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A Review of Researches on the 2022 Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards

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Abstract: In April 2022, the issuance of Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) officially brought China's basic English education into an era oriented to core competencies. To systematically sort out the research context and academic consensus formed in the three years after the policy release, this paper analyzes 35 core papers published from 2022 to 2025 based on the CNKI database. Three major research categories are summarized: comparative studies between the new and old curriculum standards, comparative studies of Chinese and foreign curriculum standards, and interpretative researches on the curriculum standards themselves. Among them, researches targeting the standards themselves are the most in-depth and longest-lasting research paradigm. This paper also puts forward prospects for future research directions.

Keywords: Compulsory Education, English Curriculum Standards, Core Competencies.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

To fully implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and cultivate all-round socialist builders and successors with comprehensive moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor literacy, the Ministry of Education formally issued *Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)* (hereinafter referred to as the New Standards) on April 21, 2022, replacing the 2011 Edition that had been implemented for 11 years. As the concentrated embodiment of the educational value of English courses, the Standards define four core competencies to be cultivated for students: linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. [1-3]This marks that the reform of basic English curriculum in China has fully entered the core competency era.

Since the release of the policy, interpretations and researches on the New Standards have quickly become a hot topic in educational academia. In this context, systematic integration and in-depth analysis of existing research results possess important academic value.

1.2. Research Significance

1.2.1. Theoretical Significance

Sorting out and integrating existing researches on the 2022 Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards helps primary and secondary school teachers and educational institutions systematically sort out and integrate the concepts and value orientation of the New Standards. Balancing instrumental and humanistic attributes, the New Standards take core competencies as the leading curriculum philosophy, which consists of three core modules: curriculum objectives, curriculum content and academic assessment. It reconstructs a curriculum content structure guided by themes, supported by discourses and organized under the English Learning Activity View. Academic quality criteria are formulated to examine students' overall performance of core competencies and their achievement levels in different school stages. An integrated "teaching-learning-assessment" curriculum system guided by objectives, supported by content and guaranteed by evaluation has been established.

1.2.2. Practical Significance

Collating relevant studies can further strengthen the guiding role of the New Standards in frontline English teaching. Most existing studies only focus on single isolated points. For example, Yang Liangxiong and Guo Huijian pointed out that the New Standards made major revisions in vocabulary requirements. A small number of scholars adopted a holistic research perspective: taking the environmental protection theme in FLTRP compulsory English textbooks as an example, [4,5]Lin Wenmei analyzed the stage connection of English textbooks under the new curriculum standards. By combing existing literatures, researchers and primary and secondary school teachers can stand at a broader and higher perspective to carry out research and teaching practice, and properly combine micro single-point research with macro overall analysis.

1.3. Research Methodology

This paper adopts the documentary research method. Based on the CNKI database, literature with the subject term "Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards" was retrieved, with publication years limited to 2022–2025. A total of 161 documents were retrieved, including 38 journal articles, 30 dissertations, 14 conference papers and 3 newspaper articles. After screening, 35 documents closely related to the research theme were selected, including 26 journal papers and 9 master's dissertations. This paper sorts out and analyzes these documents to form a comprehensive literature review.

2. Research Contents and Major Findings

After sorting out data from the 35 valid CNKI documents, the following research conclusions are obtained: First, statistics of annual publication volume show obvious distribution characteristics. [6]After the official release of the New Standards on April 21, 2022, 11 journal papers and 1 master's dissertation related to the Standards were published from April 21 to December 31, 2022. From 2023 to 2025, 15 journal papers and 8 dissertations were published in total. The

publication peak in 2022 arose from the strong policy driving force. After the issuance of the national curriculum standard, scholars immediately launched relevant research topics and formed a research upsurge. [7-10]The reduction of research outputs from 2023 to 2025 lies in the fact that follow-up researches require long-term data accumulation and multi-dimensional expansion. Second, statistical analysis of publishing institutions and authors shows prominent distribution rules. Through CNKI visual bibliometric analysis of the 35 core documents, Beijing Normal University published 6 journal papers, accounting for 17.14% of the total literature; Shanghai Normal University published 3 dissertations (8.57%); Tianjin Normal University published 2 dissertations (5.71%); Shanghai International Studies University published 2 journal papers (5.71%); Xi'an International Studies University published 2 dissertations (5.71%). The five universities contributed 42.84% of all publications, while other institutions accounted for the remaining 57.16%. It can be seen that universities are the main research base for compulsory English curriculum standards, and most productive universities are located in economically developed eastern regions of China.

2.1. Comparative Researches between the New and Old Curriculum Standards

Comparing the new and old versions helps educators accurately grasp the changing trends of compulsory English courses. Relevant literatures conduct comparisons from multiple dimensions including overall framework, curriculum nature, curriculum philosophy, curriculum objectives, curriculum content, academic quality and evaluation system, as well as curriculum implementation suggestions.

2.1.1. Overall Framework

The 2011 Standards include five parts: Preface, Curriculum Objectives, Grade-level Standards, Implementation Suggestions and Appendices. The 2022 Standards expand into seven chapters: Curriculum Nature, Curriculum Philosophies, Curriculum Objectives, Curriculum Content, Academic Quality, Curriculum Implementation and Appendices. The main structural adjustments are as follows:

The curriculum nature and curriculum philosophy originally contained in the Preface are set as independent chapters to highlight their importance[11];

A new chapter of Academic Quality is added to clarify the correlation between academic performance of each stage and core competencies;

The part of Teaching Research and Teacher Training is supplemented under Curriculum Implementation to attach importance to teachers' professional development;

The appendices are streamlined, focusing on the stage characteristics of core competencies and deleting overlapping repetitive contents.

2.1.2. Curriculum Nature

Both versions emphasize the integration of instrumental and humanistic attributes of English courses. [12]The 2022 Standards further highlight humanistic attributes and educational value, stressing the role of English in cross-cultural communication, national identity cultivation and the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind. It clearly points out that English teaching should go beyond the simple training of language skills.

2.1.3. Updated Curriculum Philosophies

The 2022 Standards take core competencies as the overall guideline to formulate curriculum objectives, select curriculum content and reform teaching and evaluation methods. It advocates thematic curriculum content organization covering three major categories: Self and Others, Society and Culture, and Nature and Environment. The English Learning Activity View consisting of three progressive links - learning and understanding, application and practice, transfer and innovation - is proposed to promote the integration of learning, thinking, application and creation. Meanwhile, it emphasizes the integration of information technology and teaching, and encourages hybrid online and offline teaching.

2.1.4. Curriculum Objectives

The general objective of the 2011 Standards is to cultivate students' comprehensive language application ability. For the first time, the 2022 Standards clarify the connotation of four core competencies, namely linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability, based on which general curriculum objectives and stage objectives are formulated. The original grading system is adjusted to three continuous stage objectives (Grades 3–4, Grades 5–6, Grades 7–9) with stronger continuity and guidance. A preparatory level and extended "+ levels" are additionally set to adapt to differentiated student development.

2.1.5. Curriculum Content

In the 2011 Standards, curriculum content was attached to grade-level standards. The 2022 Standards set an independent Curriculum Content chapter, clarifying six interrelated elements: themes, discourses, linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, language skills and learning strategies. "Cultural knowledge" replaces the original "cultural awareness" entry to strengthen structured knowledge construction and value judgment. In addition, "viewing" is newly added as a language skill to meet the learning demands of multimodal discourses.

2.1.6. Academic Quality and Evaluation System

The 2011 Standards did not set clear academic quality criteria. The newly added Academic Quality chapter in the 2022 Standards describes students' academic performance of each stage from four dimensions of core competencies, promoting the integration of teaching, learning and assessment. It advocates diversified evaluation subjects, evaluation contents and evaluation methods, and combines formative assessment and summative assessment.

2.1.7. Curriculum Implementation and Teaching Suggestions

The 2022 Standards adhere to the education concept of fostering virtue through education, advocate unit holistic teaching, in-depth discourse interpretation and practical application of the English Learning Activity View. [13-16]It attaches great importance to teachers' professional development, and encourages school-based teaching research and teacher community construction. It also stresses the application of information technology and diversified curriculum resources to support personalized learning and pedagogical reform.

2.2. Comparative Researches between Chinese and Foreign Curriculum Standards

Comparative analysis of Chinese and foreign curriculum standards helps domestic curriculum construction draw on international experience based on national reality. According to CNKI retrieval results, only two literatures carry out cross-

national comparison research on compulsory English curriculum standards, which compare China's standards with those of the United States and Pakistan respectively.

Although the curriculum standards of China, the United States and Pakistan all respond to the trend of globalization and informatization in the 21st century, they are rooted in different social and cultural backgrounds, leading to obvious differences in core philosophies.

The educational vision of China's New Standards is to cultivate all-round socialist builders and successors with sound morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor ability. Centered on four integrated core competencies, it realizes the unification of instrumental and humanistic attributes of language education. [17]Beyond language skill training, it guides students to develop international vision, cultivate national sentiment and strengthen cultural confidence through English learning, serving students' lifelong development and national strategic demands. Rooted in the task of fostering virtue through education, this philosophy reflects postmodern educational concepts focusing on all-round human development and process competency cultivation.

In contrast, the U.S. Common Core Standards adopt a pragmatic orientation, directly connecting with higher education and labor market demands. It focuses on cultivating transferable abilities including critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication and collaboration. Formulated under the influence of neoliberalism, it features strong outcome orientation, measurable indicators and accountability mechanisms, aiming to improve national educational competitiveness and equity through unified standards.

Pakistan's English curriculum standards focus on cultivating practical effective communication competence in social and global contexts, aiming to train competent language practitioners. Moral literacy and social responsibility cultivation are integrated into language learning objectives to improve students' social participation ability.

2.3. Researches Focused on the Standards Themselves

As the guiding document for teaching, in-depth interpretation of curriculum standards helps educators accurately grasp core requirements and standardize teaching implementation. Relevant researches are divided into two types: holistic overall research and partial local research.

2.3.1. Holistic Overall Researches

Scholars represented by Wang Qiang expound the seven chapters of the New Standards from multiple perspectives, clarify the core positioning of compulsory English courses, take objectives and evaluation as guidance, put forward multi-dimensional implementation suggestions, and discuss curriculum resource utilization as well as teacher training.

2.3.2. Partial Local Researches

Liu Feng puts forward multiple paths to realize core competency cultivation in junior high English under the New Standards: integrated instructional design, unit holistic implementation, innovative teaching modes, and diversified evaluation integrating teaching, learning and assessment, so as to reconstruct the educational value system of English courses.Taking PEP English textbooks as research materials, Su Miao analyzes common problems in traditional teaching and emphasizes the importance of situational teaching design.Taking the environmental protection theme in FLTRP textbooks as a case, Lin Wenmei analyzes the vertical connection of textbooks across compulsory education stages from the dimensions of themes and discourses, providing guidance for consistent teaching in different stages.Li Qi and Yang Zhengjun analyze the logical design, structural characteristics and organizational principles of English curriculum content to clarify the educational value and functions of English courses in the new era.From the perspective of curriculum theory and pedagogy, Wang Qiang, Zhou Mi and other scholars analyze the deep knowledge structure behind the six curriculum content elements, dividing knowledge into linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, methodological knowledge and value-based knowledge. Their research establishes the internal logical connection between curriculum content and core competency objectives, helping teachers grasp the core educational mission of English education.Existing literatures also put forward operable implementation strategies, including unit review teaching design based on six content elements, classroom practice of the English Learning Activity View, comprehensive unit practical activities, and reading literacy cultivation schemes.

3. Conclusion

Based on CNKI literature data, this paper adopts documentary research to classify existing researches on the 2022 Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards into three categories: comparative study of new and old standards, cross-national comparative study of Chinese and foreign standards, and interpretative research on the standards themselves. Among them, interpretative research on the standards is the most thorough and long-lasting research paradigm.

The academic circle has formed consistent views on key breakthroughs of the New Standards including expanded subject framework, deepened educational philosophy, reconstructed curriculum content and innovative evaluation system. These research results provide theoretical support for frontline teachers to cultivate students' linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability, and form operable classroom models featuring thematic guidance, discourse-based teaching, English Learning Activity View and integrated teaching-learning-assessment.

Nevertheless, there are still many research directions worthy of further exploration:

Current researches are mainly speculative theoretical papers; more empirical researches should be carried out to enhance the reliability and persuasion of research conclusions;

Expand field investigation to collect micro evidence of regional and school-based teaching cases;

Accelerate the construction of a complete evaluation system covering newly added contents such as viewing skill, academic quality criteria and three-level evaluation framework;

Explore emerging research perspectives including technology-enabled teaching and interdisciplinary integration.

Future researches on the New Standards should rely on large-scale classroom observation, long-term action research and cross-regional comparative projects to develop replicable and promotable teaching schemes for core competency-oriented English education. Only through continuous in-depth research can we fully fulfill the fundamental task of fostering

virtue through education and cultivate a new generation of socialist builders and successors with national sentiment, international vision and global competence.

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