

Comparison and Enlightenment of Curriculum Reform Trends of Basic Education in China and Europe

Ruiyi Zhao

School of International Education, The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

Abstract: Through in-depth comparison of basic education curriculum reform in China and Europe, this study explores the role of different countries' unique education systems and policies in shaping the reform process. This paper uses an interdisciplinary perspective to comprehensively examine the current situation, characteristics and evolution trend of basic education curriculum reform in China and some representative European countries, such as Germany, France and the United Kingdom. With the help of literature interpretation, case analysis and comparison, we clarified the differences and commonalities of education reform in China and Europe, and further refined the learning strategies and enlightenment. The observation shows that China's educational transformation emphasizes the shift from exam-oriented mode to quality-oriented education, and focuses on stimulating innovative thinking and practical skills. In contrast, European education focuses more on individual differences and continuous learning, and the curriculum structure shows greater flexibility and diversity. Although there are differences in methods, both of them focus on cultivating innovative talents for the future. The theoretical significance of this study is that it expands the academic boundary of education policy analysis and international education comparison. In the practical sense, it provides insightful reference for China's education reform and provides thinking materials for other parts of the world. Future studies should pay more attention to the use of empirical data, broaden the geographical coverage, and fully consider the impact of technological progress and social change on education.

Keywords: Basic Education in Central Europe; Curriculum Reform; Educational Policy; Comparative Education; Educational Change.

1. Introduction

In the wave of globalization and information technology, education reform has become the focus of governments. With the rapid evolution of social economy and the rapid change of science and technology, the old education paradigm is increasingly showing its limitations, and it is difficult to meet the expectations of talent cultivation in the new era. So many countries are racing to revolutionize basic education curricula in order to create a new generation of citizens with innovative thinking and practical skills. China and European countries have carried out multi-dimensional attempts and practices in this field. In recent years, the pace of educational reform in our country is shifting from exam-oriented to overall quality education, advocating students' overall development, paying special attention to the cultivation of innovation, practice and moral character. At the same time, European countries continue to optimize their education structure and have the courage to conduct innovative experiments in curriculum setting, teaching strategies and evaluation mechanisms [1], which can better fit the context of social development and improve the efficiency and quality of education.

In this way, this study can analyze the characteristics of the education systems and policies of the two countries and their driving effect on reform through the in-depth comparison of the curriculum reform of basic education in China and Europe. The core of the research focuses on the following aspects. Firstly, this paper discusses the similarities and differences of Chinese and European educational concepts, and further investigates how these ideas shape the path of curriculum construction and implementation. Secondly, it analyzes the differences of basic education content between the two countries, especially the curriculum structure and the design of elective courses. Furthermore, the teaching methods of

CEIBS are compared, especially how to use different teaching models to stimulate students' learning potential and growth. Finally, this paper will compare the uniqueness of Chinese and European educational evaluation systems, and comprehensively reflect students' learning achievements with diversified evaluation methods.

2. Historical Evolution of Curriculum Reform of Basic Education in China and Europe

Since the beginning of reform and opening up, China's basic education curriculum system has undergone a significant paradigm shift. Since the late 1980s, our country started the all-round promotion of quality education, hoping to cultivate students' holistic development and surpass the simple score pursuit. The core of the reform in this transition period is to break through the shackles of exam-oriented education and advocate equal emphasis on expanding humanistic feelings, scientific research spirit and social responsibility and other multi-dimensional abilities, so as to shape students' more balanced knowledge network and enhance their comprehensive quality. In the new millennium, with the introduction of such literature as "China's Education Modernization 2035", curriculum reform has been deepened, focusing more and more on cultivating students' innovation ability and practical skills, so as to establish a solid theoretical foundation and practical application skills [2-3]. To this day, the Chinese government continues to strengthen support for education in rural and remote areas, striving to reduce the urban-rural education gap and ensure that all young people have equal access to high-quality educational resources.

In the practice of curriculum reform in European countries, it is not difficult to find their unique and diverse strategies.

Germany's education reform highlights the integration of vocational education and general education, constructs a dual system of education structure, focuses on the potential of both academic and vocational aspects, and lays a diversified growth path for teenagers. In recent years, the French curriculum and teaching objectives have been revised, with a greater emphasis on stimulating students' originality and critical thinking, and encouraging exploratory self-expression and innovative action. The UK relies on its national curriculum framework to protect the quality of education, and supports the innovation of school-based curriculum, so that the learning situation is more consistent with the daily life situation and social expectations of students [4-5]. In the whole process of the reform, the concept of personalized learning and lifelong learning has been widely respected by all countries, and the goal is to customize the education model that meets the individual needs of each student, so as to better face the uncertainty of the future.

3. Current Situation of Basic Education Curriculum Reform in China and Europe

3.1. Present Situation of Curriculum Reform of Basic Education in China

With the rapid evolution of economy and society, the traditional exam-oriented education system has been unable to adapt to the modern society's desire for diversified talents. In view of this, the Chinese education authorities have launched a series of innovative measures, the core goal is to nurture students' innovative thinking and practical skills, and comprehensively improve their comprehensive quality. The reform aims for students to master basics, solve practical problems, collaborate, and take social responsibility. Since reform and opening, our country's basic education curriculum has continuously explored and practiced to move beyond exam-oriented education and promote holistic development.

Reform focuses on cultivating humanistic quality, scientific spirit, and civic responsibility. Elective courses are increased, allowing students to customize their learning. Inquiry-based and collaborative learning are encouraged. Evaluation shifts from exams to process and overall quality. Teacher training improves quality and education levels. Results are promising, with enhanced student quality and innovation. However, issues like unequal resource distribution and teacher pressure remain to be addressed.

3.2. Overview of Basic Education Curriculum Reform in Europe

European countries have their own characteristics in the reform of basic education curriculum, but the general trend is to pay more attention to the personalized development of students, enhance the ability of social practice and promote lifelong learning. Here is an overview of reforms in a few typical European countries:

Germany's primary education combines vocational and academic education. Recently, the curriculum has added topics like IT and ecology, using project-driven methods to enhance practical skills. Teacher professional development is also prioritized. France's reform focuses on critical thinking and creativity, boosting non-traditional subjects like art and PE. Emotional education and social responsibility are also emphasized.

British curriculum innovation is based on the national curriculum framework, which advocates schools to carry out teaching innovation according to local conditions. The UK focuses on individual learning with customized curricula and diverse strategies. It also promotes IT in education, encouraging students to use digital tools for self-learning.

3.3. Comparative Analysis of Curriculum Reform of Basic Education in China and Europe

A review of the current situation of basic education curriculum reform in China and Europe reveals that although there are differences in implementation strategies, the common theme is obvious, that is, the emphasis on the cultivation of innovative thinking and operational skills. Both parties have carried out innovations in the education syllabus and teaching practice, which can stimulate students' awareness of innovation and improve their ability to solve practical problems. The education system generally recognizes the unique differences among students, and pays more attention to the individual needs of students in curriculum construction and teaching activities. In addition to traditional examination evaluation, countries began to introduce process evaluation and comprehensive literacy evaluation to reflect students' learning outcomes more comprehensively. In order to strengthen the construction of teachers, China and Europe attach great importance to the professional development of teachers and improve the teaching level of teachers through a variety of ways.

However, there are some differences in the implementation process among countries. For example, European countries are relatively flexible in curriculum and give schools greater autonomy; China, on the other hand, has developed relatively uniform curriculum standards at the national level. In addition, European countries pay more attention to the personalized development of students and encourage students to choose courses independently; China's education system, by contrast, still features standardized tests.

4. Policy Comparison and Enlightenment

4.1. Educational Policy Research

China's education policy is characterized by centralization, with the central government occupying a central position in the formulation of education policies, establishing a unified subject framework and teaching plan to ensure the coordination of education reform across the country. This top-down approach has established standardized education guidelines and effectively improved the quality of education across the country. China's educational reform follows a gradual path, from local trials to comprehensive promotion, and gradually and steadily advances. This method significantly reduces the unknown factors in the reform process, ensures the stability and continuity of the transformation, and further facilitates the identification of defects and timely correction in the specific implementation process. Observing the education trend of our country in recent years, it is not difficult to see that our country is firmly promoting various quality education reforms, so as to strengthen the overall quality of students, with special emphasis on stimulating the consciousness of innovation and enhancing the ability of practical activities. China's educational strategy has adjusted the curriculum structure,

increased the proportion of elective courses, and promoted inquiry learning methods, so as to gradually get rid of the excessive reliance on the traditional exam-oriented model.

The characteristics of European education policies are mainly reflected in the following aspects: local autonomy. European countries generally give local governments and schools greater autonomy, allowing them to make innovative attempts in curriculum setting and teaching methods. This kind of regional autonomy mechanism gives the localities with adaptability, so that the education program can be timely optimized according to the specific conditions of each locality, so as to more accurately meet the educational needs of local schoolchildren. In Europe, educational policies often highlight the respect for individual differences, advocate individualized teaching, encourage students to customize their curriculum according to their personal interests and expertise, and create a rich variety of education. Its essence is a deep concern for humanity, so as to guide each student to explore an academic path that meets their individual needs. The European sports community generally respects the concept of continuous learning, strives to create a variety of learning channels for adults, and ensures that citizens at every level can enjoy the benefits of education, so as to drive the dynamic process of comprehensive social progress. This continuous learning perspective clearly states that education should not be limited to youth, but should be throughout a person's life.

4.2. Comparative Education

Chinese and European educational policies differ significantly due to their unique national backgrounds. In China, the educational strategy focuses on a nationally consistent curriculum outline, and promotes standardized examinations and unified assessment systems, which can promote the standardization and homogenization of education throughout the country. This centralized governance model is conducive to ensuring the balance of teaching quality, but it may weaken the decision-making autonomy of the local level. In contrast, European education policies tend to emphasize individual differences and support schools and teachers to innovate teaching practices according to specific circumstances. This flexible and diverse educational model helps to stimulate students' creativity and practical ability, but it also faces the challenge of how to maintain consistency and quality in diversity.

Course content and structure

In the Chinese educational scene, the curriculum structure shows remarkable uniformity, and institutions across the country adhere to the same curriculum outline and teaching materials to ensure that all young people receive standardized basic education. However, the tendency of homogeneity may restrict the innovation power and adaptability of local educational institutions to a certain extent. In contrast, the curriculum of European countries shows greater flexibility and diversity, and pays special attention to cultivating students' practical ability and emotional wisdom. Taking Finland as an example, its educational strategy advocates the cultivation of students' self-driven learning and critical thinking ability. The German education system is unique, focusing on skills acquisition and forward-thinking career planning. This diverse curriculum design helps to meet the needs of different students and promote their all-round development.

Teaching methods and evaluation system

In the educational practice of our country, teaching strategy is undergoing a gradual transformation from traditional teaching mode to interactive inquiry, and innovative models such as flipped classroom and project-driven learning are increasingly emerging. In addition to written tests, assessment methods such as oral defense and practical operation have been widely used to improve students' comprehensive quality and innovation ability. In the European educational scene, teaching methods tend to show greater flexibility, giving teachers more discretion to adapt to the individual learning needs of different students. On this basis, the evaluation system shows a more three-dimensional dimension, which not only considers the deep mastery of knowledge, but also pays more attention to the growth of students' practical application skills and emotional wisdom. For example, the A-level system in the UK encourages students to choose courses independently according to their interests, while the educational evaluation in Sweden focuses on the cultivation of individual growth and social skills.

Characteristics of China's educational system reform

The main feature of China's education system reform is the state-led model, which helps to form unified standards and ensure the consistency of education quality. However, this model sometimes inhibits grassroots autonomy and hinders the innovation and progress of local educational institutions. A feature of China's educational transition is the incremental reform strategy, which helps to mitigate the uncertainty caused by reform, but may also slow down the rate of change. In recent years, the government has actively advocated the concept of comprehensively improving the quality of education and the multi-dimensional growth of students. However, problems such as uneven distribution of educational resources and increasing pressure on teachers remain difficult to solve, which not only constrain further reform, but may also have a negative impact on students' personal development.

Characteristics of educational system reform in Europe

The main feature of the reform of European education system is the mode of local autonomy. This mode allows all localities to flexibly adjust the content of education according to the actual situation, and promotes the diversified development of education. However, the local self-government model also brings about the problem of how to ensure the uniformity of education quality and how to maintain consistency in the diversity. Adaptive education architecture is crucial to promote the personalized growth of students, but at the same time, it is accompanied by the fragmentation of educational resources and the increase of management complexity, which constitutes an urgent problem to be solved. The concept of lifelong learning is highly respected in European countries, and they use multiple ways to create a continuous learning environment for adult groups. This kind of persistent learning concept undoubtedly improves the knowledge literacy of the whole society, however, to maintain the operation of this mechanism requires continuous injection of resources to support.

4.3. International and Comparative Education

The trend of international education shows that under the background of globalization, education is increasingly emphasizing the cultivation of innovation ability, practical ability and lifelong learning ability. All countries are actively exploring the path of education reform suitable for their national conditions in order to better meet the requirements of

globalization.

The international reference of China's educational reform

China's educational reform needs to learn from international educational trends, especially in the aspects of curriculum design, teaching methods and evaluation systems. Europe's flexible curriculum design and diversified evaluation system provide valuable inspiration for China. For example, China can strengthen local autonomy, encourage schools and teachers to make curriculum innovations based on actual conditions, and improve the flexibility and diversity of teaching. In addition, China can learn from the experience of Europe to strengthen the construction of teachers, improve their professional quality and teaching ability, so as to better support students' personalized learning and development.

European education reform from China

Europe can learn from China's successful experience in the inheritance of traditional culture and large-scale education reform. China's education reform has effectively promoted educational equity, especially in expanding educational coverage and strengthening educational facilities in rural areas. This provides inspiration for Europe to strengthen its own educational equity and ensure that every student has equal access to quality educational resources. At the same time, China's mature approach to teacher development is also worth learning from Europe, especially in terms of improving the financial incentives and professional growth of teachers.

Although China and Europe differ in their specific approaches to education reform, both sides are committed to cultivating future talents with innovative and practical capabilities. China needs to increase local autonomy and teaching flexibility while maintaining national unified standards to better meet the individual needs of students. Europe should focus on improving the consistency of teaching quality and management efficiency while maintaining the flexibility and diversity of education system. With the continuous evolution of educational concepts and the innovation and development of scientific and technological tools, it is expected that more important breakthroughs will be made in the curriculum reform of basic education in China and Europe. This study may provide unique insights into education reform in China and beyond, and further inspire similar reform practices.

5. Conclusion and Prospect

This study has made contributions in both theoretical and practical aspects. The systematic research on the theoretical

foundation of China-EU primary education curriculum reform not only enhanced the in-depth analysis of related academic fields, but also put forward a series of practical strategic suggestions, which further contributed valuable insights to the road of education innovation in our country. Although this study has achieved some achievements, its limitations should be acknowledged, including lack of empirical evidence, limited geographical coverage, and insufficient consideration of changing dynamics. Future research directions are expected to make up for these shortcomings by expanding the breadth of empirical cases, deepening the comparative analysis between countries, and continuously updating research methods. The exploration of basic education curriculum reform in China and Europe is undoubtedly the core focus of current educational circles. Through this study, we recognize that although there are differences in specific approaches to education reform in China and Europe, both sides are committed to developing future talents with innovative and practical abilities. In the future, with the continuous evolution of educational concepts and the innovation of technical tools, the transformation of primary education curriculum in China and Europe is bound to move to a deeper level. It is hoped that this research will contribute to educational reform in China and other parts of the world, and may also serve as a reference for their reform practice.

References

- [1] Lokshyna O I, Dzhurylo A P, Glushko O Z, et al. Secondary education reform priorities under globalisation: the case of Ukraine in comparison with China, Germany and Poland[C]// SHS Web of Conferences. EDP Sciences, 2021 (104).
- [2] Gruijters R J, Chan T W, Ermisch J. Trends in educational mobility: How does China compare to Europe and the United States? [J]. Chinese Journal of Sociology, 2019, 5(2): 214-240.
- [3] Wang Y, Lavonen J, Tirri K. Aims for learning 21st century competencies in national primary science curricula in China and Finland[J]. EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, 2018, 14(6): 2081-2095.
- [4] Ding B, Wang F. Didactics meets curriculum studies in the context of teacher education in mainland China: a historical and comparative perspective[M]//Theorizing Teaching and Learning in Asia and Europe. Routledge, 2017: 124-139.
- [5] Theorizing teaching and learning in Asia and Europe: A conversation between Chinese curriculum and European didactics [M]. Taylor & Francis, 2017.