "openness, creativity, democracy, cooperation and competition." Policy makers should formulate measures that "fundamentally solve problems" such as the "College Entrance Examination system." Until "that problem" is solved, Zhou concludes, "the current reform cannot be fully implemented."

Alicia de Alba posed crucial questions of culture, history, and internationalization to the scholar-participants. The exchanges concerning postmodernism illustrated how ideas imported from the West circulate in contemporary China, recontextualizing them in extant intellectual traditions and repurposing them according to local circumstances. What is clear is that "internationalization" is no predictable process, in part

because it incorporates culture, history, and politics. Ideas are recontextualized according to local—to foreigners maybe invisible—legacies and agendas. The questions de Alba posed—and the replies the scholar-participants proffered—render concrete the elusive character of cross-cultural communication. Despite the familiarity of concepts, meanings differed: "diversity" for one and "democracy" for another.[12] Not only does "internationalization" require us to attend to the research of colleagues working in places perhaps far from our own workplaces, it also requires ongoing study of the intellectual histories and current usages of concepts, indigenous and imported. A question can disclose traces of that past and glimpses of present circumstances; it can also express something unresolved in the history of that individual, and/or in the nation or region s/he might personify. That "something unresolved" we struggle to give conceptual form to, to express in conversation, and to understand with others. Such understanding enables resolution, however provisional and situated. "Cultural contact" invites transformation. In her questions, Professor Alicia de Alba "performed" the theory of "cultural contact" (2011, 64–66) that she herself had formulated, disclosing on occasion the situation in Mexico and inviting her colleagues across the Pacific to reply in kind. That self-disclosure—and the reciprocity it encouraged—initiated this sequence of "exchange," enabling us to begin to understand this distinctive nationally based academic field that is curriculum studies in China.

## Notes

1. A form of dialogical encounter in which clarification of concepts and their recontextualization are primary, I first use "exchange" in the curriculum studies in South Africa project (2010, 221), but it doesn't show up in the index until the curriculum studies in Brazil project (2011a). It reappears in the title of the final chapter in the curriculum studies in Mexico project (2011b, 207).
2. As my instances of cosmopolitanism underscore (Pinar 2009).
3. As I suggest in my final chapter, due to the current reform—its national scope, its international character, its political and cultural complexity—Chinese curriculum concepts may well assume the internationally influential position that US concepts used to occupy. This is no promotion of a new hegemony but an acknowledgement that in an era of internationalization, those concepts considered crucial globally may well originate in countries where curriculum development and research is most dynamic. Today that country may be China.

4. When that occurs, personal animosities trump conceptual innovation and the field resembles more a social club than an academic discipline (see Pinar 2013, 74).
5. As it turned out, many exchanges enjoyed no second round of questions, comments, and replies.
6. Due to the importance of textbooks, Alicia de Alba suggested the formation of an international study group focused on textbooks.
7. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
8. Here is a point of confluence between Chinese and US curriculum thought (see, for instance, Pinar et al. 1995, chapter 5).
9. This statement recalls de Alba's theory of "cultural contact," which she discussed in her essay in the curriculum studies in Mexico project (see de Alba 2011, 64–66). There she underscored that intercultural communication entails shifts in the identities and subjectivities of those so engaged. Cultural contact cannot prevent conflict but it ensures that the participants will not remain static. Culture itself changes; indeed there is "the emergence of new cultures" (2011, 66).
10. Zhang Hua attributes this phrase to Professor Guy S. Alitto.
11. Especially the devaluation of education science will sound familiar to US readers, as in the name of "reform" the academic discipline of education has been widely disparaged. As "reform" enters its intense phase of privatization—curriculum moved online and developed by corporations not scholars and teachers (Pinar 2013)—other chaotic features of the Cultural Revolution that Zhou lists become evident in the United States.
12. Recall that "diversity" denoted the distinctiveness of schools, in contrast to the concept's association with "culture" in North America. And Zhou associated Dewey's assertion of a conjunctive relationship between education and democracy with the Confucian view that "officialdom is the natural outlet for good scholars."

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# Chapter 10

# The Exchanges with Tero Autio

*William F. Pinar*

A distinguished scholar of North American and North European traditions,[1] Tero Autio's questions associated these traditions with curriculum thought in China, ancient and contemporary. There is a sweeping summary of these in the exchange between Autio and Zhang Hua, as well as in quite specific discussions of the status of curriculum reform in Finland and China, including the role of the textbook. Disciplinary issues were scrutinized as well, as Autio's exchanges with Cong Lixin and Zhang Hua indicate. And the question of internationalization—the import of and resignification of postmodernism seems a central instance—concerned each of those engaged in this complicated conversation across continents, land masses with not only very different histories, cultures, and politics but with very different terrains of thought as well.

## Chen Yuting

After reading Chen's chapter, Autio exclaimed that he was "simply amazed by the avant-garde nature of your paper," especially its contrasts with "current, perverted Western trends in education and curriculum policies." Except, it seems in Autio's home country of Finland[2] where, he emphasized, the views Chen Yuting articulates are well established: schools are relatively autonomous and authorized "to interpret and translate (not 'implement'!) the national framework curriculum according to local or regional needs." Finnish teachers play a "decisive role as

curriculum theorists and decision-makers." Indeed, many of the "best teachers exercise academic freedom in their work," and "they can make their own teaching materials, should they choose." "All this is guaranteed by the total absence of nationwide, external tests: the only exception is the national matriculation exam (consisting in most cases 4–8 subjects according to the student choice) at the end of the high school. All the other tests, assessments and evaluations are teacher-driven." Given this reality, Autio continued, "it is legitimate to speak, in the Finnish context, of how teachers and schools transform reforms rather than how reforms change schools."

Chen thanked Autio for "sharing your observations on Finnish schools' autonomy in interpreting and translating the national framework," adapting curriculum guidelines to local or regional needs, and, especially, "teachers' decisive role as curriculum theorists and decision makers." She added: "Your comments outline the main reason for Finnish success in education." The situation in China is different. "It is at most the first light in the morning," Chen wrote, "because teachers don't have the tradition or the related knowledge to enable them to make their own curriculum." Teaching-to-the-test is the tried-and-true way to implement curriculum; teachers don't have the professional preparation to enable them to act as curriculum theorists and decision makers. "What I am suggesting in my thesis 'school as reform subject,'" Chen added, "is that there are signs of more light" in the "ongoing process of curriculum reform."

Autio was curious. "To what extent, in your expertise judgment, the avant-garde experimentations in Tianjin are acceptable in intellectual, political, and educational terms and applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, in other parts of China?" For Autio, this is a "very interesting question, because I think every country that is striving toward high-level education in the current, globalized context should consider adopting the kinds of principles you are recording in your paper." Chen told Autio that he can find "similar experimentation in other provinces in China," in part because the education system in China is "centralized," so that reform is replicated everywhere. It seems, she added, that "every province shares similar obstacles in the process of transforming."

"The idea of schools as reform subjects," Autio writes to Chen, "would imply what many curriculum theorists have advocated, e.g. the preference for difference over standardization and 'benchmarking.' Never have I seen 'difference' articulated so explicitly as a guiding beacon of educational reform!" The Chinese reforms seems, then, "in strict opposition" to the Anglophone "learner" discourse where it is deployed as a "political construct in scientific guises." Autio added: "I would like to know what is the intellectual and political history of the adoption of 'difference' and the related notions and preferences like 'empowerment' and 'school as reform

subject' in China." How did it come to play "such central roles in education reform at large and in restructuring schools, in teacher education pre- and in-service? What kind of intellectual, cultural and political struggles and conflicts have you experienced on the way?"

"This is a very difficult question for me to answer," Chen told Autio. The concept of "difference" in China is "quite different from that in Western countries." Terms like "standardization" and "homogeneousness" are not new in China due to "our centralized education running system. Recall that China executed a planned economy from 1949 to 1978 and during those years everything could be and must be planned, so it is not surprising that all schools were almost the same." Not until 1985 did the Central Committee of the Communist Party endorse reform in order to "empower schools." From that decision, "difference" among schools and districts "began to emerge," even if on a "small" scale, "differences under the supervision of standardization." The term "empowerment" is likewise relative in that schools are empowered only "a little." Chen underlined that "there is still a long way from regarding schools as reform subjects." One indicator of progress was provided by Xiong Bingqi, whose observation Chen quoted in her chapter. If the power of government recedes, reform is occurring. That power is expressed in testing, with which students and teachers struggle, exacerbated by parents' pressuring. Reform is assessed locally, including by shifts in school organization and in the pre- and in-service training of teachers. "For me," Chen tells Autio, "I have been working very closely with schools these past few years making conversations with principals and teachers. The most difficult obstacles I experienced were as follows: Intellectually, principals and teachers don't have enough knowledge or wisdom to deal with the complex reality due to the insufficient and sometimes inefficient pre- and in-service training; culturally, schools are accustomed to traditional ways of teaching so it is so difficult to change; principals and teachers are struggling for favorable inspections from the education department in charge of them and favorable comparison with others, so it is not easy for them to focus on the 'right' things. All in all, it seems that we are all in a big and very complex spider web and every step is influenced by others and can affect others. In this era of internationalization, the webs we are on are much bigger and more complicated than before." Chen's last comments render vivid, and perhaps slightly ominous, what in US scholarship is characterized as the "relational" character of curriculum reform, development, and research. We are caught in a web not of our making, threatened by power we cannot defeat, which, if we move with dexterity and discernment, we can circumvent but not escape.

Being nimble requires professional judgment, in Chen's lovely and alliterative phrase "dexterity and discernment."

## Cong Lixin

"I found it very interesting to read your scholarly account of the interlinkages and intellectual affiliations and differences between Chinese, European and Anglo-American education and curriculum theories," Tero Autio told Cong Lixin. His first question concerned the position of curriculum theory within the broader field of education. Referencing Eisner's and Pinar's insistence that curriculum is both the intellectual and organizational center of schooling and his own north European experience—namely, the "diminishing power of influence by the German *Bildung*/*Didaktik* tradition"—Autio asked for Cong's conception of curriculum's positioning within Chinese education. Second, Autio asked Cong about the "interrelatedness between politics and the economy and how it possibly affects as the incentive for reforms." "In the Western world," he added, providing the referent for his question, "as you well know, the economy increasingly set the standards for the curriculum and subjectivity formation in education." Third, Autio asked Cong: "How do you see the role of Chinese wisdom traditions in the current political and educational modernization process in China?" Finally, Autio asked: "How would you profile the intellectual, political and practical concerns and prospects in the Chinese curriculum studies and education reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization?"

Thanking Tero Autio "very much" for his reading and questions, Cong Lixin began her reply by noting that "for a long period of time, the concept of 'pedagogy' included the basic theory of education, including teaching theory, theory of moral education, and even management." Curriculum theory did not appear until the "late 1990s." Cong recalled a senior colleague who had concluded that the old-style basic theory of education had been vague, but that theories of curriculum and teaching risk being too superficial, overlooking basic theory. This observation, Cong noted, is "very pertinent." Specializations can be meaningful if they are not "absolutely isolated." Regarding Eisner's and Pinar's assertion concerning curriculum as the "intellectual and organizational centerpiece of education, I fully agree." While all pedagogies in "modern times" are "separated" from philosophy—due to the "development needs" of schools—Cong reminded that the school is "based" on curriculum and teaching. "Moreover," research on curriculum and teaching cannot ignore the basic theory of education, including specialization such as educational psychology as well as history of education. Philosophy and sociology of education are also invaluable—Cong includes these in any "basic" theory of education—but if either replaces that basic theory, harm is done. In China, Cong

concluded, highlighting any one specialization over a more comprehensive view is inappropriate. "For example," she continued, in explications of the various philosophies, education can go "missing." The same danger exists in exaggerating the sociology of education.

Cong found that Autio's second question concerning the "interrelatedness between politics and the economy and its relation to reform"—was "very extensive," to which she provided a succinct answer. In China, "political modernization" is still "in progress," encouraged by developments in education, the economy, and culture. This is a widely held view with which Cong agrees. Contemporary curriculum reform is caught up in this wider web of development. But not entirely: as compared with politics, the economy, science, and culture, Cong regards "basic education" as more stable. In 1980s China, she reminds, the politics and the economy of the "entire society" were "greatly changed," whereas "basic education kept considerable stability from content to form." While it is true that shifts in science and the economy directly influenced education, changes were "gradual." There have "probably" been two times, Cong continues, when change in education was "revolutionary." The "first time" occurred during the era of Confucius, when private education was founded. Confucius was "one of the first" scholars who founded a private school. The "second" occurred after the Opium War, when China began to import from the West conceptions of "modern education."

To Autio's third question regarding the role of Chinese wisdom traditions in the current political and educational modernization process, Cong started by noting that concepts of "traditional culture" and "traditional wisdom" are "related but not exactly the same." In general terms, she continued, much of Chinese "traditional culture" is "in conflict" with "modernization," but "conventional wisdom" less so. During the process of modernization, "we consciously abandon" those aspects of "traditional culture" that constitute "interferences," but "we generally advocate carrying forward the traditional wisdom." China's modernization originated in the West, and "conventional wisdom in the West makes outstanding contributions" to this modernization. "However," there are "differences" between "traditional wisdom" in the East and West. "Therefore, I believe each can complement the other."

To Autio's last question, concerning the "intellectual, political and practical concerns and prospects in the Chinese curriculum studies and reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization," Cong replied that "I believe the pursuit of most intellectuals shall be the same, although it is very difficult to achieve in practice." That shared, indeed "fundamental element" is academic research. "Of course," she acknowledged, it is "impracticable" to "break away completely" from politics. "However," she

cautioned, if research "only" serves politics, its "academic value" cannot be "guaranteed." That value—and "its practical function"—will be accorded "more importance" if it is comparable to research in other fields. "After all," educational "activities" are among the most "important practices of human existence." To meet the "various needs" of the "practical," a wide range of educational research is required. "However," Cong concluded, "I strongly believe" that, "eventually," educational research will exhibit a "certain 'pure' academic nature."

## Kang Changyun

In this first question to Kang Changyun, Tero Autio focused on the kindergarten, wondering about the use of textbooks in early education in China. In Finland, Autio reminded, "spontaneity" has always "won." In his reply, Kang explained that in early education in China the term "curriculum" is widely embraced but the "textbook" is not, at least not by "most scholars," even though "textbooks are commonly used in a large number of kindergartens particularly in rural areas." "In my personal point of view," Kang continued, the "textbook is a vehicle of curriculum." For "early learners," the textbook "should not be required." But "driven by economic interests, and the convenience of the administration, textbooks are widely accepted and used in China's early childhood education." Kang also suggested that due to "Chinese school culture and the level of teachers' professional competence, a majority of Chinese teachers are relying excessively on textbooks," which, in kindergartens, are renamed as "teaching materials." While "ordered and purchased centrally by different levels of administrative departments or schools, these "teaching materials' are widely used in the classrooms. But unlike in the primary or high schools, these materials don't have direct impact on students' academic achievement."

"Prior to the 1980s," Kang continued, "the curriculum in kindergarten and the primary school was subject and knowledge based." During the last 30 years, many Chinese scholars have come to accept (quoting Autio) that "children should be children, and they should not be subordinated too early to school-like practices." In many schools, however, the reality "is quite a different story." The Chinese government and many scholars are "determined to change the situation." Kang cited the recently released[3] *Guide to the Learning and Development of 3–6 Aged Children*, "which explicitly states that 'primary school-like practices' should be avoided and eliminated in Kindergarten." Though a "tailored curriculum is still needed for early education," Kang continued, "it should be different from that in

primary or secondary schools." The *Guide* describes a "framework" for the learning and development of "early learners" in China, Kang reported, encompassing five domains: health, language, social studies, science and arts. "In this sense," Kang concludes, "there is still 'an organized curriculum' in the Kindergarten, even though the concept of 'curriculum' is not used in the Guide."

Autio asked about curricular continuity: "How would you see the continuum of curriculum content in terms of textbooks from Kindergarten to the end of comprehensive schooling?" Autio also asked: "What principles of ideal child development (e.g. cognitive, moral, aesthetic, practical) together with ideal societal development are possibly discernible and present in the succession of the textbooks in China and how does it possibly differ from your observations in other countries?" Kang replied that "societal needs, learning contents, and child development" constitute the "continuum of curriculum," as each interweaves with each other, which "learning contents" reveals "most distinctively." In elementary education, Kang continued, the "most updated state curriculum standard adopts the 'comprehensive curriculum model' that attempts to weaken or interpenetrate the subjects'[4] boundaries," an approach similar to that for kindergarten. In contrast, grades 7–9 and grades 10–12 are subject-orientated, while acknowledging children's developmental distinctiveness and levels. Beginning from kindergarten and continuing onto high school, curriculum becomes "more distinct" and "obvious" in terms of "subject classification."

"What conclusions," Autio asked, "would you draw with your expertise on textbook design and production for teacher pre- and in-service education insofar as the content is always threaded through the subjectivity of the teacher?" Kang replied: "No matter how good a textbook is, it is the teacher who brings it into full function." While authorized by the state, textbooks function, Kang emphasized, as "vehicle" of learning, a "tool of teaching." He recommended that teachers "teach with the textbooks" rather than "teach the textbooks." Nor, he added, should textbooks become a "yardstick" for student assessment. No point, he muses, in "cutting the feet to fit the shoes." To better "accomplish" the curriculum, Kang suggested, "teachers should have the right to abbreviate and amend the textbooks wisely." Teachers should be "empowered" to choose various versions of the textbook, "although in reality teachers don't have such authority." Only those teachers who demonstrate relatively "high competence"—those who have mastered the textbooks—can make "fuller use" of them and thus become the "owner of contents."

From textbooks to the academic field that studies them, Autio asked about curriculum studies in China and the relationship of the field to

the current reform. Autio's emphasis was on the future: "How would you profile the intellectual, political and practical concerns and prospects in the Chinese curriculum studies and education reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization?" Kang replied: "I would argue that Chinese curriculum studies should maintain balance and harmony between learning Western cutting-edge theory and preserving Chinese traditions." For Kang, "wisdom" derives inspiration from the "Golden Mean theory" in Chinese traditional culture: "Going too far is as bad as not going far enough—this is my greatest concern regarding the Chinese curriculum studies." He pointed out that "China has its unique national conditions," including "five thousand years of culture and tradition." If it is true that the present historical moment is "special," with "many occurrences never previously existed or even heard of," Chinese educators, Kang asserted, should "seek the wisdom to find solutions within our own situation, including historical and cultural traditions, while maintaining an open attitude at the same time." In terms of modernization, "we have to admit that China is relatively behind," and so "a lot can be learned from the West, particularly in the education science fields." But "only by embedding in its own well-established tradition and wisdom," what it learns from the West, "can China confront the various challenges" in the ongoing curriculum reform. Then "Chinese curriculum scholars and educational researchers will be able to face the reality and establish their own identity to generate meaningful dialogues with scholars worldwide."

## Ma Yunpeng

To Professor Ma Yunpeng, Tero Autio reported that he read his chapter as a "metaphor" of the recent shift in conceiving curriculum in only organizational terms, that is, "as quite an unproblematic syllabus or content to be taught/transmitted/delivered towards more intellectual, more complicated understanding of curriculum." Ma's emphasis on mathematics makes the matter even "more interesting" given that "mathematics may be the only school subject that has arguably reached a mythological status and there are few critical questions about its educative potential, its cognitive, cultural and social meaning, its practical value in people's life." Referencing the shift in mathematics education in China that Ma discussed in the final section of his chapter, Autio asked: "What effect do you see that vibrant field of Chinese curriculum studies has possibly had upon the Chinese mathematics education in practice?" Autio then asked "How have teacher curricula been affected by this historically distinctive and radical

dynamics of the interplay between curriculum studies and mathematics education?" Autio extended this question about mathematics education to the complexity of the curriculum reform more generally, asking: "How to ideally meet and combine system interests with the design of subject matter curricula with the teachers' role and professional autonomy as curriculum theorists and practitioners?" Focusing his attention on the formalized field of curriculum studies, Autio concluded his questioning by asking a question he had posed to other participants as well: "How would you profile the intellectual, political and practical concerns and prospects in the Chinese curriculum studies and education reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization?"

Ma began with mathematics education, reviewing the main points of the reform, reiterating that its curriculum theory had been modified "dramatically." Among the casualties of the reform has been the replacement of "complex calculations" with "probability and statistics." In general terms, Ma continued, "The reform embraces new methods such as encouraging students to ask questions, to pay attention to problems in real life, and to guide students to inquire and explore." With these shifts in how students study math, there have been shifts in teachers' pedagogical practices; these have been "transformed as well." For example, "there are more student activities and communication in class. Students have more opportunities to ask questions." All is not perfect, of course: Ma acknowledged "problems in the reform process," among them regional resistance to reform by some teachers.

Regarding Autio's question concerning teacher education, Ma Yunpeng pointed to the addition of new courses in preservice teacher education, among them "Studies of Basic Education in Curriculum Reform" and the "Analysis of Mathematics Curriculum and Textbooks." Regarding the reform of pedagogy, preservice teachers now study case studies to appreciate how teachers practice after the reform. In-service teacher education has also been reformed, with a range of services now provided to help teachers adapt. In mathematics there is a "national training program" that offers courses titled "Concepts and Methods of Curriculum Reform," "Comprehension of Math Curriculum Standards," "Pedagogy Reform in Math Class," and "Case Analysis of Excellent Teachers and Teaching."

Replying to Autio's question concerning "system interests" and "teachers' professional autonomy," Ma focused first on the former: "A successful curriculum reform should set student development as the primary aim and promote the progress of society as its goal." During the last decade, curriculum reformers have designed curriculum that encourages "student development," that is, in the service of the "development of society, the economy, science and technology." Ma continued: "Additionally, I think curriculum

reform should become a carrier of cultural legacy." Acknowledging a "huge difference between traditional Chinese culture and Western culture," Ma underscored that "paying [so] much attention to student's individual success, especially student's academic performance," *confines* reform ideals and curriculum implementations" (emphasis added).

Regarding Autio's latter question, Ma insisted on the compatibility of both teachers' autonomy and the system's interests: "There is no doubt that teachers should become autonomous curriculum theorists and practitioners and that the design of subject matter curricula should meet the system interests." "However," he added, "there are always discrepancies among them," including keeping "current" and "stable" the "design of subject matter curricula." What in the West has historically been a tension—curriculum change vs. cultural preservation—is in Ma's assessment a simultaneity: the curriculum "evolves as well as carries the cultural heritage." Moreover, he continued, "the design of subject matter curricula can only reflect system interests to a certain extent." This is less a matter of control than of change, as the "subject matter curricula needs to be constantly updated and focuses on social issues in order to meet system interests." So teachers' professional autonomy seems a prerequisite of systemic success: "Teachers' professional development is the warrant of maintaining and enhancing teachers' autonomous functions in practice."

Concerning Autio final question, Ma gave credit to China's curriculum reforms, offering that "they have significantly contributed to the advancement of Chinese social, science, and technology development." It is, however, "the proliferation of exam-oriented education [that] draws most concerns." Despite efforts to focus on students' development broadly conceived, Ma worried that "more and more students consider examinations as the sole goals of learning." Focused on reputation and admission rates, "many schools" attend insufficiently to "students' creativity, autonomy, and practical skills." Ma concludes: "If there is no major political and cultural change in the society, the future prospects are worrisome."

## Zhang Hua

In his exchange with Zhang Hua, Tero Autio started by quoting Zhang's association of curriculum studies and liberalism: "Curriculum studies is a liberal cause. No freedom, no curriculum." Then Autio asked: "In terms of tripartite historical succession of the intellectual and cultural dynamics in China between liberalism, radicalism and conservatism I would be interested to learn how you conceive of liberalism and the discourse on

freedom between the period 1917–1948 compared to today's liberalization movement in Chinese education and curriculum theory/studies." Autio situated the terms as they have functioned in "two most influential basic paradigms for [Western] curriculum theory (*Didaktik* and Curriculum) and particularly in terms of their respective affiliations to the notion of freedom." The two traditions are embedded within "differing views about the world, science, society, the human subject, and, by implication, education." For Autio, "the decisive point of difference" is their "respective intellectual affiliations *in regard to freedom*." In the German–north European *Didaktik* tradition—that is, Autio noted, "uniquely reinterpreted in my Finnish context"—each individual is regarded as a "cultural and social force, not only as a cog in the societal machine." This conception of the individual provides "one theoretical base for high professional autonomy of Finnish teachers and education that is practically entirely free from external tests and evaluations." In this view, Autio emphasized, "*individual freedom is always constituted and restricted but not completely determined by the effects of power, external (social, political, economic) and internal, subjective forces*."

Autio distinguished between this north European conception of individuality—"*wherein intersubjectivity precedes subjectivity*"—and that associated with Anglophone liberal political theory that regards "*individual freedom as liberated from any external restraints whatsoever, particularly economic and political ones*." Autio linked liberal political theory—specifically, its "model of freedom and individuality—to Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), whose "mechanics broke the Aristotelian way of thinking about the movement of a particle." For Galilei, Autio explained, "movement is not something in need of explanation but it is the *status quo*, the basic state of affairs." In Galilei's "exceptional intellectual breakthrough in physics, all particles are in free motion if nothing prevents them from their smooth movement." In his famous *Leviathan* (1651), Autio continued, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) converted Galilei's "*idea of free motion into the idea of human freedom*." Autio summarized: "Free motion is paralleled by the freedom of a human subject to freely act upon her will." He noted the *Hobbes* argument—in the *Leviathan*—that "freedom essentially means the absence of resistance or interference." Hobbes's concept of freedom has been, Autio judged, "the prevailing preconception in liberal political theory over three centuries. Freedom means liberty to act upon one's will and desire without obstacles. Society and the nation-state in this liberal conception always denote a limitation and obstacle to freedom." This Hobbesian view was actualized, Autio pointed out, in "full force" during the economic globalization occurring after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Hobbesian terms, Autio continued, this neoliberal revolution

established the "free motion" of the economy as the "first priority" of the political agenda. "Actually," he added, "the political was replaced and subsumed by the economy." Now the "prime model even for the public sector" is the American business corporation. In the Hobbesian sense, "society and the nation state—with its traditional institutions—mean mainly the limitations for economic freedom." Accompanying the shrinking of the public sector at large, Autio noted, "the provision of education is imbued with the corporatist vocabulary and economic imaginaries and discourses." Parents and students are now "clients or consumers (sic!) of educational services" as "business managerialism" replaces "educational leadership." The "prime concerns of education and constituents of authentic individuality"—"morality, responsibility, vocation, desire for knowledge, intellectual and aesthetic curiosity—have been replaced by "accountability, production-line-discourses of 'quality' instituted by the vast array of surveillance, control and assurance systems."

"I really appreciate the intellectual history of the discourse on liberalism you summarized from Galileo Galilei to Thomas Hobbes, and then to the contemporary neoliberalism," Zhang Hua began. "I am particularly interested in the idea of freedom in the German–north European *Didaktik* tradition, especially the Finnish context where, just as you mentioned, 'each individual is ideally seen as a cultural and social force, not only as a cog in the societal machine.'" Zhang acknowledged that he visited Finland twice: "I am really impressed by the high professional autonomy of schoolteachers. Your ideas help me understand it well." Regarding the question itself—comparing liberalism and the discourse on freedom between the 1917–1948 period with today's liberalization movement in Chinese education and curriculum theory/studies—Zhang provided a genealogy. During the May Fourth Movement (1917–1927), the dominant meaning of "liberalism" derived from John Dewey, as interpreted and adapted to the Chinese situation by John Dewey's most famous Chinese student Hu Shih. In this conception, "liberalism advocates the unity of individual freedom, democratic society, and the inquiry spirit." Referencing Dewey's "The Future of Liberalism,"[5] Zhang noted that "both individuality and freedom are not certain, given, and ready-made things." Indeed, "they are cultivated under the background and by the support of cultural and physical circumstances." "So," Zhang Hua concluded, "individuality or individual freedom is no 'Newtonian atom' or 'Galilei's particle.'" While liberalism means, then, "becoming" and "interaction," it is "also a wisdom action. It needs inquiry spirit or experimental method."

Liberalism, Zhang Hua continued, is "historical" and "somewhat relative." Thus, "individual freedom and social democracy are also changing with time." If the "historical" and "relative character" and "inquiry spirit

of liberalism are overlooked," he warned, "it will result in absolutism." Under such circumstances, "liberalism will degrade into pseudo-liberalism." Individual freedom "fragments," is "closed," and becomes "narrow-minded." Then that so-called collective freedom that defends the group interests of industry and business will become "exclusive" and "rigid." "Conflict" between individuals and government becomes "inevitable," and "social violence and tragedy follows." During the May Fourth Movement, Zhang added, many Chinese intellectuals adopted the above idea of liberalism. He quotes Hu Shih: "The basic right is freedom. Majority rule is democracy. It is the essential of true liberalism that the majority power can esteem the basic right of minority."[6]

Concerning the relationship between the liberalism in May Fourth Movement and today's liberalization movement in China, "I want to emphasize two points." First, "Today's liberalization movement is trying to recover the early liberalism and formulate a new balance and dynamics of liberalism, radicalism, and conservatism. We can find it in the ongoing 'John Dewy craze,' the 'Hu Shih craze,' and the 'Chinese national culture craze' in today's China." Second, there is an "obvious trend" of neoliberalism since early 1990s, after the market economy system had been adopted. "I believe in true liberalism and hate any kind of totalitarianism," continued Zhang Hua, "but I hate that neoliberalist fatalism which justifies the interest of the minority against the one of the majority." He referenced Paulo Freire's criticism, that the essence of neoliberal discourse is the ethics of the market, "a perverse ethics" in which "those who cannot compete, die." Zhang asserted: "I hope today's Chinese education studies and practice will step out of the neoliberal discourse."

Turning to Autio's second question—"Your second group of questions is also big, deep, and insightful for me"—Zhang Hua referenced the "recurring question of the subject." For him, the "main" difference between Chinese wisdom traditions (Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism) and the mainstream Anglophone-Western psychologized curriculum discourse is that the former advocates a "holistic view of subject" while the latter is characterized by a "dualism of subject/object," especially evident in the behaviorist conception of the "learner." Zhang referenced his outline of the Chinese wisdom traditions very briefly in "Retrospect and Prospect: Curriculum Studies in China"[7] and told Autio that "I will systematically explore them in the future." In general terms, the "Confucian subject" is a "moral subject," Zhang Hua explained, "in pursuit of the harmony between the heaven and the human." The "Taoist subject" is a "natural" or "authentic subject," emphasizing the "naturalness, authenticity, and freedom of a human being." The "Buddhist subject" is an "insightful subject," advocating the "intuitiveness, transcendence, and ontological perfection" of a

human being. In United States, from "Franklin Bobbitt, W. W. Charters onto Ralph Tyler, then to contemporary technical curriculum discourses," dualism—a subject/object split—is evident. This is "the root of the crisis of curriculum theory." Then Zhang invoked Martin Heidegger who "wisely" suggested there is no "subject" and "object" originally in the world, but that human beings established them. "The more subjective human beings are," Zhang continued, "the more objective the world is. In curriculum field, the more subjective educational administrators and subject specialists are, the more objective students and their teachers are."

Concerning the commonalities between Chinese wisdom traditions and the various "post-" discourses, both oppose the "dualism of subject/object." That opposition provides "a common base" for their conversations. "But," Zhang cautioned, "we must realize the essential difference between them." Chinese wisdom traditions originated in premodern era, and the "post-" discourses are both the "reflections" and the "transcendence" of modernity. "I think the similarity of forms is more than the one of contents between them." Concerning the problems of the curriculum field, Zhang added, "to make creative interpretations on Chinese wisdom traditions is the academic mission of Chinese curriculum scholars, including me."

Next, Zhang Hua turned to the *Bildung* tradition in Europe, in which "I am very interested." But "frankly speaking," he told Autio, "I haven't studied it." According to "my very limited knowledge and understanding," *Bildung* means "self-cultivation" in a "collective cultural tradition," which is a "process of conversation" between an individual and a culture. "So," Zhang continued, the *Bildung* tradition has the "potential" to converse with Confucian traditions because they "share understandings" of "individuality, freedom, culture, education, and curriculum." If that is the case, it helps explain why the famous contemporary Confucian philosopher Mou Zongsan connected Immanuel Kant to Confucius and offered creative interpretations of their works. "I suggest that we can form a big project of 'curriculum conversations' based on *Bildung* and Confucian traditions." From Confucian traditions, "both the scholarship of mind (*Xin-Xue*) and the one of reason (*Li-Xue*) can help to establish new curriculum theories." Moreover, the "long tradition of curriculum practice from Confucius to Zhuxi and other Confucians are valuable in order to transform today's curriculum affairs."

What "intellectual initiatives and resources," Zhang asked, "can the Chinese wisdom traditions and present scholarship provide international curriculum discourses?" First, Zhang makes the point that Chinese curriculum studies have already contributed "a great deal to the world field," reminding us that the early Chinese curriculum scholar Cheng Xiangfan

(Franklin Bobbitt and Frederick Bonser's student) wrote the "first seminal synoptic text, *An Introduction to the Elementary School Curriculum*." During that period, Zhang reminded, "Chinese curriculum studies was an organic part of the world field." Chinese students and scholars "humbly" and "open-mindedly" learned from Western culture and "positively influenced" Western scholars. After John Dewey returned to United States from China in July 1921, Zhang noted, he published a series of "classic works." "I remember our friend William E. Doll, Jr. mentioned this fact in a talk at East China Normal University in Shanghai." Second, Chinese wisdom traditions and contemporary curriculum reform practices can provide "intellectual initiatives and resources to the world." For example, "Hongyu Wang and Jie Yu, among many others, have fully absorbed Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism and conduct crucial curriculum research." They are contributing to the field "greatly." Third, Chinese curriculum studies can provide "another perspective" to the various curriculum theories in the world. "More and more" Chinese curriculum scholars are studying "post-modernism, constructivism, multiple intelligence theory, autobiography, phenomenology, critical theory, feminism, and so on." In China, "we have a sub-field called 'comparative curriculum studies.'" All these research endeavors can provide "another perspective to worldwide field of curriculum."

Autio's third question to Zhang Hua concerned "the role of curriculum more broadly, beyond the school curriculum," referencing Zhang's assertion that "curriculum is not limited to school subjects for it includes the whole human life." Autio had asked: "How curriculum studies, from your point of view, is engaged with the traditional four 'boxes' of the educational sciences: history of education, philosophy of education, psychology of education and sociology of education? I am particularly interested to learn your points relate to transnationalism or cosmopolitanism in terms of 'subjectivity and its belonging' from the Chinese point of view and the role of educational sciences among other social and cultural studies/sciences in the Chinese context."

Zhang began his rely with a question: "What is curriculum?" This is "an eternal question" for "curriculum persons" to ask. "I will be answering it during my whole life," Zhang told Autio. "So far, for me, curriculum has physical and metaphysical meanings." In its physical meaning, curriculum is an "organic whole of teachers, students, subject matters, and environments," referencing Joseph Schwab's "Practical 3."[8] In its metaphysical meaning, curriculum is the "spiritual home of curriculum persons," referencing here "Pinar's ideas in *Understanding Curriculum* and in other curriculum works: e.g. that curriculum is a symbolic representation, that it has multiple meanings and understandings, that it is necessary to

have complicated conversions to understand curriculum, in one phrase, it *is* complicated conversation per se." In China, as a field, curriculum studies is "both ancient and young." As "practice" and "thought," it is 2,500 years old; as an academic discipline, it was established in the early twentieth century. After a 40-year interruption (1949–1988), the field of curriculum studies is now reestablished in China; it has been "growing fast and flourishing." The "educational sciences" in China are "very different" from those in Europe and the United States: "They are not formed by the 'four boxes' you mentioned. They have many branches. But," Zhang added, "it is a pity that they haven't stepped out of 'Kairov's Pedagogy.' I do think curriculum studies is playing and will play a more and more important role in the reconstruction of Chinese education studies."

Zhang Hua suggested that the "unique contribution" of Chinese culture is the concept of "all-under-heaven." According to Chinese wisdom traditions, he explained, "all nations, races, cultures, countries, and regions should belong to one big family. They share one heaven and one ground. So, the concept of 'all-under-heaven' implies 'soft' identities and 'soft' boundaries among differences. I think this conception has potential to reconstruct the meaning of cosmopolitanism." The "arrogance of rationality" is not limited to North America and Europe, Zhang continued, and curriculum research need not be structured only by the sciences. "I always learn from ideas from both the sciences and the humanities," and I adopt a "trans-disciplinary" perspective in doing curriculum research. "But I think curriculum studies is independent, unique and valuable."

To Autio's final question—"How would you profile the intellectual, political and practical concerns in Chinese curriculum studies and the education reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization?"—Zhang turned next. "My short answer to this wonderful question is: intellectually or theoretically, to construct Chinese curriculum theories based on our own wisdom traditions and the urgent requirement of educational democratization; politically, to build up a 'bottom-up' educational system focusing on the sharing and interaction of educational powers; practically, to realize the one hundred years' ideal of democratic education—emancipating every student, every teacher, and every school. That's what matters in the changing China."

## Zhang Wenjun

Tero Autio asked Zhang Wenjun: "What was the cause of the relatively and surprisingly early entry of postmodern ideas to the Chinese academe and

society?" Zhang began by referencing the facts that reverberates through the answers of others: the launching of the Open Policy in 1978, an event that changed China from a self-enclosed and ideology-obsessed country into one seeking social and economic development. "Learning from most developed countries was encouraged rather than forbidden," she recalled. The 1978 policy prompted the release of an "overwhelmingly pent-up desire for more freedom, including individual rights." Intellectually, this desire took the form of "seeking new ideas and theories," not only by intellectuals and professors, but by governments officials and indeed by people in "all walks of life." Not surprising, then, that postmodernism—an important development in Western thought—would be noticed by Chinese scholars and intellectuals.

"In many Western societies," Autio acknowledged, "there is a kind of intellectual discontinuity or break between postmodern curriculum theories and education policies and reforms. How do you see the future prospects in these terms in the process of China's modernization; will China modernize herself by postmodernization?" Zhang Wenjun replied that "this discontinuity exists in Chinese society as well." While postmodernism has provoked welcome reflection and theorizing in curriculum studies and educational research more generally, this reflection and theorizing is "not systematic and integrated." Its role has been confined to provided "perspectives" and even "alerts" concerning "further modernization." Zhang cited David Griffin's suggestion that China might modernize herself by avoiding the problems postmodernism has identified in the West.

"What do you think about the relationship between democracy and postmodernism in China?" Autio asked. The very fact that postmodernism was introduced into China, Zhang replied, demonstrates that the government was allowing "more freedom, which is very important for democracy." Postmodernism provides "a strongly subversive weapon to undermine discursive practices of certain kinds," she noted. Postmodernism "opened up more possibilities," including "alternative ideas" concerning the individual and society. In this sense, we can say that postmodernism "might contribute to the development of democracy in China."

As he had asked other participants, Autio asked Zhang Wenjun: "How would you profile the intellectual, political and practical concerns and prospects in the Chinese curriculum studies and education reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization?" Zhang replied: "It's difficult to profile the intellectual, political and practical concerns and prospects in Chinese curriculum studies and education reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization." She cited the great range of motives, commitments, and beliefs among Chinese curriculum faculty nationwide, many of whom focus on "the nation's power and competency; others are

more student-centered." Faculty are influenced variably by politicians, "some of whom are concerned only about steady development, while others are more concerned more about social justice and educational equity." Also contributing to the difficulty of answering the question is the great range of teachers and parents, "some of whom want children to be more successful academically, while others are more concerned about the happiness and health of the children." She concluded: "China's modernization will continue under the interactions of all those powers, informed by the context of global situation and relationships."

## Zhou Huixia

Questions of culture were evident at the outset of the Autio-Zhou exchange. Autio asked about "the distinctive features" of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism "from the educative point of view," and "what kind of educational totality—for instance, in terms of the relationship between the individual and society—would they create in your view?" Then Autio asked Zhou how she would "assess their intellectual, moral and political potential in today's education modernization and reforms in China?" Referencing how I[9] "set the issue—'the recurring question of the subject'—Autio wondered if "neo-Confucianism [is] now after its variegated presence in the Chinese intellectual history somehow manifest as a recurring question in Chinese educational and political modernization?"

In his second question, Autio asked about the "impact" of "pragmatism" and "Marxism" on the "dynamics" of "cultural" and "educational ideas" in China. Autio explained his linking of these apparently antagonistic traditions: "Marxism and pragmatism share, for instance, the preference—employing Hannah Arendt's distinction—for *vita activa* over *vita contemplativa.* The 'truth-value' in both schools of thought (sic!) is, boldly set, of 'what works.'" Autio noted that "this intellectual stance can turn harmful or detrimental in situations where things don't 'work' and when there would be needed the intellectual, moral, and practical resources available and provided by the imagination and *vita contemplativa*." He admitted that "I see restrictions in pragmatist thought in terms of its limitation to too hasty material, often visible and 'workable' aspects of reality." Autio worries that "this Marxist and pragmatist direct hands-on mentality alike may limit the aspiration toward a fuller awareness of the educational and educative situation," such as that referenced in the Brazilian curriculum concept of the "quotidian."[10] Autio asked Zhou: "How could you assess the Marxist and pragmatist influence in retrospect in the history of Chinese

education and how would you envision the future roles of those ideas? And how the shifts in balance between action and contemplation are present, in your view, in today's Chinese conceptual dynamics of subjectivity and society?"

Autio's final question to Zhou Huixia concerned the division between the "division of labor between private and public sectors." The background of his question is the situation in Europe, where formerly publicly funded sectors—such as health care—are being privatized. Thus far, education has been spared, but "the signs of more intense privatization of public education are in the air in many European countries." These developments, he wrote, are "quite discouraging." "Historically," he continued, the "public sector" functioned as a "vehicle" for the "moral" and "political ideas" of the "public good." The "intertwinement" of the "public good" and the "public sector" provided the "larger intellectual" and "moral infrastructure" for education. Autio then came to his question: "How do you see this situation in the present and future China and the changed relationship between the economy and politics that is behind the seeming demise of the public sector—and of society? Do we as globally connected economic regions have other than economic visions that seem to have supplanted all other big vistas?"

"I cherish such intellectually exchanging opportunities very much," Zhou Huixia began her response. Regarding Autio's first question concerning China's Buddhist and Confucian traditions, Zhou reminded that while Buddha regarded humans and animals as equal, Confucius's commitment to "benevolence" was restricted to humanity. In fact, the "beloved" for Buddha were one's intimate or related others. Buddhism transcends Confucianism concerning the ideal, as the former tradition posits "a surreal ideal world"—Nirvana—while the latter focuses on the secular world. Still, Nirvana is a "state of mind that everyone could achieve and experience." In "Buddha's mind," she summarized, "everything is natural and harmonious. Matter and mind, transience and eternity, finitude and infinity are no longer contradictions, but in perfect unity." Confucianism centered on "cultivating individual moral character," emphasizing "respect," whereas Buddhism centers on cultivating one's heart, stressing on "cleanness." Later on, Confucianism embraced "cleanness" and "finding one's true self," which also meant "cultivating one's heart." Thus, one Confucian doctrine suggests that "the study of mind and disposition manages one's internality, while serving the sovereignty and the country accomplishes one's externality." The humanities become key subjects for cultivating morality, and the teacher is constructed as a "person of noble character and integrity." In fact, "moral behavior outweighs knowledge." Buddhist educational practice, he continued, emphasizes practice, including "meditation."

As "mental and spiritual activity," meditation encourages the heart to focus, enabling understanding of the phenomenal world. Following nature in Taoism means respecting the individual's distinctiveness. Teaching "wordlessly" is a Taoist tradition that acknowledges students' subjectivities. Among the phrases expressive of Taoism are: "administrating people without forbidding," the "use of uselessness," and the "more skills you learn, the more ethics you lose." And: "The more you lose of what you have learned, the closer you are to inaction. When you are inactive, you can do anything."

Zhou Huixa quoted PeiRong Fu, a professor of philosophy at National Taiwan University, who summarizes the contributions of Confucianism to modern society as: "Discipline one's behavior; tolerate others, especially when they make mistakes; consume materials with thriftiness; and lastly, respect one's ancestors and gods." Taoism emphasizes "settling with self, reconciling with others, enjoying nature, and wandering about in Tao." The critique of contemporary society that Confucianism and Taoism offer is that "vanity and loss of internality are coming from the lack of communication with one's soul, which shatters one's life and leaves it incomplete."

Historically Buddhism has, Zhou continued, enjoyed great influence in Chinese educational philosophy. Neo-Confucianism can be regarded as a combination of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Yangming's School of Mind[11] absorbed Buddhist thought, especially Zen Buddhism, evident in Zhu Xi's six reading methods: proceeding step-by-step; reading thoroughly and thinking carefully; being open-minded and repeating one's reading; translating what one reads into action; reading actively and diligently; focus and persistence. Yangming's admonition to "inquire inside" is inspired by Zen's concern with self-comprehension. "Such thoughts," Zhou observed, "remain the cultural roots of contemporary education in China." "In my opinion," Zhou concluded, "Confucianism indicates a sign of resurrection."

Concerning Autio's second question, Zhou affirmed that "Marxism is positioned as the orthodox philosophy in contemporary China. The state prescribes the hours and content of Marxism courses in schools." Concerning pragmatism, Zhou also referenced the "May Fourth" or New Cultural Movement in 1919." America's "project method" was introduced to China around 1918, and at the 7th Annual Meeting of National Education Union in 1921, a special resolution was passed endorsing the "project method" in teacher education. In institutes around China the project method was taught as exemplary education.

Zhou judges American pragmatism as having had "some positive effects" on "Old China."[12] For example, the purpose of primary education was no longer reading many books and acquiring rich knowledge but

cultivating children's practical capabilities, skills, and habits. Pragmatism also had "many negative effects," among them an overemphasis upon "children's nature, instincts, and impulses." The "old education only focused on texts," but pragmatism "over-focused on individual's activities, hands-on, and 'learning from doing.'"

The current curriculum reform, Zhou continued, shares elements of early twentieth-century US pragmatism, namely a skepticism concerning constant testing and toward grades as the only indicators of learning and understanding. Education should cultivate not only social but also individual development.[13] In addition to pragmatism, contemporary curriculum developers and designers also draw upon postmodernism, critical theory, and constructivism. "Therefore," Zhou wrote, "I think the theoretical basis of the current curriculum reform is one of diversity." Such diversity is for some bewildering, Zhou admitted: "What is our core philosophy? Anti-tradition, return to tradition, or reconstruct culture?" Grappling with such complexity requires becoming historical: "Facing challenges in different eras, educators need to select and modify different theories." And so the future will bring continued interaction between "Western theories" and "local cultures." Such interaction requires contemplation, as "ideas are always prior to actions." Zhou judges that "the balance between action and contemplation is not in its best position in present China. The contemplation behind action is insufficient to direct action. We still lack philosophies that back up methods."[14]

Replying to the question concerning current and future relations between the public and private sectors, Zhou reminded that China is a one-party state with a centralized administration. In the Chinese economic system, public ownership is the "mainstay," and all other forms of ownership are "supplements." The primary principle of the political system is "democratic centralism," positioning the "public" as the "mainstream" in most areas of contemporary Chinese society. It is also the "will of the state." Such a system has "problems," Zhou acknowledged, including "low efficiency" as well as "corruption." Private education is expanding quickly in China today, he added, but it "rarely" draws upon the resources allocated to public education. "If the state encourages private education," Zhou observed, "its scale will increase rapidly." As a scholarly topic, the privatization of public education was in the 1990s "a hot topic." However, the conclusion reached then was that the "challenges in current system of education cannot be solved by privatizing."

Zhou then reiterated basic Marxist theory: "The economic base determines superstructure. Education belongs to superstructure." But he added: "Once the private sector becomes the mainstay of the economy, the political structure will change as well." If that occurs, then the question of

which sector—public or private—is in charge of education will have to be raised again. While China is a one-party state, "other parties participate in politics." The Communist Party is the "absolute majority" in political situations; as a consequence, the public sector is protected. But the private sector is proliferating, he allowed. About the future, he says: "I cannot imagine what the destination of economic development is in the future. But I feel that the overall negative consequences of economic development may override the positive consequences." "We need to care more about how we should live." Like the Buddha, "we should stand above everything" and "see this world" with "great wisdom." This is a "grand question, which seems far away from me." Perhaps it is a "childish thought," Zhou concluded, but "I want us all to live a simple and peaceful life."

It is an aspiration I share. But simplicity can be complicated, as these insightful questions and thoughtful answers illustrate. The similarities between Finland and China turned into differences as Chen emphasized the struggles Chinese teachers and administrators face in challenging authoritarian school cultures and—as Kang made clear—monopolies of textbook production. Asking if what Chen described in Tianjin is the case across China, Autio's question allowed Chen to acknowledge that in China, centralization *enables* decentralization, the standardization of diversity. Such contradictions need not be disabling, as the remarkable exchange with Zhang Hua suggests. Concepts are historical and situated culturally and politically; at times they exhibit blurred boundaries, an insight evident in the Zhou-Autio exchange over "the public." But these are "all-under-heaven," and, in this case, incorporated into the concept of "curriculum," itself the descendent of "pedagogy," as the discussion with Cong underscored. The latter is now subsumed in the former, just as postmodernism was recontextualized in debates over curriculum reform, itself a proxy perhaps for the future of the nation.

## Notes

1. See Autio 2006.
2. After teaching at the University of Tampere in Finland, Tero Autio accepted a position at the Tallinn University in Estonia.
3. In 2012, by the Ministry of Education.
4. Health, language, social studies, science, and the arts: see Kang, this volume.
5. In *The Journal of Philosophy* XXXII (9), 1935.
6. Hu Shih (2001[1948]), "What is Liberalism?" In *The Collected Works of Hu Shih: Philosophy and Culture*, xx. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.

7. Zhang, Hua and Zhenyu Gao. 2014. "Curriculum Studies in China: Retrospect and Prospect." In the *International Handbook of Curriculum Research*, second edition, edited by William F. Pinar, 118–133. New York: Routledge.
8. "As Joseph Schwab beautifully explicated it in his famous 'Practical 3' (*The School Review*, Vol. 81, No.4, 1973)," Zhang Hua wrote.
9. Pinar 2011a.
10. See Pinar 2011b, 206–209.
11. A sub-branch of Confucianism. (Translator's note).
12. China before 1949, the founding of the People's Republic. (Translator's note).
13. In my reconstruction of pragmatism, individuality is to be cultivated through the social, and vice versa. In other words, it is the reciprocity between the social and the individual that structures the relationship between democracy and education, although such conclusions must be modified according to time, place, and circumstance.
14. Perhaps Professor Zhou is right, but these exchanges suggest otherwise, that scholars in China are very actively engaged in long-term theory development—contemplation that informs thoughtful action.

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# Chapter 11

# The Exchanges with Janet L. Miller

*William F. Pinar*

While the range of topics was wide, Janet Miller's questioning positioned clarification at the center of the dialogical encounter. Not assuming that she understood familiar concepts now that they had been recontextualized in China, Miller requested clarification. Concepts are not free-floating universals but situated and specific, and Miller acknowledged this fact by regularly indicating the context of her questions: the United States. That ongoing process of contextualization—of self-situating[1]—is crucial in clarification. By situating concepts in one's own context, one is not necessarily retreating to the familiar. Indeed, in Miller's case referencing the usage of concepts in the United States was less about the United States than it was about clarifying the connotations of concepts embedded in her requests for understanding. By such specification, Miller enabled participants to focus their answers as they might not have been, had they been responding to the same questions in China, say with their own students in curriculum studies. In these careful, sometimes cautious, always illuminating exchanges, we witness the intellectual labor of "internationalization." It starts with clarification.

## Chen Yuting

Janet Miller asked Chen Yuting about the reference in her chapter to the Yueyang Street Elementary as constructing a "creative education mode called 'three combinations.'" Miller asked: "Could you please explain what

these 'three combinations' are? And please explain what you mean by "education mode"? Chen replied: "Three combinations" refers to the "combination of school, family and society." Combined, they "form 'joint power' enabling students to experience education more fully." The Yueyang Street Elementary School has relied on the "three combination pattern since 1979." Chen then clarified the phrase "education mode" by suggesting that "education pattern" or "education model"—similar to "teaching models"—may be more appropriate. What Chen was referencing, she explained, is "a set of education procedures or new education ideas that are aimed to transform a school quickly. It is usually generated by the schools."

Miller then asked Chen to explain what she meant when she wrote: "Tianjin also started to clean up the 'school within school' and each 'class within a class' in which students are charged extra fees." What do these concepts "mean" in China, Miller asked, and why would students be charged "extra fees"? Chen explained that earning extra money had received "tacit permission" so that some of the teachers created "a new school" within the extant school and offered "special classes." These required "extra fees." She continued: "The new schools or classes within state-funded schools usually offered better teachers and smaller classes; they are very attractive to parents who can pay the extra money." There are consequences of such practices, including "more inequalities." In the last decade, there have been efforts to "clean up" these "school within schools" and "class within classes."

Referencing Chen's discussion of "The Plan," which emphasizes "cultivating local schools' creativities," Miller asked: "What 'counts' for you, for other educators, as 'creativities'?" "Your whole manuscript," Miller continues, "emphasizes the importance of educators as 'active creators.'" Citing Chen's examples of teacher-research, Miller pursued this issue: "What 'counts' here for you in terms of these being 'successful' examples of these possibilities, given that you also point to the difficulties of 'top-down' attempts at school reform?"

Due to the centralized governance system in China, Chen replied, schools had enjoyed little autonomy. Faithfully following the orders of superiors meant little opportunity for curriculum development that addressed local—especially student—needs. "The government realized the consequences of a unified education management system all across China," Chen continued, "so the New Curriculum reform was initiated in 2001. From then on, local government and schools' creativities have been emphasized." The story is not so simple, she admitted: "But as the reform was carried out in a top-down way, some schools wanted to maintain the status quo. Some conducted reform in ways that were uninspiring for teachers and not supportive of students' creativity." But there are administrators

and teachers who appreciate fully the reform, Chen reported, and "they try their best to do the reform in creative ways to focus on students' overall development rather than on test scores." While few in number, there are schools in China that are (in Chen's phrase) "sparks of fire" in igniting reform. "My research interest," Chen told Miller, "is conducting case studies on those schools. I hope to document these Chinese experiences of transforming our traditional education system successfully."

Is "inquiry-based study" similar to the "project method"[2] in the United States, Miller asked. In the revision of her chapter, Chen replied, she changed "inquiry-based study" to "research-based study." This is a "brand-new form of study," emphasizing "students' group cooperation and problem solving ability." It differs from "project-based" learning insofar that it is a subject that is officially stated in the curriculum documents and that every school must include in their course syllabi. In the United States, Chen suggested, "project-learning may be more of a teaching method" than curriculum content.[3]

Is the stipulation of autonomy and vitality a "paradox," Miller asked? How can "top-down directed school reform" result in "vitality"? Chen replied: "For me, I have contradictory feelings toward the top-down directed educational reform because on the one hand, if there is no governmental intervention, too many schools will choose to maintain the status quo; on the other hand, schools may take part in the reform only superficially under management that is top-town." Despite these contradictory circumstances, there are, Chen reiterated, "principals and teachers who have actively responded to the call of reform and who have been inspired by theories and colleagues all over the world. Their schools or classrooms demonstrate vitality. These principals and teachers are the vanguards of reform." Miller asked Chen to comment on how "theories and colleagues" worldwide have influenced the curriculum in China. "Since 1980s, Chinese educational researchers have been working hard to understand international curriculum language through writing introductions of different schools of thought and through the translation of books.[4] If I tried to record the names of the books or writers, the list would be too long." Nonetheless, Chen summarized: "Since the New Curriculum Reform began in 2001, theories of constructivism, instructional design, curriculum development, and learning styles have been among the most popular theories imported from the West. By the way, I was inspired by your book *The Sounds of Silence Breaking and Other Essays: Working the Tension in Curriculum Theory*. It was translated into Chinese and I read it in both English and Chinese. I did research on your contribution to the autobiographical research method in my doctoral dissertation." More principals and teachers need to read such work, Chen insisted. To encourage

that, many schools are holding a "Reading Festival every year to encourage teachers to read more so as to enhance their professional development." It is these "multiple influences" that comprise "international curriculum languages," a phrase on which Miller focused.

In her second round of questions, Miller expressed her delight that her own work had proved helpful and that she looked forward to meeting Chen someday.[5] Miller focused on technical matters—citations and phrases that she regarded as requiring explanation—at one point referencing the US distinction between teachers as "curriculum creators" in contrast to "dispensers" of "predetermined versions of curriculum." Any "reform" of the latter would be welcome, Miller noted. Regarding other concepts—specifically Chen's use of "curriculum language"—Miller requested clarification, worrying that "international readers" will misread the phrase as implying that there is only one version of such "language." Internationalization means dialogue across national differences, implying the clarification of the proliferation of curriculum languages.

## Cong Lixin

To Cong Lixin, Janet Miller posed the following questions of clarification: "What counts as 'real curriculum research' for you? What do you mean by 'special' curriculum theories? How are you defining curriculum theory when you write that China accepted curriculum theory mainly from European pedagogy? Can you please explain and clarify this statement? And how are you distinguishing between curriculum theory and curriculum research?" Miller asked for Cong to comment on her claims that "theory" is also a "practice." Miller agreed with Cong when she acknowledged that her distinction between German and US research—that the former focused on principles and the latter on the individual case—is "too simple." Working in the United States, Miller continued: "I take curriculum theories [and theorizing] to undertake far more than what you describe as instruction theories (including curriculum studies) that explain and guide basic educational practice. I'm wondering if you can elaborate on this point?" Finally, Miller "wonders about the reasons for your contention that 'there is no absolute distinction in the research object between teaching methodology and curriculum theory, but [that] the curriculum is relatively independent.' Can you please elaborate on this statement? Further, what do you mean by 'research object'? What do you mean by 'the curriculum is relatively independent'? Independent of what? Of whom?"

Interpreting Miller's questions as "kind of similar," Cong Lixin resolved "to answer them together." In China, she explained, there was curriculum research before the 1980s but it was conducted under the concept of "pedagogy." Within the category of "pedagogy," she continued, there was "teaching theory," within which was formulated "a variety of theoretical points of view for the curriculum." Instead of concepts such as "curriculum objectives," "curriculum design," "curriculum implementation," "curriculum evaluation," and so on, researchers worked with notions of "teaching content," "teaching plans," "teaching programs," "textbooks," "teaching objectives," "teaching disciplines," and so on. Teaching was the core of pedagogy, and the broader field of "pedagogy" expanded around this core. "This is what I mean by 'special' curriculum theories."

To distinguish between "research" and "theory," Cong continued, requires acknowledgement of their blurred boundaries: "any research shall be carried out under the guidance of certain theories, whereas the result of any research will always show [the imprint of] certain forms of theories. Basically, that's why my chapter does not deliberately distinguish between them." Those three main "features" of curriculum theory (outlined in the chapter) refer to the "actual situation during that historical period, rather than to present a point of view…when there was no specialized 'curriculum theory.'" The distinction between German research paradigms (focused on principles) and American ones (focused on the individual case) is adopted from a Chinese scholar. "To your last question" concerning blurred boundaries between curriculum theory and teaching theory, Cong replied: "We still use conventional concepts, categories, highlighting teaching; curriculum theories were introduced from the United States after the 1980s, which are also prosperous and developing, and became a relatively independent discipline. This is the meaning of my use of the word 'independent' about which you asked."

## Kang Changyun

"The nightmare of the exam"—Kang's phrase—Janet Miller found "compelling and moving." Is it "still dominant" in Chinese schools? Is the curriculum still test-driven? Miller referenced these same realities in the United States, where school reform has focused almost exclusively on standardized test scores. "I have to admit that," Kang replied, "though it has been eased a bit by the curriculum reform, the problem caused by exam-oriented education is still left unsolved, which implies that a majority of Chinese students are still living the 'nightmare of the exam.'" Waking up

from the nightmare remains a goal, however. Kang pointed out that not only does the emphasis upon exams undermine efforts to diversify textbooks, the lack of diversity in textbooks helps to support the emphasis on examinations. He advised: "Scholars who work hard on Chinese education should figure out the relationship between textbook diversification and exam-oriented education so as to realize the program of textbook diversification, which would provide a great possibility to end the 'nightmare.'"

Quoting Kang, Miller wondered if the work of John Dewey had been an influence in reform efforts to reconstruct curriculum and compose textbooks attentive to "the development of every child." Miller explained: "I ask this due to your attention throughout your chapter to particular historical, political and economic influences in different eras. I'm wondering if some tracing of influential curriculum scholars and educational philosophers might inform your manuscript further?" "The answer is yes," Kang replied. "Since 1980s, China has embraced an open era; Chinese education has found itself welcoming various Western theories, including the work of John Dewey, which have played a prominent role in reconstructing modern Chinese education as well as this round of curriculum reform. The idea of 'for the development of every child' has indeed become a leading guideline of this reform and has been widely accepted and broadly studied by Chinese scholars."

Miller wondered about Kang's discussion of "kindergarten objectives" and efforts to encourage "activities [that] replace the knowledge structures in the curriculum." She asked: "Can you please elaborate on this statement, including how you are conceiving of and using the notion of 'knowledge structures' and how 'activities' in fact can and do replace them in these textbooks?" Kang replied: "Paying too much attention to the knowledge hierarchy and structures is another noticeable problem in China's K–12 curriculum." It is interwoven with "exam-oriented education." Traditionally, "transmitting the knowledge already known is one of the main functions in K–12 schooling," and the "hierarchy of knowledge" provides the "essential foundation and guide for the designing of curriculum content, and textbooks in particular." However, it is obvious, Kang continued, that such curriculum organization is developmentally inappropriate for many students in kindergartens and primary schools. "One of the major agenda items of this round of curriculum reform is reducing the difficulty and intensity level of knowledge acquisition, eliminating the school subjects' boundaries, as well as enhancing the connections between knowledge and students' daily life." Especially for "early learners, given their specific characteristics, both physically and psychologically, their curriculum should draw on activities with which they are familiar, instead of knowledge-orientated or knowledge hierarchy based textbooks."

For instance, science was traditionally taught "top-down" and "facts" were "transferred." In the reformed science curriculum, now called "Science Activity," there is "more emphasis on inspiring early learners' interest in science and developing their hands-on and inquiring abilities. What's more, the curriculum design focuses on children's hands-on activities and life-related materials to make the scientific knowledge more accessible and the whole class more dynamic."

In reply to Miller's request to Kang that he discuss his "important argument" that the curriculum and the textbook are concepts at two different levels—that is, the textbook is "subordinated" to curriculum—Kang replied that compared to Western countries, in China the textbook plays a "more critical role" because the "textbook and curriculum are interwoven with each other more closely," and the "curriculum is much more dependent on textbooks." Indeed, "if we want to list certain cultural characteristics of the Chinese curriculum, textbook-featured culture is indeed one of them."

Miller asked Kang to comment on the concepts of curriculum, curriculum studies, and curriculum theory, and speak about their relationship. Acknowledging the complexity of the concept of curriculum in scholarship and research, Kang defined "curriculum" as "a practice" dependent upon "meaningful studies." It is through the curriculum, he continued, that the purposes of education become realized. Purpose and practice intermingle, boundaries blur, and in China, Kang continued, "the boundary between curriculum practice and curriculum studies is becoming more and more indistinct, or, to put it another way, more and more practitioners are engaging in curriculum practice and the reform programs by applying research methodology and theory; meanwhile, more and more theorists are rooting their research work within the practice, inspired by practice to develop their action research and function-orientated theories." Kang concluded: "Curriculum practice is not only the essential soil and foundation for generating curriculum theory, equally important, it also guides the latter's development."

## Ma Yunpeng

"Throughout your essay," Janet Miller wrote to Ma Yunpeng, "you refer to 'theoretical issues' involved in curriculum development and implementation in China. Can you please identify some of these 'theoretical issues' and the scholars on whom you have most drawn in your own work?" Ma replied that he is referencing curriculum theories prevalent in China during

the 1990s, including the philosophy of curriculum, curriculum design and implementation, principles of curriculum assessment, as well as student learning and development. "The theories we studied and learned," Ma continued, "included those of Dewey and Bruner and those concerning constructivism, multiple intelligence theory, and postmodern curriculum." Responding to Miller's question concerning his statement that curriculum studies did not "exist" in China until recently, Ma affirmed[6] that "curriculum" had been a subset of "pedagogy studies," that his, Ma's, graduate work was conducted in "pedagogy" not "curriculum," and primarily on the teaching of mathematics. Piaget was a major influence.

Ma referenced Lee Shulman and Michael Fullan as well. In North America, Miller pointed out, these scholars are considered teacher educators, not curriculum scholars. "Admittedly," Ma began, "Michael Fullan and Lee Shulman are not curriculum studies scholars. However, when I focused my research question on curriculum implementation, I found Fullan's enunciations of how to understand reform implementation and factors affecting implementations (in his work *The New Meaning of Education Change* in 1992) had significant implications for my research." "Teachers play a key role in curriculum implementation," Ma observed, and so he focused his research on "teacher's curriculum decision-making and professional development." Shulman's work was helpful to him, as well as Ralph Tyler's and Denis Lawton's. Miller asked Ma to elaborate upon his references to "curriculum implementation theories and methods." Ma reiterated his intellectual debts to Tyler and Lawton, acknowledging as well Stenhouse, Schwab, Eisner, McNeil, and Goodlad, all of whose work "greatly assisted me in conducting my research and working in the field of curriculum studies and pedagogy. Their studies formed a systemic frame upon which I studied and pondered curriculum reform issues." Tyler's four questions and Goodlad's five levels of curriculum (ideal, formal, perspective, operational, and experience curriculum) are "very helpful in terms of understanding different kinds of curriculum in reality and studying curriculum issues at different levels." Methodologically, Ma affirms both qualitative and quantitative research methods, admitting that he uses "qualitative research paradigms such as ethnography, and the case study." Observational and interview methods—especially those of Hall and Hord but also of Stake and Yin—support Ma's study of curriculum assessment and implementation. "When I work with graduate students on curriculum implementation issues," he reports, "we apply and modify these methods to study curriculum implementation and we achieve good results." In reply to Miller's request for additional comments on theoretical issues embedded in implementation, Ma pointed to the significance of culture: "If there are any theoretical considerations, they are mainly around the relations

between curriculum implementation and the current culture. The reform design and implementation cannot be considered apart from cultural characteristics. The success of reform mostly depends on its capacity to adapt to the changing culture. Thus, cultural factors should be considered while assessing curriculum implementation."

In the second round of exchanges Miller recommended that Ma include—in addition to acknowledgements of Dewey and Bruner—references to various "constructivisms" (specifically multiple intelligences theory) and "postmodern theories" that inform his research. Miller pointed out that there are sometimes conflicts within and across these strands of research, and that it could be important to acknowledge how these surface in Ma's research. Such a genealogical acknowledgement could help "international" readers understand how various theories converged in Ma's research. Regarding the references to Fullan, Shulman, Tyler, and Lawton, Miller recommended that Ma add explanatory notes to his chapter so that readers can decode exactly what has been their influence in his thinking. Likewise, Miller requested examples of research—perhaps conducted by his students—that provide examples of the "levels and depths of curriculum implementation" and specified the research methods employed. Miller concluded her engagement with Ma's chapter by concurring with his underscoring of the significance of "cultural factors" in all aspects of curriculum research and development.

## Zhang Hua

Referencing the phrase "spiritual conditions," Janet Miller asked if Zhang Hua associates that phrase with the three major "wisdom traditions" he cites in his essay or if he is "gesturing toward other, perhaps broader metaphysical 'meanings' of 'spiritual.'" Zhang replied by acknowledging the significance of "the spiritual" in US curriculum studies, referencing the canonical work of Dwayne E. Huebner (1999). In China, the concept "spiritual" conveys moral meanings. Zhang cited Chen Yinque who asserted that "independent spirit and liberal thought" were the "basic value principles of a true intellectual." In this context, "spirit" means "moral personality," he explained. Zhang incorporates this meaning of spiritual in his more "general" use of the term, but one stripped of any specific religious or theological meaning. Instead, for Zhang spiritual means "intellectual." Miller responded appreciatively: "I would not have understood, until your excellent elaboration, that you are using 'spiritual' as meaning 'intellectual' or 'disciplinary.'"

Given his rejection of Kairov's pedagogy and the Soviet tradition, Miller asked Zhang Hua about the phrase "educational science." She acknowledged that her question derived from her location, that "science" in the United States has long been associated with "technical rationality" and "efficiency," in the present time with "high-stakes testing." Zhang Hua replied that "educational science" is an "umbrella term" that incorporates all areas of educational research. He disavows "technical rationality" although he allows that quantitative research has a role to play in educational research. But the "technical," he continued, is not the "essence" of curriculum. The core of curriculum is "personal development, social democracy, and knowledge construction." He summarized: So "practical rationality" and "emancipatory rationality" are "essential" for curriculum research. While Zhang Hua rejects "labels," he would prefer being characterized as an "educational humanist"[7] rather than an "educational technician." Kairov's pedagogy, he continued, and its Chinese variety—the so-called Special Epistemology of Education—is "essentially different" from scientific or quantitative education studies. It is ideological rather than scientific. Again Miller responded appreciatively, referencing the situation in the United States where "scientific" implies the "technical." She too prefers to be characterized—even criticized—as an "educational humanist" rather than an "educational technician."

Miller then asked Zhang about his claim of "the more international, the more national," wondering how he conceives each category and their interrelation. Worried about ahistorical celebrations of global "interdependence," she wondered how his understanding of these categories is informed by history and present global inequalities. The "international-national" distinction is no simple binary to be sure, Zhang replied, and he too expressed appreciation: "The ideas and questions you raised here, Janet, are very essential, for the growing tendency of internationalization and our specific cause: the internationalization of curriculum studies." Zhang's first point was that both "national" and "international" are "relational concepts," so that "we should understand them based on relational" not "atomized" or "entity thinking." Within China, for instance, "international and cross-cultural communications are necessary and inescapable." Zhang referenced the incorporation of Buddhism into Chinese life, dating it to the Han dynasty. "If one culture is too local, limited, and narrow-minded to pass the examination of international interaction," he reflected, "it will eventually disappear." Zhang suggested that the "international" is the basic condition of "national." Indeed, the "uniqueness of any nation, country, culture, and so on is the prerequisite for 'internationalization.'" By itself, internationalization risks "cultural invasion." Zhang concluded:

"Only if something is 'national,' can it be 'international'; the more national, the more international."

Zhang emphasized the "uniqueness" of each concept, of each phenomenon. He asserted: "No uniqueness, no relationship." Nationality references the multiplies histories and cultures of any single country but internationalization belongs to no one country but references the relationships among various nations, a "third space"[8] that is implied in notions of "interculturality" and "internationality." For Zhang, this noncoincidence between the "national" and the "international" implies a "critical consciousness," his next point. "Janet," he wrote, "I really appreciate and agree with your idea that we should not adopt 'romanticized' notions of the 'national' as well as 'international,' and simply 'celebrate' 'interdependence.'" These concepts must be embodied, evident in our "international communications." If not, "democracy will be a lie." Internationalization means, "essentially," "cultural democracy." Without "critical consciousness" we cannot construct a "real democratic internationalization." Without critical consciousness, we risk instituting a new form of "international oppression" in the name of "interdependence."

"I especially appreciate your extended discussion of *why* you feel it is imperative that 'national' and 'international' be regarded as *relational* concepts," Miller responded. "I too am convinced of this relationship." She noted that the concept of "third space" has become "contested" by postcolonial, poststructural, and feminist critiques. But "I agree with Professors Pinar, Aoki and you—AND I think too that we all must work to further theorize and complicate possible curriculum studies iterations of this important concept." Miller concluded: "I especially consider your notion of 'internationalization as a [possible form of] cultural democracy' to be a very important one to extend and promote in our constant and always on-going efforts to forge a 'worldwide but not the same' field of curriculum studies. Zhang Hua, your scholarship is *crucial in these worldwide field undertakings*," she emphasized, adding "and I am honored and humbled to be able to exchange ideas with you in this way."

## Zhang Wenjun

Responding to Zhang Wenjun, Janet Miller spoke of her own understanding of postmodernism—no "ism" at all, she wrote—insofar as that noun "suggests something complete, totalized, unified." For her, postmodernism represents a "social, discursive, cultural and political turn—a turn out of and away from the modern, from previously customary modes of

thinking and living." Less a "particular moment in chronological time" than "a moment in logic, or a rupture—a break—in modernist consciousness," then—Miller continued—"postmodern(ism) can be considered as an awareness of being within a particular way of thinking, language, and a particular cultural, social, historical framework." Miller's first question to Zhang Wenjun followed: "What does postmodernism mean in China?" She cited Zhang's assertion that there are "no such things as subjectivity or linear progress." For Miller, these are "postmodern" disruptions of "subjectivity" as fully conscious and unified. "I also am aware that poststructural theories point to the discursive, multiply dialogic, and socially, culturally and historically inflected effects on constructions of subjectivity. I am wondering if you might comment on these points?" Finally, Miller asked about Zhang's referencing of criticism of postmodern thought within curriculum studies in China, specifically its apparent inability to specify "curriculum practice" based upon such thought.

In her reply, Zhang Wenjun expressed agreement with Miller's definition, emphasizing the postmodern as a "moment in-between," including in-between "chronological ages, ways of thinking, discourses and disciplines." There are scholars in China, Zhang explained, who regard the postmodern as a "continuation" of modernity, an "aberrant difference from itself." So defined, postmodernism is not a "rupture" but a "difference." Other scholars stress the shift from modernity to postmodernity, suggesting it represents nothing less than a "paradigm shift." For some, postmodernism has its destructive version (often associated with the works of Foucault and Derrida) and a constructive version (associated with the works of Lyotard and Griffin). For others, the postmodern is primarily chronological, yes with its distinctive characteristics but as also "not yet" formed, as "in-between." In this third view, the postmodern promotes "conversation" and "understanding," including across economic, cultural, political, and gendered barriers. For many, however, it is "ridiculous" to discuss postmodernism in China, as China "remains" in a "process" of modernization; "indeed, China has a long way to go to achieve modernity."

Zhang Wenjun then thanked Miller for questioning the assertion that there is "no subjectivity." She allowed that she would amend her statement to say "there is no *solid* subjectivity." As a postmodernist, "I am aware of how the 'I' is historically, socially, discursively, and culturally informed," how crucial "intersubjectivity" is to the constantly changing character of subjectivity. Referencing Miller's third question concerning the emergence and criticism of "postmodern thought" in China, Zhang explained that it was the "practical need" that accompanied "social change" and that it was "educational reform" that had allowed "postmodern thought" to enter China. "When a man is seriously sick," Zhang wrote, "every kind of

therapy is recommended by doctors, friends, and relatives. Postmodernism seemed to some as another therapy to try." Critics scoffed at this analogy, Zhang allowed, but "obviously many don't even read postmodern scholarship" but only criticize it "from their own positions, which are traditional or ideological." She continued: "Because education itself is regarded as a practical project, the intention of borrowing postmodernism for use in classroom teaching and development is strong among educational theorists and teachers." Efforts to implement postmodernism are "always difficult, shallow, partial and limited." Were it to become "one unified or grand theory," postmodernism would be postmodern "no more." This situation "expels" postmodernism from mainstream curriculum theories and practices so that it occupies a "peripheral position."

In her second round of questions, Janet Miller expressed appreciation for Zhang's comments concerning the various "versions" of the "postmodern," writing: "It sounds as though you agree with my point that 'postmodern' is not so much an 'ism' in terms of any fixed 'meaning' or chronological period of time (as in, 'after' modernism . . .)." Miller also expressed appreciation for Zhang's "articulation of the four 'popular' versions of the 'meanings.'" She suggested that this be included in the chapter, adding: "Let me know what you think of this suggestion." Zhang replied with agreement, that additional clarification could be helpful. "You remind me to be 'other' friendly in writing." She wondered, however, if changing the chapter could be confusing, given that the conversations follow from the original version.

Reiterating her understanding of the postmodern as "disrupting" subjectivity as "unified" and "integrated," and as emphasizing its "discursive"—including social, cultural, and historical—character, Miller wondered if Zhang might "consider even deleting or changing the phrase, 'the nature of the human being . . .? 'The nature' still implies an Enlightenment version and vision of 'the human' as able to be essentialized, universalized as all sharing 'the nature of . . .,' etc. I'm sure that you saw this as part of my inquiry, but I'm just checking here, and perhaps suggesting this tiny further revision." Zhang Wenjun acknowledged that she was "immersed" in modernism, so that she sometimes saw postmodern scholarship "in a modernist way."

In response to Miller's request for "some examples of 'postmodern' curriculum work and theorizing," Zhang explained that "the role of postmodernism in China is breaking the ice rather than constructing new theories and practices." In addition to criticism of traditional conceptions of curriculum and instruction, postmodernism supports celebrations of "creative thinking and practice." She recalled specific references in her chapter—to the work of Hao Deyong, Yu Zeyuan, and Wang Xia—as

"examples" of postmodern scholarship in China. "Honestly speaking," Zhang Wenjun continued, "I myself am still bewildered which orientation I should choose, what issues I should address, what my contribution should be." Postmodernism is such a "broad" and "contradictory sphere, I've had the feeling I could say anything. . . . Sometimes I feel like an Italian standing in front of the Piazza Italia in New Orleans, Louisiana, wondering who and where I am." Then Zhang made a move reminiscent of William E. Doll Jr.—from postmodernism to complexity theory (see Trueit 2012)—and told Miller "If I think from an optimistic stance, I would say all the chaos might lead to a self-organization for a new order. I'll try hard to seek the point of transformation, and so will curriculum studies in China."[9]

## Zhou Huixia

Referencing "the large shifts in Chinese education and conceptions of curriculum throughout your overview," Janet Miller asked Zhou Huixia "if perhaps more academic citations might bolster your interpretations of these major movements and changes?" In his reply, Zhou provided five, summarizing each.[10] Miller then recalled when, in Zhou's chapter, "you mention several scholars who introduced Dewey's educational philosophies to China. You then state that they 'performed the concepts into practice.' Could you please give some examples of how they 'performed the concepts'? There are many and varying attempts to enact Dewey's ideas, and I think that readers would be interested in some examples here." In her reply, Zhou named Tao Xingzhi[11] as "the most representative educator who practices Dewey's educational philosophies in modern China." Over his career, Zhou continued, Tao implemented many reforms, all of which derived from Dewey's theories. His most famous experiment was the establishment of Xiaozhuang Normal School that Tao designed "to promote Dewey's ideas." Early on Tao realized that educational efforts "may, to some extent, successfully enhance people's literacy, but they have limited and slower impacts on social progress." Because the Chinese population was mainly comprised of people living in rural areas, Tao turned his attention to the countryside, asserting that "if we could help everyone in rural area live a fulfilling new life, then they will unite and establish a great new life for China." Zhou reported:

> Xiaozhuang Normal School opened on March 15th 1927 with 13 students and 10 teachers. There was no formal classroom facility. The only shelter

> was a tent. Most of the daily chores were done by the students. The school had two major goals: teacher education and village reconstruction. Tao believed that the aim of education was to cultivate a "healthy body, scientific thinking, peasants' skills, artistic interests, and the spirit of social reconstruction." In addition, Tao encouraged students to make friends with the peasants and actively participate in the political and social reconstruction of Xiaozhuang village.

Zhou emphasized that Tao's educational ideas were derived from Deweyan's theories: "School is society and education is life itself." To enact such US-born progressivism in China, Zhou explained, Tao had to adapt Dewey's theories to local conditions. In Xiaozhuang, for example, Tao "connected current social political situations to education under poor democratic political environment." Zhou judged Tao's practice as a "milestone in Chinese education history." His "combining of teaching, learning and doing" represented the "complete destruction" of "traditional" Chinese education. "Currently," Zhou concluded, "Xiaozhuang Normal School remains one of the cradles of Chinese democratic, experimental, and community-centered education. The school carries out Tao's educational principles at a cautious pace. Successful or not, the experiments in Xiaozhuang Normal School must inspire and benefit Deweyan scholars and educators around the world."

Miller recalled Zhou's assertion that "curriculum difficulties were increased." She asked: "What do you mean here? Could you please elaborate, and then give some examples?" Zhous replied: "This refers to the period from 1977 to 1984. The teaching syllabus had relatively large volume of content. Pedagogically, it contained more training exercises. For example, in the elementary school Chinese teaching syllabus, the requirements for 'learning Chinese words' clearly stated that students needed to learn about 3,000 commonly used words.[12] In the first three years, students learned about 2,500 words in order to establish the foundations for their reading and writing courses in the fourth and fifth years. In other words, the intention was to quicken the pace of learning Chinese words and to complete this task in the first three years. Fourth and fifth grades were to focus on reading and writing. Given the diversities of different locations, the content of teaching syllabus was reduced in 1985 and that decreased the difficulties."

Miller then asked: "You state that the 'objectives of new basic education curriculum reform centered around nurturing the human.' Does this emphasis connect in any way back to the 'ancient' Chinese curriculum 'objectives' of 'knowing inter-person relations'? Could you please elaborate whether or not you view this connection as strong or weak

or non-existent?" "Knowing inter-person relations," Zhous replied, "was first summarized by Mencius as the ancient educational objective which underlines inter-personal relations, among them relations between monarchs and his/her subjects, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, and relations among friends. This educational objective profoundly influenced Chinese feudal society. In feudal society, there should be affection between parents and children, obligations between monarchs and his/her subjects, distinction between husbands and wives, order between the elder and the younger, and trustworthiness amongst friends. Among the five relations, the relations between fathers and sons, and brothers[13] are the most fundamental ones. Sons should exhibit filial piety to fathers and the youngsters should demonstrate fraternal duty to the elders. When these ancient conceptions of 'filial piety' and 'fraternal duty' apply to society, they stipulate loyalty from subjects to monarchs and obedience from civilians to officials." In contemporary Chinese society, Zhou added, "the objective of 'nurturing the human' in the new curriculum reform emphasizes the centrality of students. Student development is the root requirement of education. 'Students are the core' is the motto of the new curriculum."

Referencing the current reform, Miller continued: "What attention, if any, has contemporary 'reform' paid attention to the complexities and difficulties of 'changing teachers' instructional action and improving students' 'learning approach'? In particular, what do you mean by students' 'learning approach'?" Zhou replied that the phrase "learning approach refers to student's basic behaviors and cognitive orientations in the course of completing learning tasks." As examples, Zhou noted that "students' cognition could be characterized as active or passive; they might work individually or collectively; engaged in inquiry-based learning or receptive learning." Reformers hope to "shift students' learning approach fundamentally, to guarantee student's learning activeness in using inquiry-based approach." To do so, the "new curriculum reform adjusts curriculum structure so that children have sufficient time and space for activities." Because the new curriculum reform positions students as central in the curriculum and learning as "active," the reform encourages "changing the way content knowledge is presented. It asks students to ask and solve questions constantly. Students could choose to receive, inquire, imitate, and experience knowledge according to the learning content and their own individual characteristics."

Shifting students' approach to learning, Zhou continued, means "changing teachers' instructional behaviors." Now educators are encouraged to teach "according to differences in learning content and student's needs." Doing so requires shifting the very idea of student

evaluation; now a "developmental evaluation concept is being widely promoted." Many teachers are attempting to use the "portfolio" in student evaluation, but due to the large student population, "such strategy is hard to practice." In reality, teachers should "gradually try to change their behavior and try new pedagogies in class. For example, teachers might encourage students to engage in group discussions; they might increase time for [these] activities, and they might use multiple methods to assess. At present, teachers are transforming their thinking. Their actions have not been completely changed yet, especially in underdeveloped regions."

Then Miller asked: "What attention has this contemporary reform paid also to developing teachers' increased capacity in curriculum design?" "With the deepening of curriculum reform," Zhou replied, "teachers are shifting from curriculum deliverers to curriculum designers." Teachers are "mostly involved in micro-level curriculum designing," namely the everyday school curriculum, converting "curriculum concepts and texts of curriculum standards into practice, curriculum implementation and assessment." Systematic curriculum development, however, remains uncommon. Several "experimental districts have made several attempts but they are hard to popularize."

Citing Zhou's closing paragraph, Miller noted that Zhou acknowledged that there are a "number of problems" in "implementing" this contemporary curriculum reform. She asked: "Might you more fully develop this last section to describe some current attempts to address these overarching and complex problems? These are problems that haunt educators all around the world, and it would be helpful to readers to have some insight into how Chinese educators, and curriculum studies scholars in particular, are attempting to address such issues." While the reform has made "great achievements," Zhou confirmed that there have been "problems." There are teachers who "complain that the old has not been thrown away yet, only the new has been added. Teachers are exhausted and children's backpacks are getting heavier and heavier."

"After a decade of reform," Zhou continued, China is "deepening" the reform and paying "more attention" to "classroom teaching." For example, there is more research on "effective teaching." Objectives are "shifting" from "pre-determined" to "generative." Several projects have been initiated at the national level: (1) Build a curriculum studies team at the national level; study, make decisions, direct, and evaluate important issues that affect curriculum quality. (2) Organize a national teaching and learning steering committee. Implement the support that the nation offers to elementary and middle schools, especially the special support plans to schools in the middle west rural regions. (3) Center classroom

teaching and learning in the curriculum reform. (4) Establish basic education standards; enhance exam evaluation reform. (5) Establish National Curriculum Teaching and Learning Exploration Funds and a National Curriculum Teaching and Learning Reform Special District. (6) Encourage trials in school systems, curriculum experiments in content selection and organization, teaching and learning, classroom formation, and assessment, which might lead to significant changes in elementary and middle schools.

As Zhang Hua pointed out in his chapter and during this exchange, the present is preoccupied with practice. The problems and promises of the contemporary reform are innumerable and complex, at once familiar to readers outside China (e.g., the test-driven curriculum) and riveting in their immediacy and importance (e.g., changing school culture). In these exchanges with Janet L. Miller, the scholar-participants underscored the aspiration of the reform. It is vast: not only does it aspire to changing teaching, it promises to change learning. It aspires to change not only the organization of both—from lecture to dialogical engagement, from memorization to discussion and activity—but the content as well, as questions of culture and functionality imply the incorporation of new curriculum concepts and materials. Historically informed, culturally sensitive, and (inter)national in origin, curriculum reform in China is an event of world importance.

## Notes

1. See Pinar 2010, 231–234.
2. This effort to encourage student-directed learning is often associated with William Heard Kilpatrick 1918.
3. Chen is right: see, again, Kilpatrick 1918.
4. Chen herself translated into Chinese William Pinar's 1994 *Autobiography, Politics, and Sexuality: Essays in Curriculum Theory 1972–1992*, originally published by Peter Lang in New York.
5. They did meet in March 2013 at a conference on teacher development held at Hangzhou Normal University.
6. As had Professor Cong in her exchange with Miller in this chapter. See also her exchange with Tero Autio.
7. Zhang Hua has been criticized as an "educational humanist" by Chinese colleagues; he cited Tan Bin, "On Students' Needs: Debating with Zhang Hua's Lecture 'Reconceptualization of Curriculum and Teaching in China'" in the *Journal of Educational Studies* 5, 2005.
8. Here Zhang referenced Aoki (see Pinar and Irwin 2005).

9. Zhang Wenjun added an addendum to her note, expressing her appreciation for Miller's "comments and critical suggestions. The conversation with you enabled me to think more about what to do next." Zhang is concerned with connecting traditional culture with postmodernism in ways that enable communication within the international field of curriculum studies. Additionally, she hopes to work with Miller's "autobiographical feminist methodology" to study and develop curriculum. And she hopes to work with postmodernism to "analyze China's curriculum phenomena as tragedy and comedy."
10. Wang, Zhan 2012, "Promoting Quality Education for Children's Healthy and Happy Growth," *Education Studies* 1, 65–68. Zhou summarized: "It has been thirty years since the Reform and Open-Up policy was issued. The achievement of 'two basics' [popularized nine-year compulsory education and basically eliminated illiteracy among young and mid-aged people. (Translator's note)] and the rapid development of primary education can be called a miracle in education history. Today, people are not satisfied with just having access to education. They long for high quality education. The foremost task in primary education is to firmly promote quality education and return to essence of education for children's healthy and happy growth. Thus, there is a need to enhance the awareness of promoting quality education, solid the key components of quality education, and establish a system that ensures the implementation of quality education." Yang, Jiujun 2009, "The Basic Ideas of Top-level Design of China's Basic Education Reform," *Jiangsu Educational Studies* 2009, 9A (3–9). Zhou summarized: "The basic ideas of designing the top-level of China basic education reform includes the 'three orientations' as guiding ideology [Education should orient to modernization, the world, and future. (Translator's note)]; the core value is the development of each student; the aim of the reform is to educate the new generation; the idea of developing and implementing curriculum overtakes 'discipline centered' curriculum. The curriculum reform is a systemic project." Zhang, Xiaodong 2010, "Returning to Life: The Transfer of Moral Education Policy," *Educational Studies and Experiments* 2010, 3, 32–35. Zhou summarized: "In the backdrop of policy studies, the analysis and organizing of China's elementary school moral education policies since the reform and opening up policy not only help us understand the functions of moral education from individual development's perspective, but also inspire us to construct new moral education policy views and fully perform moral education functions in the perspective of returning to life. Such strategies effectively realize the political and economic functions of moral education and pay attention to the value and significance of moral education to individual student's growth." Xu, Yuzhen 2008, "The Implementation of School-Based Curriculum,". *Educational Studies* 2008, 2, 53–59. Zhou's abstract: "The implementation of school-based curriculum not only allied with the needs and features of Chinese new curriculum reform, but also conformed to the assumption that school is a learning community and teachers are professionals. The implementation of school-based curriculum is determined by the dual nature of curriculum implementation as well as the nature and features of the new curriculum reform.

School-based curriculum resolves the problems existing in the 'experiment-promote' model. In return, the new curriculum reform provides a broader platform for school-based curriculum implementation. The conditions for implementing school-based curriculum include: at national level, the national curriculum should leave sufficient space for school-based curriculum; local governments need to provide policy, resource, technology, and research supports for school-based curriculum; schools need to possess the capability and culture of implementing school-based curriculum." Yang, Xiaowei and Wang, Kai 2004, "'Conversation' and "'Monologue': Discussion about Assessment in Basic Education Curriculum Reform," *Educational Science Studies* 2004, 4, 5–8. Zhou: "The theoretical orientation of educational assessment is turning from objective judgment to comprehensive conversation. To practice genuine conversational assessment, assessors need to leave enough room for students' reflection. The study of curriculum standard evaluation reflects the process of turning from 'objective' judgment to comprehensive conversation. The assessment of the 'new basic education' classroom is a blend of monologue and conversation. Every step is a mix of self and other evaluations, a combination of internal and external evaluations."

11. Tao, Xingzhi was one of Dewey's graduate students in Columbia University in 1915. (Translator's note).
12. There are precedents in the United States. Writing in the *Twenty-Sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, the superintendent of the Winnetka, Illinois public schools, Carleton Washburne (1926, 219–220) reported that "We, in Winnetka, have . . . made comparative analyses of the vocabulary studies of others, to determine what words children are most likely to need to spell. We have . . . analyzed the 10,000 commonest words in the English language to discover the syllables which occur so commonly as to demand instant recognition." For Washburne and his colleagues, such vocabulary building constituted the "knowledge-and-skill part of our curriculum [based] on the known needs of society" (1926, 220). The other part of the Winnetka curriculum was devoted "giving children a deep and abiding sense of the act that in the world's good is one's own, and that in one's own is the world's" (1926, 224). (Editor's note).
13. Between older and younger brothers. (Translator's note).

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# Part III

## Curriculum Studies in China

# Chapter 12

# Curriculum Studies in China

## Reform, Culture, History

*William F. Pinar*

The future of curriculum studies in China will unfold from its past, a century old. It is a past that is international as well as local. That temporal and cultural complexity is registered in current curriculum policy and classroom practice. China's great "wisdom traditions"—Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism—comprise the ancient cultures now being invoked in contemporary curriculum research and development. Traces of an intense encounter with US progressivism—personified by John Dewey's two-year visit—remain. Contemporary curriculum reform in China incorporates those traces as well as aspects of its own ancient culture within a dynamic economy, a vast society, set in a global village. From the interviews, essays, and exchanges, it seems to me that *reform*, *history*, and *culture* comprise three key categories in understanding curriculum studies in China.

## Curriculum Reform

Realizing the "consequences" of a "unified education management system all across China," Chen Yuting recounts, in 2001 the central government undertook "the New Curriculum Reform." Chen provided a summary of the reform, referencing Zhong's specification of its four key points. First, the curriculum is to be regarded not only as a systematic organization of knowledge, but also as an ongoing opportunity to cultivate students'

personalities, laying a solid subjective as well as social foundation for future national development. In keeping with that first point, the curriculum, second, emphasizes character education; third, it exhibits a humanistic quality; fourth, it includes a course of comprehensive practical activities, enabling students to learn interdisciplinarity. The core of the reform, Zhong explains, is curriculum reform. And the core of curriculum reform is the reform of classroom teaching, itself dependent upon the professional development of teachers. "One of a major agenda items of this round of curriculum reform," Kang Changyun told Janet L. Miller, "is reducing the difficulty and intensity level of knowledge acquisition, eliminating the school subjects' boundaries, as well as enhancing the connections between knowledge and students' daily life." Especially for "early learners," given their "specific characteristics both physically and psychologically," their curriculum should draw on "activities with which they are familiar, instead of knowledge-orientated or knowledge-based textbooks."[1]

Recall that, after reading Chen's chapter, Tero Autio was "simply amazed" by the "avant-garde nature" of the reform Chen described, specifically its contrast with "current" and "perverted" Western curriculum policies.[2] Except in Autio's home country of Finland[3]—where implementation has meant "translation," not "gracious submission"[4]—the West seems determined to destroy teachers' academic freedom in favor of curricular conformity. In China, as Chen suggests, "it is at most the first light in the morning." The reform encourages teachers to translate national policy according to local needs, but, as Chen tells us, many teachers lack the "tradition" or necessary "knowledge" that would enable them to take a more active role in everyday curriculum development. Despite the call of reform, teaching-to-the-test remains. Chen calls for more "light"[5] so that teachers and students might find their own ways out of the authoritarian past wherein standardization and homogeneity represented not "reform" but political ideology. That changed when the Central Committee of the Communist Party endorsed educational reform, authorizing schools to develop distinctiveness (or "diversity," as Chen put it). Chen emphasized that "there is still a long way" to go. Changing metaphors, Chen likened the current situation to "a big and very complex spider web and every step is influenced by others and can affect others."[6] She added: "In this era of internationalization: the webs within which we work are much bigger and more complicated than before." Reform, the presence of the past, and internationalization: Chen has introduced these key concerns in the contemporary curriculum studies in China.

Within these webs there is a relative freedom. Chen cites several schools where "models" have been developed to encourage increased teacher autonomy and creativity. While there are also schools that have used the

freedom the 2001 curriculum reform conferred on them "to maintain the status quo," others have "tried their best to reform in creative ways by mobilizing teachers' initiatives to focus on students' overall development rather than on test scores." While still a minority, these schools in China constitute "sparks of fire" in igniting reform (quoted phrases are Chen's, this volume). There is now in China a "diversity" of schools.

The enthusiasm that several scholar-participants feel for the current curriculum reform has not blinded them to its difficulties. Recall that Chen Yuting reported that "most teachers" are directed to "take actions without adequate theoretical or practical preparations," and, as a result, they "followed the reform without questioning, without making adjustments according to their circumstances and professional judgement." Without such theoretical and practical preparations, reform cannot occur, Chen cautioned. While schools have been given "more freedom" to "design their own ways" of reform, she worries that many fail to respect the "subjectivity of teachers." Nor has the cultivation of students' subjectivity been a key curricular aspiration, as many "teaching models" have been designed to produce "higher scores" on examinations. "Inquiring" or "making experiments" are not always "valued," Chen acknowledged. The freedom conferred by curriculum reform cannot be forced, only accepted, and then only if understood. Theoretical as well as practical preparations are a prerequisite. Chen Yuting is committed to making these in collaboration with her colleagues in schools, universities, and research institutes.[7]

In contemporary China, curriculum is then a "multidimensional" concept. At the present moment and as the exchanges with Chen Yuting underscore, the concept is closely identified with "practice,"[8] informed by "meaningful studies" (Kang, this volume). Such studies are at once practical and theoretical, historical, cultural, and focused on the specificities of curriculum in Chinese classrooms. Through the curriculum, education is actualized. The boundary between curriculum practice and the academic field of curriculum studies is both blurred and distinct. Practice predominates as practitioners are engaged in the reform, asked to conduct research[9] as they construe curriculum theory according to its significance for classroom practice. Recall Kang's conclusion that "curriculum practice is not only the essential soil and foundation for generating curriculum theory, equally important, it also guides the latter's development." This is a reciprocal relationship, as curriculum theory and history inform the formulation of practice, as the chapter by Zhang Hua details.

As Zhang's chapter demonstrates, practice is in fact theoretical, embedded in history, culture, and politics, a fact echoed in the reply of Cong Lixin to Tero Autio's question concerning the interrelations among politics, the economy, and curriculum reform. In China, "political modernization" is

still "in progress," Cong reminded, indicated by developments in education, the economy, and culture. With its preoccupation with "practice," contemporary curriculum reform occurs within this wider web of multiple developments. However embedded in politics, the economy, science, and culture, "basic education" is more stable. To substantiate her claim, Cong provided an example: in 1980s China, when the politics and the economy of the "entire society" were "greatly changed," "basic education kept considerable stability, from content to form." While it is true that shifts in science and the economy were influencing education, these changes were "gradual." There have "probably" been only two times, Cong continued, when change in education was "revolutionary." The "first time" occurred during Confucius's era, when private education was founded, and the "second" occurred after the Opium War, when China began to import Western conceptions of "modern education." Cong is less inclined than the other scholar-participants to regard the 2001 curriculum reform as "revolutionary."

Ma Yunpeng also locates the current curriculum reform within wider webs of social and economic development. He does not use the term "revolutionary," but he seems more inclined to confer upon the current reform more than "gradual" change status. Evident in his reply to Alicia de Alba, Ma considers curriculum reform as "closely related" to "social development." Social change, Ma asserted, "needs correspondent educational change." In the present historical conjuncture in China, this means the cultivation of students' "creativity" as well as their "practical skills." The "creativity" that the current reform supports occurs within "practice," as among the reform's curricular priorities are "information technology" and "environmental awareness." These two broad topics, Ma points out, are "directly related" to "social progress and development."[10]

How "progressive" the current Chinese reform is might surprise scholars and students elsewhere, especially in the United States and Europe, where public policy has stipulated standardized testing and accountability over creativity, innovation, and inquiry. As Zhou Huixia explained in her exchange with Janet L. Miller, curriculum reform in China aspires to "shift students' learning approach fundamentally" by emphasizing students' agency through an "inquiry-based approach." To support this shift, Zhou continued, the new reform "adjusts curriculum structure so that children have sufficient time and space for activities." Because reformers position students as central in the curriculum and their learning as "active," the reform encourages "changing the way content knowledge is presented. It encourages students to ask and solve questions constantly. Students could choose to receive, inquire, imitate, and experience knowledge according

to the learning content and their own individual characteristics" (Zhou, this volume).

That concept of "diversity" that Chen Yuting discussed reverberates here. Reformers appreciate that positioning students as central in the curriculum means that teachers must be encouraged to teach "according to differences in learning content and student's needs." Doing so requires the reconceptualization of student evaluation, and that is under way. Now a "developmental evaluation concept" is "widely promoted." Present circumstances are not always conducive, however. Many teachers are attempting to use the "portfolio" in student evaluation for example, but due to class size, "such strategy is hard to practice" (all quoted phrases are Zhou's, this volume). Still, Zhou continued (replying to Janet Miller's question), the role of teachers is slowly "shifting from curriculum deliverers to curriculum designers." Objectives are "shifting" from "pre-determined" to "generative," and today there is considerable curriculum research focused on these diverse developments.

## Curriculum History

Both as a burden (specifically the Soviet influence[11]) and as inspiration (for instance the 1922 Movement[12]), history seems almost as important a focus of contemporary curriculum research as do the practices associated with the implementation of the new reform. Recall Chen's cautioning that theoretical as well as practical preparation are a prerequisite to reform: that former category includes historical research. History—of the curriculum, of curriculum studies, both situated within the history of China—was a major topic in the essays and in the exchanges among scholar-participants and members of the international panel. Questions concerning curriculum history were often specific. Recall that Alicia de Alba asked Zhou Huixia if she thought any Western perspectives were "linked with Confucianism." Separated as subheadings in his chapter, in this question culture and history intersect. Then de Alba linked her historical question with the problems of contemporary curriculum reform. Yes, Zhou confirmed, Confucianism has a long history in the West, which he then summarized. And—moving to the present moment—the extent to which teachers are "actively involved" in the present reform is influenced by "traditional culture." By this last phrase, Zhou was naming tendencies to affirm the "collective" over the "individual," the preference for "constancy," as well as the authoritarian demand to "respect and value officials." Other more ancient conceptions of culture circulate in contemporary curriculum studies in China as well.

Weaving history's links to the present was also evident in Zhou's exchange with Janet Miller. Quoting phrases from his essay, Miller asked if the interest in "nurturing the human" through basic education "connect[s] in any way back to the 'ancient' Chinese curriculum 'objective' of 'knowing inter-person relations'?" "Knowing inter-person relations," Zhou replied, "was first summarized by Mencius, who emphasized the importance of relations between monarchs and subjects, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, and among friends." In contemporary Chinese society, Zhou added, "the objective of 'nurturing the human' in the new curriculum reform emphasizes the centrality of students. Student development is the root requirement of education. 'Students are the core' is the motto of the new curriculum."

The "progressive" character of contemporary curriculum reform in China has its historical antecedents. Zhou acknowledged that the curriculum concepts of Tao Xingzhi were derived from John Dewey. Concerning pragmatism, Zhou also referenced the "the New Cultural Movement in 1919." America's "project method" had been introduced to China about 1918, and at the 7th Annual Meeting of National Education Union in 1921 a special resolution had been issued endorsing its inclusion in teacher education programs. In institutes throughout China, the project method was taught as exemplary education. Recall that Zhou judges US pragmatism as having had "some positive effects" on "Old China."[13] Pragmatism also had "many negative effects," however, among these an overemphasis upon "children's nature, instincts, and impulses." The "old education had focused exclusively on texts," but pragmatism "over-focused on individuals' activities, hands-on, 'learning from doing.'" The current curriculum reform, Zhou continued, exhibits elements of early twentieth-century US pragmatism, namely a skepticism concerning constant testing and toward grades as the sole indicators of learning and understanding. It is now widely assumed that education should cultivate not only social but also individual development. In addition to pragmatism, contemporary curriculum developers and designers have also drawn upon postmodernism, critical theory, constructivism, and pragmatism. "Therefore," Zhou writes, invoking the same term as Chen, "I think the theoretical basis of the curriculum reform is diversity."

## Curriculum Studies

As an academic field of study, recall that curriculum studies had disappeared in 1949, reappearing in the 1980s.[14] During that 30-year period,

the ministry bypassed curriculum specialists to consult subject-matter scholars.[15] Within the academic field of education, "pedagogy" not "curriculum" was the central concept. Recall that Cong Lixin explained that "pedagogy"[16] constituted the "basic theory" of education, and that the concept included "teaching theory, theory of moral education, and management." While "pedagogy" may have become too general, Cong allowed, theories of curriculum—insofar as they focus exclusively on practice—risk being too superficial and overlook basic theory. Contemporary research ought not to ignore the basic theory of education, Cong cautioned. While important, specializations such as the sociology of education have become swollen in importance.[17] Highlighting any one specialization over a more comprehensive view, Cong concluded, is inappropriate.

The restoration of curriculum studies in China has been decidedly international. Questions of practice, culture, and history—both alongside and incorporated within internationalization—preoccupy the field today. As curriculum studies reappeared, Western theories were imported. Recalling his graduate-student days, Ma Yunpeng referenced the theories of Bruner, Dewey, and Piaget[18] as well as those concerning constructivism, multiple intelligences, and postmodern curriculum theory. Influential in US curriculum studies due to the work[19] of William E. Doll Jr., the postmodern is understood in China as a "moment in-between," including in-between "chronological ages, ways of thinking, discourses and disciplines" (Zhang Wenjun, this volume). There are scholars in China, Zhang Wenjun explained, who consider postmodernity as a "continuation" of modernity, as an "aberrant difference from itself." Other scholars in China stress the shift from modernity to postmodernity, insisting that it represents nothing less than a "paradigm shift." For some, postmodernism denotes destruction; for others it represents a constructive moment. For some, the concept is primarily chronological, emphasizing the "not yet" and the "in-between." In Zhang's view, postmodernism promotes "conversation" and "understanding" across "difference," including intrasubjective difference.[20] But for many in China, she acknowledged, it seems "ridiculous" to discuss postmodernism in China, as China "remains" in a "process" of modernization.[21] Zhang Wenjun explained that it was the "practical need" that accompanied "social change" and "educational reform" that prompted "postmodern thought" to enter China. Its role, Zhang explains, has been "breaking the ice" rather than "constructing new theories and practices." The importation of the concept and its recontextualization in contemporary curriculum studies illustrates the field's internationalization.

## Internationalization

"In this era of internationalization," Chen Yuting told Tero Autio, "the webs" in which we are embedded are "much bigger and more complicated than before." Recall that Chen was referencing not only the institutional and political complexity of curriculum reform within China today but the importation of ideas from abroad as well. Linked with curriculum reform specifically and with the two decades of "opening" more generally, the internationalization of curriculum development and research has been rapid, extensive, intense. Still, ancient conceptions of balance and harmony obtain. To Tero Autio's resounding question—"How would you profile the intellectual, political and practical concerns and prospects in the Chinese curriculum studies and education reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization?"—recall that Kang replied: "I would argue that Chinese curriculum studies should keep balance and harmony between learning Western cutting-edge theory and preserving Chinese tradition."[22]

The nature of this harmony became clear in the exchange between Janet L. Miller and Zhang Hua, during which Zhang Hua made several crucial points. The first was that "national" and "international" are not separate but dialectical concepts. Zhang underscored how intertwined—how "relational"—these notions are, encouraging us to appreciate that neither concept conveys "atomized" or "entity thinking." Both "international" and "cross-cultural communications" are "necessary," even "inescapable." This is a profound point that acknowledges that nationality is a construct comprised of difference, both internally and internationally. This sophisticated formulation is in sharp contrast to the simplistic allegation that circulates in North America curriculum studies, namely that the "nation"[23] is only a relic of nineteenth-century modernization, inevitably engaged in the oppression of difference within its borders and in aggression against difference outside. The concept of "nation" contains innumerable differences—cultural, classed, political, gendered—that reconfigure themselves according to (including in reconstruction of) the circumstances, both internal and external, of the nation. Those circumstances comprise the present historical moment, but they are unintelligible without excavating their histories, as Zhang Hua did in his essay opening this collection.

Recall too that this ambivalent embrace of difference—encoded in the concept of internationalization—carries its cautions. In his reply to Janet Miller, Zhang Hua reminded us that "difference" is no absolute to be encouraged without constraint. Simplistic celebrations of difference distract us from comprehending the dynamic, ever-shifting character of

culture, including in its diasporic and postcolonial configurations. Zhang Hua insisted that the acknowledgement of difference ought to occur within democratic dialogue, not as self-serving demands to rewrite history. Without difference, including within itself, "democracy will be a lie." That requires a public sphere wherein difference can be articulated, recognized, and acknowledged, what Zhang Hua terms a "cultural democracy." Without "critical consciousness," he emphasized, "we cannot construct a "real democratic internationalization." Such "critical consciousness" includes self-consciousness, as his discussion of culture suggests.

"If one culture is too local, limited, and narrow-minded to pass the examination of international interaction," Zhang Hua warned, "it will eventually disappear." Not only is cultural continuity imperiled by cultural isomorphism, so is national identity itself, as Zhang asserts that the "international" is a basic condition of "national." Indeed, the "uniqueness of any nation, country, culture . . . is the prerequisite for 'internationalization.'" By itself, he cautioned, internationalization risks "cultural invasion." Reciprocity, indeed mutual self-constitution, structures their interlaced identities: "Only if something is 'national,' can it be 'international'; the more national, the more international" (Zhang, this volume).

Now cultural and national isolation may be impossible, and not only due to technological advances and the globalization of the economy. Even if isolation were possible, self-encapsulation threatens culture and nationality as it signals vulnerability within each, an incapacity to engage with alterity both within and outside legal borders. Yes, nationality—and certainly nationalism, as critics have long emphasized—depend upon affirmations of difference, but what Zhang Hua is pointing to here is that the affirmation of distinctiveness does not depend on exclusion of and antagonism toward difference. Indeed, the survival of distinctiveness—cultural and national and, I would add, disciplinary, as this principle is also fundamental to the intellectual advancement of curriculum studies—depends in part on its capacity to engage respectfully with otherness, within and worldwide. From such ethical engagement with alterity—"cultural contact" in Alicia de Alba's concept—comes reaffirmation and reconstruction.

Recall that Zhang Hua focused on the "uniqueness" of both nationality and internationality, asserting that there can be "no relationship" without uniqueness. Sameness slides into fusion. National uniqueness depends on the presence of multiple histories and cultures. Internationalization is likewise multiple, encouraging movements of peoples, concepts, and customs within and across national borders, affirming their internally differentiated histories and cultures as they engage difference. These empirical facts and aspirational ideals become encoded in concepts such as "interculturality" and "internationality" (Zhang Hua, this volume). Here

we glimpse the cosmopolitan character of curriculum studies in China, as key scholars—Zhang Hua is, arguably, *the* key scholar in China[24]—acknowledge their national distinctiveness as simultaneously international, as honoring cultural and historical difference within the field as it creatively—hospitably—engages with alterity from inside and outside national borders.

The reciprocity of the national and the international is affirmed as well in the exchanges between Zhang Hua and Alicia de Alba. In reply to de Alba's question concerning the "meaning and idea of our common cause of Internationalization," specifically to her question concerning its character, and its appropriateness for all nations, Zhang Hua underlined that "internationalization" and "democratization" are "two sides" of "one coin," that they are "dependent" on "each other." He defined internationalization as "the principle of democracy applied to the international relations." Referencing John Dewey's conception of democracy, Zhang Hua defined "democracy as the sharing of common interests" through "liberal interactions among different social groups." Affirming our distinctiveness, we seek through self-expression and dialogical encounter what we contemporaries have in common. Understanding curriculum in this moment of internationalization—a concept I recode as ethical engagement with alterity—encourages the articulation of what we share and what we do not.

Internationalization, then, requires "respect for cultural uniqueness, complexity, and differences" as we "increase the sharing of interests, and promote interaction and cooperation among all countries and cultures." That, Zhang Hua concludes, is the meaning of "cultural democratization." He cautioned: "If the principle of democracy were overlooked and destroyed, 'internationalization' would deteriorate into cultural invasion or international autocracy." Zhang Hua argued that the "integrity" of "internationalization" and "democratization" is "the fundamental meaning of cosmopolitism," and "the basic philosophy guiding our international relationships. It is valid for all nations." He emphasized that "the meaning of our cause—internationalization of curriculum studies—is not limited to the curriculum field. It is an organic part of the project 'for a better world.'"

In curriculum studies in China, internationalization is not only political, social, and intellectual, it is also historical and cultural. Recall that while Kang Changyun is encouraged by the efforts Chinese scholars have made to learn from their colleagues worldwide, "what I would strongly advocate is that Chinese scholars should cherish and benefit from the valuable cultural heritage of the ancient Chinese." Expressing a cautionary note, as Zhang Hua did concerning cultural invasion, Kang advised that "any indiscriminate and uncritical copying or following of others' theory should

be avoided." While engaging in research and dialogue internationally, our "aspiration," Kang asserts, is "to carry on Chinese distinctive education and curriculum traditions," as we work to "establish curriculum concepts" that bear the distinctive marks of Chinese culture and history. Testimony to this reactivation of China's ancient cultures—already underway (see Zhang and Zhong 2003)—was evident in several of the exchanges.

## Culture

Questions of culture were raised at the outset of the Autio-Zhou exchange. Recall that Tero Autio asked about "the distinctive features" of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism "from the educative point of view," and "what kind of educational totality—for instance, in terms of the relationship between the individual and society—they would create in your view?" Then Autio asked Zhou Huixia how she would "assess their intellectual, moral and political potential in today's education modernization and reforms in China?" Autio wondered if "(Neo-)Confucianism [is] now, after its variegated presence in the Chinese intellectual history, somehow manifest as a recurring question in Chinese educational and political modernization?"

In his reply, Zhou provided summarizes of the cultural traditions that contemporary scholars are laboring to reactivate. Buddhism transcends Confucianism concerning the ideal, Zhou explained, as Buddhism offers "a surreal ideal world"—Nirvana—while the latter remains focused on the secular world. Still, Nirvana is a "state of mind that everyone could achieve and experience." Confucianism centers on "cultivating individual moral character," emphasizing "respect," whereas Buddhism focuses on one's heart, stressing "cleanness." Confucianism centered on "cultivating individual moral character," emphasizing "respect," whereas Buddhism cultivates one's heart, stressing "cleanness." Later Confucianism embraced "cleanness" and "finding one's true self," which require "cultivating one's heart." Thus one Confucian doctrine states that "the study of mind and disposition manages one's internality, while serving the sovereignty and the country accomplishes one's externality." The humanities become crucial subjects for cultivating morality, and the teacher is a "person" of "noble character" and "integrity." In fact, "moral behavior outweighs knowledge."[25] Buddhist educational practice, Zhou continued, emphasizes practice, including "meditation." As "mental and spiritual activity," meditation encourages the heart to focus, enabling understanding of the phenomenal world. Following nature in Taoism means respecting the individual's distinctiveness. Teaching "wordlessly" is a Taoist tradition that acknowledges students' subjectivities. Recall that Zhou recounted that Yangming's

School of Mind absorbed Buddhist thought, especially Zen Buddhism. Yangming's admonition to "inquire inside" was inspired by Zen's concern with self-comprehension. "Such thoughts," Zhou observed, "remain the cultural roots of contemporary education in China." "In my opinion," Zhou concludes, "Confucianism indicates a sign of resurrection."

Efforts to reactivate ancient elements of Chinese culture involve, then, historical reconstruction as well as acknowledgement of their international origins and influences. The latter were—are being—accommodated because, as Zhang Hua suggested, the "unique contribution" of Chinese culture is the concept of "all-under-heaven." Recall that Zhang Wenjun described the movement of postmodern curriculum theory from the United States to China; Zhou and Zhang referenced Dewey's presence in China, evident in the current reform. Ma Yunpeng underscored the significance of "cultural factors" in *all* aspects of curriculum research and development. While engaging in research and dialogue internationally, our "aspiration," Kang reminded, is "to carry on Chinese distinctive education and curriculum traditions," as we work to "establish curriculum concepts" that bear the distinctive marks of Chinese culture and history.

These aspirations are realized in the research underway in the contemporary field and are evident in the chapters and exchanges. As an example, consider an exchange between Zhang Hua and Alicia de Alba. While the "main representative" of cultural conservatism, Zhang explained to de Alba, Liang Shuming—the so-called last Confucian—was no "narrow-minded conservative." He appreciated that "the national" depends on "the international," that we are "obligated to respect" the "uniqueness" of "national culture" as we learn from cultures worldwide. He appreciated that "the national" depends on "the international," that we are "obligated to respect" the "uniqueness" of "national culture" as we "learn" from cultures worldwide. "I think it is impossible to list all the cultures in the world," Zhang Hua appreciates, "because cultures are fluid and ever-changing, not fixed like mineral deposits." However fluid and ever-changing, cultures pose risks and offer opportunities, as Zhang's next point reminds.

Since the 1840s, Zhang Hua admitted, the "main problem" has been the relationship between Western and Eastern cultures. In his view, the long-term project is twofold: (1) "how to deal with the conflict" of these cultures, while (2) "fully incorporating" the "best parts" of Western cultures, "especially the spirits of democracy and science." Addressing this ongoing conflict will preoccupy the Chinese, Zhang thinks, for "the next few centuries." Western cultures and Chinese national culture can "interact and cooperate with each other," Zhang believes, and can "form a mutual beneficial relationship." Such a cosmopolitan conception of

internationalization supports the formation of variously situated and focused "communities without consensus," in Janet Miller's phrasing.

Questions of culture were also evident in the exchange between Zhang Wenjun and Alicia de Alba. De Alba had asked why postmodernism is relevant to cultural critique. Recall that Zhang Wenjun began her reply by explaining that Hao Deyong had used the "cocoon" as a "metaphor of cultural development and self-restraint." Various cultures, he had noted, incorporate ideas and practices and in so doing make their cultural threads thicker and strong. Later, however, the threads become too thick. They bind and cultures become "conservative, closed, exclusive, even arbitrary" (Zhang Wenjun, this volume). Cultures must remain "fluid" and "ever-changing," as Zhang Hua appreciates, "not fixed like mineral deposits."

Recall too the exchange between Alicia de Alba and Cong Lixin, during which de Alba acknowledged a "serious problem" between "national culture" and "traditional culture" in Mexico.[26] In her reply Cong acknowledged that China's cultural traditions "always influence" Chinese researchers, even when they are unaware of it, suggesting that culture is at times invisible. When visible, the tension such cultural complexity can produce "always arouse my interest and thinking," but, Cong admitted, its relevance for her is "finally" how "it affects" Chinese education.

In his reply to Tero Autio, Cong drew a distinction between Chinese "traditional culture" and "traditional wisdom." They are "related but not exactly the same." Much of Chinese "traditional culture" is, Cong suggested, "in conflict" with "modernization," but "conventional wisdom" less so. In modernization, "we consciously abandon" those aspects of "traditional culture" that constitute "interferences," but "we generally advocate carrying forward traditional wisdom." China's modernization originated in the West, and "conventional wisdom in the West makes outstanding contributions" to this modernization. "However," there are "differences" between "traditional wisdom" in the East and West. She left these unspecified but they are, evidently, at least potentially compatible, as she added: "Therefore, I believe each can complement the other" (quoted phrases from Cong, this volume).

This apparent compatibility of modernization, specifically of curriculum reform, with "traditional wisdom," and the apparent willingness to abandon elements of "traditional culture" that are no longer functional, are implied in Ma Yunpeng's reply to Janet L. Miller's request for additional commentary on those theoretical issues embedded in his concept of "implementation." Recall that Ma had pointed to the significance of culture: "If there are any theoretical considerations, they are mainly around the relations between curriculum implementation and the current culture. The reform design and implementation cannot be considered apart from

cultural characteristics. The success of reform mostly depends on its capacity to adapt to the changes of culture. Thus, cultural factors should be considered while assessing curriculum implementation." Responding to Alicia de Alba's question concerning culture, Kang Changyun had also affirmed that culture is "undoubtedly" one of the key elements of curriculum. Indeed, "if we want to endow certain cultural characteristics to Chinese curriculum, textbook-featured culture is indeed one of them." Kang worried that due to "Chinese school culture and the level of teachers' professional competence, a majority of Chinese teachers are relying excessively on textbooks." Culture, then, plays a variable, complex even contradictory, role in contemporary curriculum studies in China, evident too in the exchanges over textbooks.

## Textbooks

"A nodal issue" (de Alba, this volume), the question of the textbook reverberates in curriculum research worldwide. In China, it has a specific history and significance, underscored in the essays and exchanges of Kang Changyun. Compared to Western countries, Kang suggested—in his exchange with Alicia de Alba—that in China the textbook plays an even "more critical role," as the textbook and the curriculum are "interwoven." Indeed, the curriculum is "much more dependent" (than in other countries) on textbook. In China, he continued (in his exchange with Tero Autio), the textbook is a "vehicle" of the curriculum.[27] "Driven by economic interests," Kang argued, and by "the convenience" of the administration, textbooks are omnipresent, a fact the Chinese government and many scholars, Kang reports, are "determined to change."[28]

Moving from a textbook-centered curriculum to one that positions students as central means, Chen Yuting affirmed, is an acknowledgement of teachers' subjectivity. Recall that in his exchange with Tero Autio, Kang had affirmed that "no matter how good a textbook is, it is the teacher who brings it into full function." He recommended that teachers "teach *with* the textbooks" rather than "teach the textbooks." Nor should, he added, textbooks become a "yardstick" for student assessment. The point is to provide options, "an essential condition," Kang argued, in the "realization of any curriculum reform objectives." Challenging the monopoly on textbooks has meant challenging the economic interests profiting from that monopoly. No surprise, then, that "strong protests" from vested interests followed. Moreover, the emphasis upon examinations undermines efforts to diversify textbooks, and, Kang noted, the lack of diversity in textbooks

supports the emphasis on examinations. He advises "scholars who work hard on Chinese education should figure out the relationship between textbook diversification and exam-oriented education so as to realize the program of textbook diversification, which would provide a great possibility to end the 'nightmare'" that is China's excessive reliance on standardized examinations.

Replying to Autio's question concerning the relations between "system interests" and "teachers' professional autonomy," Ma focused first on the former. "A successful curriculum reform," he wrote, "should set student development as the primary aim and promote the progress of society as its goal." During the last decade, curriculum reformers have designed curriculum that could encourage "student development" but also the development of "society, the economy, science and technology." Again culture enters the picture, as Ma added: "Additionally, I think curriculum reform should become a carrier of cultural legacy." Acknowledging a "huge difference between traditional Chinese culture and Western culture," Ma suggests that "paying [so] much attention to student's individual success, especially student's academic performance, *confines* reform ideals and curriculum implementations" (emphasis added). Regarding Autio's question, Ma insisted on the compatibility of teachers' autonomy *and* the system's interests: "There is no doubt that teachers should become autonomous curriculum theorists and practitioners and that the design of subject matter curricula should meet the system interests."[29] The interrelationship between students' and society's development is, then, coextensive. Concerning Autio's final question, Ma accorded considerable credit to China's curriculum reforms, offering that "they have significantly contributed to the advancement of Chinese social, science, and technology development." It is, however, "the proliferation of exam-oriented education [that] draws most concerns." Despite efforts to focus on students' development broadly conceived, Ma reports that "more and more students consider examinations as the sole goals of learning." Focused only on reputation and admission rates, "many schools" attend insufficiently to "students' creativity, autonomy, and practical skills." Ma concluded: "If there is no major political and cultural change in the society, the future prospects are worrisome."

## Conclusion

Reform means rupture with the past, and the 2001 curriculum reform does denote that. Paradoxically, *this* break with the past means the past's reactivation in the present, as reformers—curriculum studies professors,

government officials, public school administrators, and teachers—seek the future in the past. It is the Chinese past, both politically—the 1922 movement—and culturally, as the three great wisdom traditions—Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism—are invoked to address the cultural crisis capitalism creates. In China's cultural history, world politics plays a crucial—if not always welcomed—role, as certain elements of contemporary curriculum reform reactivate early twentieth-century US progressivism, with its insistence that children's development and social development are coextensive and codependent. Even continued economic development depends on the quality of education, in China decoded not only as test scores but also creativity, innovation, and academic freedom. While caught in contradictions (as some schools use their autonomy to stay the same), the fact that official government agencies (in particular the Ministry of Education) proclaims these educational aspirations is, as Tero Autio notes, astonishing. The contrasts with the West—with the West's dogged determination to destroy creativity, innovation, and academic freedom—could not be sharper.

Given the centralization of the state, democratization takes cultural forms, as Zhang Hua emphasizes. The cultures that are being reintegrated into daily life are also spiritual disciplines. Recall Janet Miller's referencing of Zhang's use of the phrase "spiritual conditions," and her question to him: Are "spiritual conditions" associated with the three major "wisdom traditions" that he cites in his chapter[30] or is he "gesturing toward other, perhaps broader metaphysical 'meanings' of 'spiritual'?" Zhang replied by acknowledging the significance of "the spiritual" in US curriculum studies, citing the canonical work of Dwayne E. Huebner (1999). Then Zhang cited Chen Yinque who had postulated that "independent spirit and liberal thought" were the "basic value principles of a true intellectual." In this context, "spirit" means "moral personality." Zhang incorporated this meaning of spiritual in his more "general" use of the term, but one stripped of any specific religious or theological meaning. "Spiritual" is inseparable from "intellectual." Miller responded appreciatively: "I would not have understood, until your excellent elaboration, that you are using 'spiritual' as meaning 'intellectual' or 'disciplinary.'" In this brief exchange we see that history, culture, and internationalization converge in the intellectual effort to understand curriculum in the present.

In the scholarship of Zhang Hua, the repudiation of the "technical" tradition in US curriculum studies—associated with the Tyler Rationale, its antecedents and its offspring[31]—could not be more explicit. The "technical," he asserted, is not the "essence" of curriculum. The core of curriculum is "personal development, social democracy, and knowledge construction." The "practical" is no split-off sphere of technical expertise, as "practical

rationality" and "emancipatory rationality" are together "essential" for curriculum research. While Zhang rejects "labels," he would prefer being characterized as an "educational humanist"[32] than an "educational technician." Moreover, he disclaims any avowedly political practice of education (such as Kairov's pedagogy) as "ideological." China's curriculum reform cannot be confined within any political concept as it embraces "diversity."

"I think the theoretical basis of the curriculum reform," Zhou Huixia wrote, is "diversity."[33] Such theoretical and organizational diversity has been for some[34] bewildering. Zhou asks: "What is our core philosophy? Anti-tradition, return to tradition, or reconstruct culture?" Grappling with such complexity requires becoming historical: "Facing challenges in different eras, educators need to select and modify different theories." Culture and history intersect through internationalization,[35] as Zhou suggests that the future will bring continued interaction between "Western theories" and "local cultures." Such interaction requires contemplation, as "ideas are always prior to actions." As acknowledged throughout the essays and the exchanges, the resolve to reform requires recognition of undermining circumstances. Zhou admits that "the balance between action and contemplation is not in its best position in present-day China." That present circumstance does not foreclose the future, even if it makes its actualization more difficult. We see signs of it, however, as in opening essay by Zhang Hua, where we read of the determination to shift the emphasis of the Chinese field from "practice" to "understanding."

Whatever the future of the field in China, it will not mirror the present of the West. Recall Tero Autio's question concerning current and future relations between the public and private sectors, a question prompted by Autio's appreciation of the cannibalization of the former by the latter in the West. In her reply Zhou reminded that China is a one-party state with a centralized administration. In the Chinese economic system, public ownership is the "mainstay," and other forms of ownership are "supplements." The primary principle of the political system is "democratic centralism," positioning the "public" as the "mainstream" in most domains of contemporary Chinese society. It is the "will of the state." Such a system has "problems," Zhou appreciates, including "low efficiency" as well as "corruption." Private education is expanding quickly in China today, he adds, but it "rarely" draws upon public education resources.[36] The future is concerning, Zhou admitted: "I cannot imagine what the destination of economic development is in the future. But I feel that the overall negative consequences of economic development may override the overall positive consequences." Displaying the wisdom China's cultural traditions convey, Zhou wrote: "We need to care more about how we should live." Like the

Buddha, "we should stand above everything" and "see this world" with "great wisdom." This is a "grand question, which seems far away from me." Perhaps it is a "childish thought," Zhou concludes, but "I want us all to live a simple and peaceful life." This humility, breadth of vision, and resolve are evident everywhere in these essays and exchanges.

I am been struck by the extensive use of metaphor. Recall the images of "morning light" to depict the early stage of reform's realization, and "web" to denote the current interrelatedness of social and international relations. Unburdened by a history of scientism, with its reduction of epistemological complexity to quantification, with its logical exclusion of antinomies and insistence on verifiability, contemporary curriculum studies in China incorporates poetic and aphoristic elements of ancient Chinese wisdom cultures. That "diversity" coheres into a distinctive conceptual style characteristic of contemporary curriculum studies in China, at least insofar as we can glimpse the field here. But to say that the research is poetic or aphoristic would be to overstate the case, as these are embedded in academic writing the style of which is familiar to scholars worldwide, wherein "reason"—informed by culture, history, and the practical demands of reform—remains the medium of understanding. Distinctive and similar, national and international, the academic field of curriculum studies in China reflects as it reconstructs the cosmopolitan character of the nation it serves.

Recall Tero Autio's question to Cong Lixin, concerning the "intellectual, political and practical concerns and prospects in Chinese curriculum studies and reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization." Cong had replied that "I believe the pursuit of most intellectuals shall be the same, although it is very difficult to achieve in practice." Why? Cong does not say, but with "modernization" in the question one might speculate that "progress" could represent copying academic research conducted in fully "modernized" places. Indeed, Cong states that the shared, indeed "fundamental," element that "intellectuals" pursue is academic research. While modernization may remove one obstacle—by providing the material and intellectual conditions for "world-class" curriculum research to be conducted—it turns out that she is referencing another. "Of course," Cong told Autio, it is "impracticable" to "break away completely" from politics. "However," Cong cautioned, if research "only" serves politics, its "academic value" cannot be "guaranteed." That value—and "its practical function"—will be accorded "more importance" if it is resonates with research in other fields. "After all," educational "activities" are among the most "important practices of human existence." To meet the "various needs" of the "practical," a wide range of curriculum research is required. "However," Cong concludes, "I strongly believe" that, "eventually," curriculum research will

exhibit a "certain 'pure' academic nature." That ideal—simultaneously ancient and futuristic—is, I believe, shared by serious scholars worldwide.

In Cong's statement we see the confluence of history, culture, and reform that characterizes contemporary curriculum studies in China. The "practical" may provide the impetus for curriculum research today, but it is to "history" and "culture" where curriculum scholars journey to understand what is at stake in enacting the reform the ministry has decreed.[37] One suspects it was to history and culture scholars went when recommending to ministry officials the constitutive elements of the 2001 reform. Ambitious, some say revolutionary, contemporary curriculum reform in China is decidedly distinctive. China is the only major[38] country on earth undertaking such progressive curriculum reform: emphasizing student development, meaningful learning, community engagement, and teachers' creativity as central to "quality education." Perhaps because the examination system in China is old, it holds such little fascination as a "salvational" ritual.[39] In these essays and exchanges it was the subject of complaint. Examinations are not going away in China; they could be said to comprise a central stumbling block to enacting the 2001 reform. But they lack the status now ascribed to them in the West, as if they could constitute "accountability" or ensure "quality." These may be "bottom lines," but there are other more important—non-quantifiable—measures of quality education. These will never be found in standardized examinations, as the West will someday remember. In the present historical moment—wherein educational experience can only be rendered numerically—quality education can be found only in the past, in elements of culture displaced by the obsession with profit and consumption that capitalism compels. Reconstructing the past and recontextualizing concepts imported from abroad, supported by its distinctive and dynamic field of curriculum studies, China is reconstructing the character of curriculum.[40]

## Notes

1. For a more detailed description of the 2001 reform, see chapter 1 (this volume.)
2. In her interview with Pinar, Chen acknowledged that the "new curriculum reform has been widely criticized as too derivative, too reliant on foreign countries' theory and practice."
3. Recall that after teaching at the University of Tampere in Finland, Tero Autio accepted a position at the Tallinn University in Estonia.
4. See Pinar 2004, 46, 65, 71, 127, 163, 165, 250.

5. Recall that Hongyu Wang (2004, 53) employs the same metaphor to describe her teacher helping her, literally and figuratively, to find her way.
6. Comprising the web close-at-hand are "school, family and society," Chen told Janet Miller. Combined, she added, these three forces "form joint power that could help students to experience education more fully." Unlike the spider's web, this worldly "web" does not represent capture and certain death, not even confinement, but the complexity of interrelationships that Chen recognizes as crucial to educational experience. It is a recognition of relationality noticeably absent in US reform rhetoric.
7. "As an educational researcher who works closely with principals and teachers," Chen told Alicia de Alba, "I have been working very hard to encourage conversations that enable teachers to think more critically about their teaching traditions."
8. Given the emphasis upon practice, how do scholars and practitioners conceive of curricular continuity? Recall that in his exchange with Tero Autio, Kang listed "societal needs," "learning contents," and "child development" as constituting curricular continuity. Each becomes interwoven with each other, evident in the "learning contents" (a concept broader than textbooks, Kang explained). In contrast to kindergarten and elementary school, in grades 7–9 and 10–12 the school subjects become primary, acknowledging still students' developmental distinctiveness.
9. Especially action research, qualitative and quantitative. Recall that Ma affirmed both, referencing observational and interview methods, as well as ethnography and the case study. Chen emphasizes autobiography. Studies in Chinese history and culture, including histories and cultures of internationalization, are also relevant to "practice," as the exchanges and essays underscore.
10. In contrast to STEM (the emphasis in the United States on science, technology, engineering, mathematics), mathematics is not central to the current reform, at least in Ma's view, as it fails to address "China's development," clearly, like curriculum itself, a multidimensional concept. Subjects such as science, technology, and economics play more "central roles" in China's development, Ma suggests, because these subjects have "direct" and "visible effects" on social and economic development. Compared with these subjects, mathematics plays only an "indirect role." Recall that Tero Autio found Ma's comments even "more interesting," given that "mathematics may be the only school subject that has arguably reached a mythological status," and so suffers "few critical questions about its educative potential, its cognitive, cultural and social meaning," or "its practical value in people's life." Autio asked then Ma three questions: (1) "What effect do you see this vibrant field of Chinese curriculum studies has possibly had upon the Chinese mathematics education in practice?" (2) "How have teacher education curricula been affected by this historically distinctive and radical dynamics of the interplay between curriculum studies and mathematics education?" and (3) "How to ideally meet and [at the same time] combine system interests with the design of subject matter curricula with the teachers' roles

as curriculum theorists and practitioners?" In Ma's reply we learned that the current reform has modified the mathematics curriculum "dramatically," including the replacement of "complex calculations" with "probability and statistics." In more general terms, Ma reported that "the reform embraces new methods such as encouraging students to ask questions, to pay attention to problems in real life, and to guide students to inquire and explore." With these shifts in how students study mathematics, there have also been shifts in teachers' pedagogical practices. For example, "there are more student activities and communication in class. Students have more opportunities to ask questions." All is not perfect; Ma acknowledges "problems in the reform process," among them regional resistance to reform by some teachers. Regarding Autio's question concerning teacher education, Ma Yunpeng listed new courses in preservice teacher education, among them "Studies of Basic Education in Curriculum Reform" and "Analysis of Mathematics Curriculum and Textbooks." There is now a "national training program" that offers courses titled "Concepts and Methods of Curriculum Reform," "Comprehension of Math Curriculum Standards," "Pedagogy Reform in Math Class," and "Case Analysis of Excellent Teachers and Teaching." Clearly, while playing an "indirect role" in China's overall social and economic development, mathematics plays a major role in contemporary curriculum reform, reflecting its general principles while contributing concrete illustrations of its "practice."

11. Associated with the Soviet Union was Marxism. In this exchange with Tero Autio, Zhou affirmed that "Marxism is positioned as the orthodox philosophy in contemporary China. The state prescribed the hours and content of Marxism courses in schools."
12. This was, as Zhang Hua reports in his chapter, the first curriculum reform in modern China, associated with the May Fourth Movement or New Culture Movement in which millions of students—soon joined by workers—protested the terms of the Versailles Treaty. The students' success, Zhang reports, represented important victories for democratization in China.
13. The purpose of primary education was no longer "reading many books and acquiring rich knowledge," but cultivating children's "practical capabilities, skills, and habits" (Zhou, this volume).
14. Curriculum theory, Cong reports, did not reappear until the "late 1990s." Like China itself, this is a field in rapid movement.
15. Zhang Wenjun in her interview.
16. Within the category of "pedagogy," Cong explained to Janet L. Miller, there was (before the 1980s) "teaching theory," within which were formulated "a variety of theoretical points of view for the curriculum." Instead of concepts such as "curriculum objectives," "curriculum design," "curriculum implementation," "curriculum evaluation," and so on, researchers worked with notions of "teaching content," "teaching plans," "teaching program," the "textbook," "teaching objectives," "teaching disciplines," etc. Teaching was the core of the concept of pedagogy, but the broader field of "pedagogy" expanded around this core. "This is what I mean by 'special' curriculum theories." Ma too

affirmed that "curriculum" had been a subset of "pedagogy studies," and that his own graduate work was conducted in "pedagogy" not "curriculum."

17. This is an assessment I share, not only due to its overemphasis on the social but also its positioning of the subjective as supplemental (Pinar 2011, 32).
18. Recall that Ma also referenced the work of Eisner, Fullan, Goodlad, Lawton, McNeil, Schwab, Stenhouse, Shulman, and Tyler as informing his own curriculum research focused on implementation.
19. See, especially, Doll 1993 and Trueit 2012.
20. In her exchange with Janet L. Miller, Zhang Wenjun articulated a postmodern view of subjectivity, one emphasizing "intersubjectivity" wherein the "I" is "historically, socially, discursively, and culturally informed."
21. See Cong's chapter, this volume.
22. Cong Lixin also criticizes the uncritical importation of Western theories; see her chapter, this volume.
23. The point bears emphasizing. Yes, the "nation" has functioned in those destructive ways, but not only in destructive ways. Canada, for instance, officially embraces difference (see, for instance, Pinar 2011, 175, n. 4).
24. As evident in chapter 1, within China, Professors Wang Cesan and Zhong Quinlan have been the most prominent, but, as internationalization intensifies, the influence of Zhang Hua at home and abroad can only strengthen. I am not alone in this conclusion. Recall that at the end of her exchanges with him, Janet L. Miller—former vice president of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (AAACS), and without question one of the most important curriculum studies scholars working today in the United States—tells Zhang Hua: "I especially consider your notion of 'internationalization as a [possible form of] cultural democracy' to be a very important one to extend and promote in our constant and always on-going efforts to forge a 'worldwide but not the same' field of curriculum studies. Zhang Hua, your scholarship is *crucial in these worldwide field undertakings*, and I am honored and humbled to be able to exchange ideas with you in this way." I share Janet Miller's appreciation for the scope and sagacity of his conception of internationalization. His wisdom, scholarship, and leadership—not only in China but worldwide, having served as president of the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS)—qualifies Professor Zhang Hua to be regarded not only as the key scholar in China, but as one of the most important scholars of curriculum studies working in the world.
25. For me the canonical curriculum question—what knowledge is of most worth?—is also a moral question. The teacher threads the moral through academic knowledge, and vice versa. Unless it is threaded through academic knowledge and dialogical encounter, morality can become split-off, a grid, conformity to which conceals difference and dynamism, the very domains of the moral.
26. From the exchanges, intercultural communication can be said to have occurred. Recall that Zhang Hua told Alicia de Alba that from "your

wonderful comments and questions, I have touched and appreciated the great fascination of Mexican culture." Zhang's choice of verbs aligns with de Alba's choice of phrases for intercultural encounter, in her terms "cultural contact" (see de Alba 2011).

27. About that fact Kang is obviously ambivalent, as he also stated that for young children the textbook "should not be required."
28. Especially in kindergarten, the centrality of the textbook is being challenged, including officially. Recall that Kang referenced the *Guide to the Learning and Development of 3–6 Aged Children* (Ministry of Education, 2012), which provided a framework for "learning" and "development," encompassing five domains: health, language, social studies, science and arts. "In effect, there remains in kindergarten "an organized curriculum" (quoted passages are Kang's, this volume) even though the concept does not appear in the *Guide*.
29. Recall that that is also Chen's chief concern.
30. And which Zhou summarized in his exchange with Autio; see above.
31. Antecedents and offspring are sometimes the same, as in the case of Hilda Taba: see Pinar 2013.
32. Recall that Zhang Hua has been criticized as an "educational humanist" by Chinese colleagues; he cites Tan Bin, "On Students' Needs: Debating with Zhang Hua's Lecture 'Reconceptualization of Curriculum and Teaching in China,'" in the *Journal of Educational Studies* 5, 2005.
33. Recall that Chen Yuting also emphasized "diversity" as a defining feature of the current reform, but in her discussion the emphasis is upon institutional or organizational diversity.
34. Not only for some administrators and teachers, but for some number of university professors and members of the public as well.
35. Nationality and internationality intersect through culture and history.
36. "If the state encourages private education," Zhou added, "its scale will increase rapidly."
37. These cohere within the presence of the person, as the interviews summarized in chapter 1 and the exchanges described in chapters 9, 10 and 11 testify. In her interview with Pinar, Chen Yuting expressed this succinctly: "In order to advance the field intellectually, I think the most urgent step is for researchers to devote some of their time to studying themselves: the relationship between one's own life history and his/her state of mind; the history of Chinese curriculum field and his/her own research, etc." I hope this project has provided one opportunity for the scholar-participants—and the readers of their work—to do so.
38. In terms of its population and economy, China is a "major" nation. In terms of curriculum studies, China's field may be the "major" field in the world today.
39. Pinar 2012, 152, 218.
40. Recall that in reply to Autio's final question—"How would you profile the intellectual, political and practical concerns in Chinese curriculum studies and the education reforms at this historical moment of China's modernization?"—Zhang specified this reconstruction: "My short answer to this wonderful

question is: intellectually or theoretically, to construct Chinese curriculum theories based on our own wisdom traditions and the urgent requirement of educational democratization; politically, to build up a 'bottom-up' educational system focusing on the sharing and interaction of educational powers; practically, to realize the one hundred years' ideal of democratic education—emancipating every student, every teacher, and every school. That's what matters in the changing China."

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# Part IV

## Epilogue
### The Participants Comment

# Chen Yuting

One cannot choose his or her birthplace. I did not have the opportunity to choose. My parents didn't either. They too cannot escape from the limitations of their place and time. Sometimes when I look back my parents' lives, they seem like an ancient generation. Their values, attitudes, and everyday lives seem to belong to another world. It is hard to imagine the times I spent with them. I have memories of both harmony and conflict.

In the summer in 1997, I climbed Laoshan Mountain, surrounded on three sides by the sea. It is near Qingdao City, Shandong Province. In heavy fog, I traveled a path lined with bamboo trees on my way up. I could see only a very little space in front of me. The fog enveloped me. I could touch the bamboo leaves with my fingers, smiling. Laughing, talking quietly with myself, it was as if I were in the heavens. As I traveled back down from the mountain, the fog disappeared. I looked back at those bamboo leaves and beyond toward the sea. At that moment it seemed that I had never walked along that path. No matter how carefully one studies one's past—or one's research field—one's life sometimes seems as illusory as did that experience of walking along that mountainside path filled with fog.

As a very little girl, I lived in a small village in Shandong Province. On many occasions the villagers told stories, many related to our village life. In one story there was a block somewhere in the village, where if, late at night you entered it, you would walk around in a very small space, unable to find your way out until dawn. One night a young man tried to return home after a fine time at his friend's house; he lost his way. He walked and walked, watching for familiar sights so he could find this way home. How could he be lost in the same village where he had grown up? When dawn came, the young man discovered numerous footprints around him. He had been walking in that very small space all night long! "He had been trapped by the 'block,'" the storyteller said, concluding the story.

This is my experience of trying to understand, enlarge, and liberate myself through my study and research work in the curriculum field. If only I study carefully the cultural and practical dimensions of curriculum locally or nationally, I remain within that block. It is by journeying locally,

nationally, and internationally that my study of curriculum (including Pinar's *currere*) helps me to realize who I am and how and why the present field is. In contrast to popularized forms of devotional practice common today—some enthusiasts even quit their jobs to search for harmony—autobiographical research methods enable one to reflect on the deep meanings of everyday—and specifically work—life.

When I was a little girl, I dreamed of being able to escape from the land of gender discrimination. When I returned to that same village over 20 years later, I found that all of the gender trouble had disappeared. I no longer felt it in my heart. The understanding and growth of one's spirit is marked by hard work and sometimes by misery. Only when the heart and spirit grow strong, can those troubles disappear, as if in the fog.

For me, the new curriculum reform, Chinese culture, and international curriculum studies provide the path I walk to understand my school colleagues: principals and teachers. The questions posed by Professors Alicia de Alba, Tero Autio and Janet L. Miller were like those bamboo leaves that touched me, revealing the web in which I walk. At times while studying their comments and questions and preparing my replies, the fog cleared. During those moments, the conservation became the dawn that enabled the villager to find his way home. I am a villager who finds her way home by understanding curriculum nationally and internationally. I thank all of the participants in this project. How I have benefited from this complicated conversation!

# Zhang Hua

*"Studying the alterity of actuality cultivates cosmopolitanism."*

*—William F. Pinar (2009, viii)*

As Chinese colleagues, we were not passive subjects or informants of Pinar's research project, but active participants in his great experiment of thought. The participatory process is growth, both for our own research and for the field in which we are working. Cultural democracy, participatory epistemology, and the methodology of complicated conversations form the basic character of Pinar's great project—Curriculum Studies in China.

What is the main problem of curriculum studies in China and worldwide? It is problem of proximity. In the project proposal, Pinar wrote: "Given the problem of 'proximity' between curriculum studies scholars and government-mandated school reform, and global tendencies toward ahistorical, presentistic school reform, basic research into the intellectual histories of nationally-distinctive academic fields of curriculum studies is urgently needed" (Pinar 2008). The "proximity" here means not the active interaction among theory, practice, and policy-making, or the productive collaboration among curriculum studies scholars, schoolteachers, and educational administrators. It means instead the connection between technical rationality and autocratic ideology. Due to technical rationality, curriculum becomes curriculum prescriptions, controlling the practitioners so they follow the rules or procedures of curriculum development. Both curriculum studies and curriculum practice lose their respective characters: the former becomes "ahistorical" and "atheoretical," the latter loses practical rationality. Due to autocratic ideology, curriculum studies scholars and schoolteachers must comply with administrators. The problem of proximity signifies the control-orientation in curriculum field.

In order to solve the problem of proximity, Pinar provided three solutions. First, Pinar recovered the temporal character of curriculum studies. Curriculum studies is a field being-in-time. Exploring intellectual history

is an intrinsic requirement for the development of curriculum studies. That is the "verticality" of disciplinarity in curriculum field (Pinar 2007, xiii). That is a "solution" of time or history. Second, Pinar recovered the space or place character of curriculum studies. Curriculum studies is a field being-in-the-world. Understanding the space or place character is necessary to strengthen the disciplinarity of curriculum studies. To study curriculum in different places, nations, races, countries, regions, identifying their alterity as well as commonalities, is not only the promotion of intellectual advancement of curriculum studies. It is also the cultivation of cosmopolitanism in the age of internationalization. In Pinar's (2009) wonderful phrase, it is "the worldliness of a cosmopolitan education." That is a "solution" of internationalization. Third, Pinar focused on the analysis and reconceptualization of present circumstances in curriculum studies. Curriculum studies is growing, becoming, and in an eternal process of transformation. Exploring the present circumstances or the date of the field is important for intellectual advancement. Pinar called it "horizontality" of the disciplinarity in curriculum studies (Pinar 2007, xiv). That is a "solution" of reconceptualization.

Through the three solutions of time or history, internationalization, and reconceptualization, "critical intellectual distance" can be produced, the problem of proximity can be overcome, and the vitality of curriculum studies will be thoroughly recovered (Pinar 2008). That is the main aim of a series of projects that Pinar has been researching, including this one—Curriculum Studies in China.

Pinar's project has special significance for Chinese curriculum field. First, it meets the need for the renaissance of Chinese culture in twenty-first century. Just as English historian Peter Watson (2002, 761) pointed out, in the twentieth century, nearly all the non-Western countries or cultures, including India, China, Japan, and the Islamic countries, tried "modernization," including Western modes of thought and action in academic fields. But they hardly created outstanding accomplishments in philosophy, literature, science, or arts as in Western countries. Pinar chooses another way. He carefully explores the intellectual history and present circumstances of Chinese curriculum studies, appreciatively finds its unique values and contributions, and enthusiastically collaborates with Chinese colleagues to promote its development. At the same time he seriously criticizes the conservative and degraded side of educational theory and practice in the Western world, especially in his mother country the United States. He always converses with Chinese curriculum scholars, encourages them to join international organizations and express their own ideas, and wholeheartedly helps them develop in their academic research. Pinar does not do projects on internationalization, but does projects as responsibility for

internationalization. What he does is responsible research. For this project, his contributions are not limited to curriculum field, but broadly extended to the understanding and development of Chinese culture.

Second, Pinar's project echoes the long-term traditions of humanistic research in China. From his early 20s to now, all the research work Pinar has been doing, the reconceptualization project in 1970s, autobiography project from 1970s to now, the gender studies project in 1990s, the paradigmatic construction of understanding curriculum in 1990s, and the internationalization movement of curriculum studies in 2000s, can be understood as instances of "humanistic inquiry." In the 5,000 years' recorded history of civilization, China has a weak tradition of scientific inquiry, but a strong one of humanistic research. Of course China should realize its "modernization," adopt scientific culture from the Western world, and develop a scientific spirit in the Chinese national mentality. But this does not mean abandoning our ancient humanistic traditions. On the contrary, only the humanistic spirit gives meaning to scientific culture. Without the humanistic spirit, scientific culture inevitably does harm to the world, can even destroy it. China's humanistic traditions are the value base and spiritual guarantee for the modernization of the Chinese world. Pinar's humanistic inquiry in curriculum studies can not only encourage Chinese colleagues to respect and study Chinese humanistic traditions, but also give rise to East-West conversations on the ongoing significance of humanistic research.

Third, Pinar's project meets the urgent need of the fast-developing curriculum field in China. As I pointed out in chapter 1 of this book, there are two peaks of curriculum studies in China: one is the 1922 Curriculum Reform; the other is the 2001 Curriculum Reform. In both scale and depth, the past decade is the period during which Chinese curriculum studies has been developing the fastest in history. Because most curriculum scholars try to address various practical needs, the paradigm of curriculum development dominates today's field in China (Zhang and Gao 2014). The problem of proximity exists in today's Chinese curriculum field. For curriculum field, the more technical, the less understanding. One of Pinar's most important contributions to curriculum field is that curriculum development and understanding are reciprocally related (Pinar et al. 1995; Pinar 2006). Curriculum development must be based on understanding. Otherwise it will turn to technical rationality and proceduralism. Curriculum understanding must be based on practical concerns and action. Otherwise it will go toward verbalism. I think that Pinar's ideas are of great help for Chinese curriculum field to reject technical rationality, to integrate curriculum development with understanding curriculum for the field to develop healthily.

What did Pinar conclude in this project? Theoretically, the main character of curriculum studies in China is the integrity of culture, history, and reform in the context of internationalization. The basic nature of the ongoing curriculum reform in China is "progressivism" or educational democracy, which is pioneering in today's world. These conclusions have at least two important implications. First, every Chinese curriculum scholar should enhance our cultural consciousness and theoretical confidence. Fully respecting and understanding our own wisdom traditions—Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, among others—positively recovering and promoting the traditions of educational democratization, wholeheartedly realizing the internationalization of curriculum studies, are the process of and necessary conditions for formulating Chinese curriculum theory. Second, with each Chinese schoolteacher, every Chinese curriculum scholar should commit to the educational democracy of the current curriculum reform, as the emancipation of every student, teacher, and school is the aim of curriculum reform. We should not adopt models and practices of "standardization," "efficiency," "routinization," or "accountability," as they are the "forms of death to the human spirit" (Pinar 1994, 197). Incorporating these into the current reform would mean that Chinese educational practice would not improve but get worse.

Participating in Pinar's project is one of the most valuable opportunities in my academic life. I can freely present my own curriculum ideas. I can trace my life history and "subjectivize" my curriculum thought. I can converse with curriculum scholars like Pinar and Professor Janet L. Miller from the United States, Professor Tero Autio from Finland, and Professor Alicia de Alba from Mexico. In so doing, our curriculum thoughts enjoy international meaning. During the process of "subjectivization" and internationalization, I come to understand better what I want to do. This is exactly the reconceptualization of my own "present circumstances." The integrity of subjectivization, internationalization, and reconceptulization is the true meaning of cosmopolitanism. It is the reconstruction of self, field, and culture. It is the charm of Pinar's project. It is the charm of internationalization.

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# Zhang Wenjun

When I accepted the invitation from Professor Pinar about the project on Curriculum Studies in China, I was very interested in the design of the whole framework. Having read his book about existential experience of curriculum and autobiographical research methodology, I was curious about how his research methodology would be implemented in this research project, and how he would conduct this research project.

The project was quite ambitious but strictly organized; and the way of conversations with him and intellectuals from other countries was appealing to me. I was involved in the curriculum reform and identified myself as a member of curriculum studies field in China, and I had something to say about each question in the questionnaire. It was a great chance to understand more about intellectual histories and current circumstances of curriculum studies in China; it was very exciting to be part of this project.

## The Encounters

I accepted the invitation and began to answer the questionnaire.[1] During the process of communication with Professor Pinar concerning my replies to his questions, I was curious about the participants. How will they answer these questions? What kind of topics they will choose for the research paper for this project, and how will they write about them? How will Professor Pinar respond to the participants? What would the conversations will be like?

The questionnaire encouraged me to think more about myself. For the first time I dared to write about the really vulnerable part of my life history: my fear of writing, my complicated sense about schooling, my everlasting existential sense that "life is elsewhere," and the search for salvation in various ways. The reasons "under cover" were also revealed. The people I met, the events I encountered, the historical, economic, cultural, and political context in which I was situated: all became the triggers of

my transformation in becoming a member of curriculum studies field. Tragedies became strengths, then obstacles, to going further and doing more.

Personal choices are not always personal; they are driven by very complicated events in the nation, its historical moments, and specific places. While answering the questions, I realized that the formation of my identity and the subjectivity is located deeply in the curriculum studies field in our country. I feel as if I encountered myself in the process of interviewing and paper writing.

The paper I wrote for this project—now chapter 6 in this volume—is the topic most familiar to me, the one about which I have the most to say. Because curriculum studies in China is such a broad field, there are numerous perspectives and facets to consider. When Professor Pinar invited us, I guess he would not have imagined what kind of perspectives we would take. On one hand, it shows the respect he accorded to the participants' own academic judgments and expertise; on the other hand, it is kind of risky to give power to the participants completely. Their topics could be very much different, and their stories could be fragmented and broken, even contradictory.

Although there is an overall framework of doing the research, there is enough space open to all possibilities. There are no predictions or hypotheses; everything is emergent from the main topic. This courage to take this risk, free the participants' space to speak and imagine can also lead to vivid and panoramic pictures of the origins, the history, the current status of curriculum studies.

Gradually I began to know who the other participants were as we met in conferences or meetings. I discovered that Zhang Hua was one of the participants during a chat with him; I discovered that Kang Changyun was one of the project participants when he visited our university; I learned that Ma Yunpeng was one of the participants during a seminar on high-school curriculum reform in Beijing. And I knew more authors when Professor Pinar sent us their papers, including the one by Chen Yuting. Although most of us knew each other and some of us are even good friends, the project provided a new sense of connection, as if we were in the family of curriculum studies in China. Thus the research topics not only represent participants' personal expertise, they interconnect, knitting a vivid portrait of our history, the reform, and the influence of Western curriculum discourses. As Professor Pinar concluded in chapter 12:

> The future of curriculum studies in China will unfold from its past, at once ancient and a century old. It is past that is international as well as local. That temporal and cultural complexity is registered in current curriculum policy

> and classroom practice. China's great "wisdom traditions"—Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism—comprise the ancient cultures now being invoked in contemporary curriculum research and development. Traces of an intense encounter with U.S. progressivism—personified by John Dewey's two-year visit—remain. Contemporary curriculum reform in China reincorporates those traces as well as aspects of its own ancient culture within a dynamic economy, a vast society, set in a global village. From the interviews, essays, and exchanges, it seems to me that *reform*, *history*, and *culture* comprise three key categories in understanding curriculum studies in China.

Zhang Hua, Cong Lixin, and Zhou Huixia discussed our vast history, the current reform, and the role of culture in curriculum studies; Zhang Hua emphasized the intellectual development of curriculum studies, Cong Lixin focused on the conflicts between "pedagogy" and "curriculum theory (or studies)." Emphasizing the ideological and philosophical bases of curriculum history and present circumstances, Zhou Huixia provided a broader framework for understanding curriculum studies field in China. Other participants told more "specialized" stories from varied perspectives, providing important details in the "big picture" and overall framework. Cheng Yuting wrote on the roles and reactions of schools in the current curriculum reform; Kang Changyun discussed the importance of textbooks in the process of curriculum reform; Ma Yunpeng addressed a particular subject and its attendant issues in the theoretical transition of curriculum studies in China; and I wrote on a particular postmodern influences from the Western academic world. The various encounters—with Professor Pinar (through all the interviews and communications), and with our international colleagues Professors Janet Miller, Tero Autio, and Alicia de Alba—made the stories more abundant, complicated, and provoking—a complicated conversation according to Pinar's terminology. Among all the stories, we can see certain themes emerging again and again, the enrichment of understanding occurring through the rereading of all the juxtaposed stories.

## The Ghosts

In *Curriculum Visions*, William Doll suggests that the concept of "ghost" can be a useful metaphor to explore curriculum. He argues that "Ghosts have an ethereal presence; they can be seen, often felt, but have no material substance. They exist on the fringes of our consciousness, neither physically real nor psychically unreal. They appear and disappear. They may be the appropriate metaphor to use when talking of curriculum visions.

A ghost incarnated loses not only its ghostliness but also its suggestive power—of what was, is, might be. A ghostly perspective on curriculum may be not only all we can get but all we want, for in such a perspective, we always have potential, unrealized possibilities" (Doll 2002, 24) This metaphor is also useful in exploring curriculum studies in China, with the acknowledgement that the ghosts in China are not the same as the ghosts in Western intellectual thoughts and curriculum studies.

The ghosts in Chinese curriculum studies are all gathered in the chapters in this book. Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism are powerful traditions—ghosts—hovering over the present circumstances (cultural and spiritual) of the Chinese people. They cannot be avoided when discussing curriculum. Among the three, Confucianism is the institutionalized dominant cultural force; it has had the most powerful influence on curriculum discourse and practice in China. As Holmes and McLean (1989) pointed out, although comprehensive technological curriculum paradigm from Marxist-Leninist ideology had been introduced into People's Republic of China, traditional Confucianism remains the most powerful influence in the Chinese people's hearts; it will return whenever possible. In the chapters by Zhang Hua and Zhou Huixia, this "ghost" speaks.

There are also ghosts from the Western world; they appeared one by one in different chapters with different faces. The most influential ghost is obviously John Dewey, who had been haunting us not only in the "old China" (before 1949), but also recently in the new curriculum reform. Exactly as in Doll's analysis: "The ghost of John Dewey hovers over the American curriculum and, coincidentally, over the curriculum of other countries where he has had an influence, either in thought or in practice" (Doll 2002, 23). Dewey's students—Hu Shi and Tao Xingzhi—are referenced by Zhang, Zhou, and Cong. The work of Tao Xingzhi was the trigger for me to select education as my major when I was in high school. Intellectual history and personal history are interwoven here, animated by the ghosts, stimulating the will to find solutions and pursue a better future as educators. Other ghosts—Marx, Bruner, Piaget, Liang Shumin, Chen Yinque—are all referenced, making vivid the historical transformation and current conditions of curriculum studies. They are part of our autobiographies, part of our selves, providing us new spaces of conversation and imagination.

## The Subjectivities

As Professor Pinar has suggested, studying intellectual history and the current circumstances of curriculum studies provides structures of

disciplinarity to support intellectual advancement in curriculum studies: verticality and horizontality (Pinar 2013). This project provided the opportunity for Chinese curriculum scholars to reflect on the intellectual history and current circumstances of curriculum studies in China. These complicated conversations stimulate us to consider what we should do next in curriculum studies. With the unique and long history of curriculum studies in China, with the vast land and people in tremendously different situations, curriculum studies in China is facing critical challenges and possibilities in its future development. The conversations summarized in this book could stimulate a reconceptualization of curriculum studies in China in the future. The field has already been an active and influential field not only domestically but also internationally. This conversation will enhance international communication and the cosmopolitan character of curriculum studies in China, strengthening efforts to meet the global challenges of humanity to enjoy a decent life, and a peaceful earth.

In chapter 12, Professor Pinar reports that he has "been struck by the extensive use of metaphor" during the conversations. I would say that the prominence of metaphor in our exchanges reflects the way of Chinese thinking. Before we began to accommodate ourselves to the Western paradigm of intellectual work—rational analysis and the prominence of argumentation—metaphor was more common among us. The ghosts of Chinese cultural history are audible in metaphoric representations from the participants. These could be also part of our subjectivities in the future curriculum studies.

The journey we undertook in this project could serve as a start for us to form a new custom of doing curriculum studies, the custom of more conversation and communication with curriculum scholars around the world through writing, conferences, and other dialogical encounters, the custom of seeking understanding and revelation through historical and cultural studies of our own circumstances. These customs can support the new subjectivities of our curriculum studies field, not only locally, but also internationally, toward a truly cosmopolitan feature. There is much more to do, much more to anticipate, if all of us believe we are able to create a better educational reality and better world through curriculum studies.

## Note

1. See Appendix.

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# Zhou Huixia

It has been 12 years since the launch and implementation of the eighth basic education curriculum reform in the People's Republic of China. Twelve years happens to be the entire circle of China's basic education (grades 1–12). The actual implementation of the new basic education curriculum form reflects the general status of students' living, surviving, and growth in primary and secondary schools. Therefore, the evaluation of and reflection on the new curriculum reform is a prerequisite to carrying on the past and forging the future.

Theorizing and implementing the basic education curriculum reform in the new century include the translation of curriculum concepts into curriculum qualities. Essential concepts such as student-centeredness, heuristic teaching, autonomous learning, collaborative learning, and inquiry learning are repeatedly enhanced in the 12 years of the reformed curriculum. The center of schooling is shifting from teaching and learning, a systematic understanding of curriculum. Such a shift constantly activates new understandings of the reformed curriculum by educators, parents, and citizens. In general, the Chinese people approve of the basic concepts of the new curriculum reform. Although criticism has never stopped, the achievements ring louder.

Compared with the public's expectations, however, the overall appearance of basic education remains far from ideal. An online survey indicated that 47 percent of teachers considered that students feel more burdened *after* the new curriculum reform. Only one-fourth of the teachers are satisfied with the reform. Some point to what the reform has failed to achieve—(1) multidisciplinary integrated learning, (2) diversification of students through academic proficiency tests, (3) provision of elective courses that personalize student learning, and (4) students' school performance should comprise 30 percent of their high school and college entrance examinations (Zhou 2011).

Why haven't many excellent designs in the new curriculum become reality? The answer is not only the lack of infrastructure and policy supports during the trial phase, but also resistances in the promoting process.

Some educational departments did not take action, which led to "choosing schools."[1] Some still hold a "wait and see" attitude and do not support the reform in actions.

At present, the revision and review of compulsory education curriculum standards have been completed. The general direction of the new curriculum now is the clarification and specification of the aims of each period of schooling. The learning contents of each grade and the extent to which students need to acquire these contents are being specified. Suggestions are being made for teaching practices, and new requirements for textbooks are being proposed. In sum, reformers are becoming more practical.

The present circumstances, however, force us to ponder the fact that after 12 years of implementation, students feel overburdened. They suffer from insufficient sleep, lack independent thinking and learning styles, and inadequate opportunity for free expression. Such realities are still quite far from the core value of the new curriculum reform: children's harmonious development.

How can our basic education become "the development of each student"? How to cultivate students' social responsibility, creativity, and practical ability? Can schooling return to the essence of what it means to "educate the human"? Questions like these still trouble the future of the new curriculum reform and require our constant attention. Many fundamental questions need to be reconsidered during this phase of deepening the reform. How to clarify our understanding of the new curriculum values in the course of changing practice and behaviors is becoming a problem on which every "curricularist" should focus.

## Note

1. "Choosing schools" means that some parents do not want their children to go to their assigned elementary or secondary schools. Instead, they pay so that their children can attend another school.

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# Appendix

1. Please describe the genesis of your present intellectual preoccupations and research agenda. To what extent do you regard these as consequences of your individuality and specific life history, to what extent were they structured by historical and political events within and outside of India? Regarding the former, did specific professors inspire your choice of fields (and specialization within the field) and/or did the intellectual content of the field draw you into participation? Regarding the latter, did political or social convictions influence your choice of field or, within the field of curriculum studies, structure your research?
2. As you reflect on your intellectual life history and specifically the paper you are preparing for this project, to what extent were and are your choices of what to study informed by the intellectual history of the discipline? How "independent" can your work be, given institutional and larger political circumstances?
3. Please provide a sketch of the academic field of curriculum studies in India, including how you position your research within it. How has your work been positioned by others? How has your work contributed to the intellectual advancement of your field?
4. How have global initiatives, influences (macro-political events as well as global conflicts and cultural imports), aspirations (global citizenship issues, such as ecological sustainability and women's rights, for instance), and geopolitical realities (historical regional or colonial relationships, for instance) influenced the research you have conducted and plan to conduct?
5. What is, in your judgment, the "state of the field" in India and how does that state of affairs influence your own research and scholarship? What "next steps" might the field take in order to advance intellectually? What do you imagine your own "next steps" to be?

# Contributors

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