Deliberation and School-Based Curriculum Development – A Hong Kong Case Study

Tak Shing LAM John

The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Abstract

Background: Deliberative mode of curriculum development has been hailed as one effective way of developing school-based curriculum. Its participatory, egalitarian and discursive characteristics have helped to generate the much-needed synergy and ownership feeling among the curriculum team members that lead to   curriculum success. Nevertheless there is little such research in Hong Kong and thus very little is known as to the what, why and how in doing deliberative mode of curriculum development.

Aims: This study intended to examine the patterns of curriculum development of a local primary school and how they had evolved over the span of four years.

Method: The case school was selected due to its successful curriculum innovations over the years. Two site visits were made to the case school, one in 2003 and one in 2007. Eight teachers and the principal were interviewed and some lesson observations were made.

Results: It was found that the success of the school's curriculum development pattern is similar to Decker Walker's 'naturalistic model' which is premised on the notion and practice of deliberation. It is also found that the school's ethos, organizational arrangements and professional relationships contribute to the success of the school's deliberative mode of curriculum development.

Conclusion: With the knowledge gained in this study as to the what, why and how of doing a deliberative curriculum development, it is hoped that it will illuminate for local teachers, school administrators and school curriculum development personnel the kind of personal, organizational and social context in order that deliberative curriculum development can thrive and sustain.

Keywords: Deliberation, school-based curriculum development, teachers' professional knowledge

課程慎思與校本課程發展——一香港個案研究

林德成

香港教育學院

摘要

背景：「課程慎思」式 (或稱「課程審議」模式) 在課程發展學術文獻中，常被推崇為其中一種有效的校本課程發展模式。因其講求平等、共同參與及鼓勵老師同儕對話的特色，能產生校本課程發展必需的[老師擁有感] 及 [協同作用]，有助課改成功。但本港教育界及學術界對此之研究及論說不足，未能令人對「課程慎思」模式之理論、實踐方法及好處有充份之認知。

目的：本研究旨在探討個案小學學校課程發展之模式及階段發展，及其曆經四年之變遷情況。

方法：本研究以個案研究方式進行，探討一間本地課改表現出色的小學之課程發展之模式。研究由兩次場地考察組成，一於2003年進行，另外一次乃於2007年進行。學校場地考察中，訪問了校長及老師共八人，並作了若干課堂觀察，以收集資料。

結果：研究結果顯示，該校之校本課程發展模式呈現類似瓦克 (Walker) 所倡議之一種慎思課程模式--「寫實模式」。研究亦發現該校之學校/校長之文化特質、組織行事方式，及老師同儕間之合作關係，乃促成課程慎思模式成功落實之因素。

總結：研究所得對有興趣試行「課程慎思」模式的老師及學校有啟示作用，使其對於「課程慎思」之功用、本質特色及行事模式有更深刻之認知。

關鍵詞：課程慎思、校本課程發展、老師專業知識

Introduction

There has been a trend, both locally and worldwide, in schools' curriculum development to shift away from a traditionally highly centralized curriculum decision making largely in the hands of centralized government agencies towards a school-based model of involving and engaging teachers in making more decisions for pupil learning (Stenhouse, 1975; Marsh, 1997; Wallace et al. 1999; Morris, 1992; Morris and Adamson, 2010). For a school curriculum endeavor to be successful, both the teachers and the school itself have to undergo some learning process before the two can muster enough personal practical knowledge and organizational/ contextual knowledge to solve the curriculum problems.

Teachers' Learning

McCutheon (1995) attributes curriculum success to teachers' solo and group deliberation. Stenhouse (1975) posits that a school's curriculum development implies teachers' professional development. In other words, for a school to succeed in its curriculum endeavours, teachers have to be given the space and place to go through 'learning by doing' in their curriculum theorizing and making (Miller, 1990; McCutcheon, 1995).

In this study, we view teacher learning as a socio-cultural phenomenon. It means that teacher learning is constructed through discourse. As school culture creates opportunities for teachers' everyday informal professional learning and development. When researchers focus on interactions and relationships that manifest teacher learning, they also look into the school context.Research shows us that teachers' professional learning comes more from the school context instead of from formal in-service experiences (e.g. Darlind-Hammond, 2000, 2006; Goldernberg & Gallimore, 1991; Lieberman, 2000). Knight (2002) also argues that 'the quality of teachers' learning comes from the quality of their departments and/or schools as learning

organizations' (p. 293). Hence in this study, besides teachers' learning we also look into the organizational factors that facilitate curriculum successes.

Organizational Learning

An organization cannot learn and grow if there is only teachers' learning in the context, as an entity it should also launch its own learning and inquiry machinery in order to survive or thrive. Here dawns the notion of 'organizational learning' which is defined by Leithwood & Aitken (2000) as '…a group of people pursuing common purposes with a collective commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes' (p.63).

Organizational learning is seen as a journey rather than a destination for a school to inquire its future pathways. It involves learning by individuals, learning by groups and learning by the organization itself (Mulford, 2005). For an organization to learn, some kind of human interaction and communication mechanisms should be in place to effect the kind of cultural change that would help the school see successful change. MacGilchrist, Mortimore, Stedman, and Beresford (1995) have propounded a framework that highlight professional relationships and organizational arrangements as the two means a school employs to create opportunities for teachers and the school to learn. Jurasaite-Harbison & Rex (2009) also outline five factors that teachers find providing them with opportunities for informal teacher learning. They are (1) school mission, (2) traditions, (3) architectural features, (4) organizational arrangement and (5) professional relationships. At the same time, one of the most significant school factors that have positive impact on a school curriculum development is the school culture. Hodkinson, Biesta, & James. (2008) view culture as a social phenomenon, or a practice '…

constructed through interactions and communications between the members and the operational contexts of an organization.'

In this study, it aims to highlight the influences of the school culture, the organizational arrangement and professional relationships on the success or failure of a deliberative school-based curriculum development. The three factors are elaborated here:

a. Organizational Arrangements

Organizational arrangements include any arrangement that can facilitate in our case school based curriculum development, e.g. rescheduling of preparation times and venue for teachers to get together for informal learning and lesson planning, encouraging teachers' participation in workshops and conference, and identifying/inserting outside experts, in-school mentors, group leaders into various curriculum committees and teachers' task force.

b. Professional Relationships

Collaborative learning thrives in a context of productive professional relationships in which teachers can tinker, transfer knowledge, research their practice, and engage with middle managers in facilitating their collaborations (Hargreaves, 1999). It means that the professional relationships within schools should be enthused with a culture of collaboration, value for individuals, interdependence, openness and trust. Teachers are expected to develop and help their colleagues develop. Teachers are motivated to experiment in their classrooms (tinkering) and borrow ideas from each other (transfer of knowledge). A school should espouse a kind of working relationships that empowers the teachers to make decisions including what, when and how they are going to learn.

c. School Culture

The term 'culture' has been defined in a variety of ways, emphasizing different elements. As a broad definition of 'culture', Schein (1992) defines it as 'a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration ….(p.12). Schein identifies that culture can be manifested in the form of artifacts, espoused values and basic assumptions which are the core organizational values that shape the behavior and social relations of participants within a particular context. In other words, culture stands for and explains '…this is the way we do things here'. It provides the bases for cohesion among all members (Firestone & Louis, 1999).

Here the relationship between the three is depicted as interrelated and interactice. It is evident that a school culture encompasses the interaction and communication among its school members. Axley (1996) characterizes this interdependence between culture and communication: 'Communication gives rise to culture, which gives rise to communication, which perpetuates culture' (p.153). In other word, the school culture can have implications for organizational arrangement and professional relationship aspects mentioned above. For example, a school culture that prides itself on its staff potentials and expertise will naturally employ various organizational channels and means to tap on, disseminate and utilize them. Needless to say, a school culture that prides itself on staff expertise is also one that implicates professional relationships like equity, collaboration, mutual learning, trust and valuing individuals And these communicative behaviors and ethos will also naturally permeate in all the school's organizational arrangements and ways of 'getting things done'.

The Case School

The case school is a subsidized primary school in the New Territories of Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region. The school has a history of about nine years. It has a Christian religious background. The school is situated in the lower socio-economic status region of the northern part of Hong Kong, with most of its students coming from newly-arrived immigrant families from Mainland China. The school is renowned to the educational community in Hong Kong as having various successful and high-impact curriculum and assessment initiatives. The Headship is a democratic and open-minded figure in his early forties and most of its teaching staff are young energetic teachers and eager learners in professional development.

Research Methodology

In this study, an ethnographic case study methodology is used to investigate the curriculum development process of the case school. The ethnographic study is at the same time a perception study of teachers' retrospective and current view of their school's curriculum development. Purposive sampling is used to select the case school both because of the researcher's previous knowledge of the school and its Principal and also its reputation as one of the leading innovative schools in Hong Kong. A total of 8 teachers were interviewed and several classroom observations were made. The eight teachers were purposely selected by the Principal and recommended to the researcher as they are among the first batch of teachers employed in the founding phase of the school. They are referred to as the 'pioneering teachers' in the school's curriculum development. The study was conducted in two phases, one in 2003 and one in 2007. Each visit lasted for about two to three whole days. The researcher transcribed the recorded interview tapes in verbatim himself and he also analyzed and formulated the data into significant and meaningful themes and categories. The purpose of the second visit is to observe how the school's curriculum development pattern has changed over the years and to ask the informant teachers to validate and comment on the initial findings of the first visit.

Deliberation and Curriculum Development

McCutcheon (1995) defines deliberation as:

… a process of reasoning about practical problems. It is solution oriented, that is, toward deciding on a course of action. A deliberative approach is a decision-making process in which people, individually or in groups, conceive a problem, create and weigh likely alternative solutions to it, envision the probable results of each alternative, and select or develop the best course of action. (p.4)

Teachers have to face curriculum problems everyday. Most often these curriculum problems are practical problems. When decisions have a clear , single solutions, deliberation is not necessary. However, there are very few cases of this kind of problems. Complicated practical problems with multiple solutions may be best treated through the process of deliberation. Curriculum problems are clearly of this sort. Moreover, curriculum problems that arise out of a difference between stakeholders' beliefs and practice particularly lend themselves to a deliberative mode of curriculum development. Curriculum theorist Decker Walker (1971) thinks that in reality most of the curriculum design process embody such characteristics and he develops a 'naturalistic model' to describe it. Using his own studies on groups doing curriculum development and the way they made curriculum decisions, he noted that the ways of proceeding was not linear and predetermined but negotiated as the stakeholders worked their way out of the problem. The key feature was the deliberative

process in which personal agendas with a lot of value-ladden positions or perspectives were able to be tabled for open articulation, exchange and discussion. Teachers' individual and collective beliefs about schools, schooling and related classroom issues constitute a kind of deliberative platform. In other words, deliberation lends itself to teachers' solo and group deliberation.

Fullan (1991) considers that clarity or confusion about curriculum goals and means is one of the perennial problems of curriculum change. In his view, two approaches are open to the curriculum developer. One is the fidelity approach which aims at adherence to predetermined goals and process while the other is the adaptive approach in which further revision or development can be made by individuals or groups in the implementation process (Fullan, 1986). In this case, Fullan also favours a kind of deliberative model of curriculum development which emphasizes participation and communication and consensus making.

A deliberative model treats curriculum development as a social enterprise rather than a linear systematic way of planning and designing-- it is ' a process of negotiation among those with different points of view and value systems in order to find a satisfying solution' (Banathy, 1987,p.93). In this study, the researcher argues that a deliberative model can best be implemented by tapping on teachers' professional knowledge (solo deliberation) and the organizational learning aspects (group deliberation). This model is not a normative model of how curriculum design should take place, but a descriptive model of how it often occurs in reality. This case study aims to use the case school's successful story and its exhibiting deliberation characteristics to shed light on our understanding of the what, why, and how of the deliberative mode of school curriculum development.

The notion of 'deliberation' has received a wider spectrum of academic attention and recognition in Mainland China and in Taiwan than in Hong Kong. In China it is called 'ke cheng shen yi' (課程審議) and in Taiwan 'ke cheng shen si' (課程慎思). Local research on school-based curriculum development (Cheng, 1994; Lee, Dimmock & Au Yeung, 2009; Chan, 1998) reveals that successful curriculum innovation schools exhibit organizational features and characteristics that are reminiscent of deliberation— democracy, two-way change, emphasis on teachers' competence, teachers' participation and teacher/group leadership.

Nevertheless, the word 'deliberation' was seldom mentioned or used by the interviewees in the study. This study is premised on the Interpretivist paradigm which posits that interpretive lens be used by both the interviewer and the interviewees (Blumer, 1969; Garfinkel, 1967). It posits that the reality is constructed inter-subjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially. Researchers' values are inherent in all phases of the research process. Truth is negotiated through dialogue. The postulation made in this study that the school exhibits a deliberative trait of curriculum development is well supported by findings from in-depth interviews and on-site observations. Also member checking with the interviewees in the second site visit shows that the teachers and the principal agree to the allusion of the term 'deliberation' to describe their curriculum development model.

McCutcheon (1995) cautions us that conflict is bound to happen in a deliberative process and normative interests are always prevailing. In group deliberation, each individual brings to the scene his or her own idiosyncratic and 'subjective' theory of action. It is very likely that one person's theory will disagree with another's. In this connection, conflicts will easily arise when different parties or individuals strive to convince others that they have got the best option or project available. McCutcheon advises us to see positive

features and outcomes in conflicts. First of all, conflict can be seen as the force '…driving the deliberative process as individuals move from personal (subjective) interpretations and platforms to one arrived at by the group' (p.154). Secondly, citing Dahrendorf (1959), McCutcheon reminds us that conflict can actually 'sew' the group together as they discuss their subjective positions and closely examine the alternatives. It is because individuals can see that they can examine alternative positions better or more carefully in a group than when deliberating alone. Moreover, in Dahrendorf's view, conflict can 'lead to pressure for innovations, creativity, and change, thus deterring the complacency arising from too much stability' (p. 154-155). So we have come to learn that conflict in deliberations will not disappear and we actually should see great merit in it.

Findings in the 2003 Site Visit

The researcher first visited the school in 2003 in a span of two to three days and interviewed eight teachers and the Principal. The eight teachers were the 'pioneering' teachers who joined the school on its very first day of establishment. Some classroom observations were also done at the request of some of the eight teachers. Two major findings were found. One concerned the emergence of a 3-phase development process in the school's school-based curriculum. The other is the researcher's interpretive attribution of the school's curriculum success to three factors, namely: (1) the school's ethos and culture, (2) the school's organizational arrangement and (3) the school's professional relationships among its staff. The three themes are in an interplay manner, with one framing the other. This will be explained in more details in the following paragraph.

1.Experimentation Phase

Teachers were given autonomy and space to try out new curriculum innovations at class or grade level. Action research, individually or collaboratively done, was the order of the day. It was discovered that teachers were given an ample temporal space of four to five years for their curriculum experimentation (Elliott, 1993) before some kind of formal curriculum evaluation set in. This enhanced teachers' curriculum agency and space and place for experimentation (Miller, 1990).

2.Discursive Phase

During this phase, formal and informal communication channels were set up and utilized for teachers to disseminate and share their own curriculum experimentation stories among colleagues and invite others' feedback. In a deliberative sense, all the teachers could participate in the discussion on an equal footing and useful feedback came both from the top and the bottom.

3.Institutionalization Phase

When the school management saw that a curriculum experiment had come to a maturation phase and had received adequate whole- school deliberation, the school management would see that it goes through some kind of final consensual committee meetings. The deliberated curriculum outcome would then become an institutionalized matter to be supported and implemented by all staff concerned.
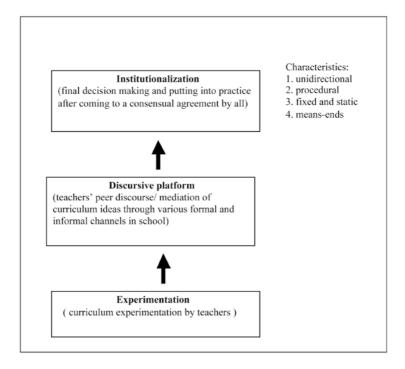
The figure below shows the three- phase curriculum development model of the school.

The School Ethos or Culture

In the interviews, the principal was heard repeating his belief in the immense potential value in human capital and expertise found among his staff, students and ancillary staff in his school. He said:

> *Every soul in this school is an asset to me*
> *and to the school, including both students*

and teachers…they all have something to contribute to the school…(The Principal, interview excerpt, 2003, P/01/2003)

This visionary statement resonates with the 'distributed leadership' perspective held by academics like Spillane et al. (2003, 2004) and Harris (2005). It implies that the institution exploits the professional and personal knowledge of each individual teaching staff, regardless of their seniority, ranks and years of teaching experience. The school principal depicted in the following remark the mutual benefiting way when eliciting the wealth of professional knowledge and experience from both novice and experienced staff. It was the case when the school first embarked on its venture of doing integrated curriculum development in the early foundation years.

The young teachers were energetic and eager to learn new things from personal reading and attending courses, they were also keen on experimenting new ideas in their own classroom… whereas the experienced teachers, some of them coming from other schools, with their experience in doing integrated curriculum previously, contributed by giving sound advice on the logistic side of things and alert the novice teachers of the what and how on the practical side…(The Principal, interview extract, P/02/2003)
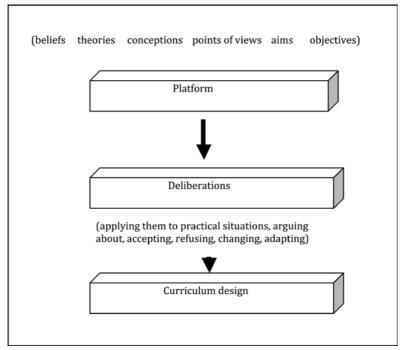
Thus the school's culture plays an analogous role just like the ideational 'platform' phase posited by Walker (1971) (see Figure 2) in which the ideas, beliefs and visions that different individuals have brought to bear in the beginning deliberation phase. The ideas are freely and equitably proposed, weighed, exchanged,

counter-proposed, modified and finally condensed in the 'deliberation' phase into a common ideational stand that is ready for subsequent institutional implementation (the final 'design' phase).

The school's ethos also saw the school provide equitable and ample opportunities for each willing staff to contribute his or her expertise. This is perceived as one effective way of the school in 'getting things done'—the organizational arrangements. This will be discussed in the following section.

Figure 2. Walker's 'Naturalistic' Model of the Curriculum Process

Source: After D. Walker, 1971.

The Organizational Arrangements

One thing that distinctly characterizes the school's organizational arrangements as making a good impact on the school curriculum is its fluid yet structured, participatory, 'experimentation' and 'ownership' characteristics. In a way, the school's organizational arrangements speak for the school's intention to handle the school curriculum matters in the best agreeable and productive terms for both the school and the teachers. The following are the observations made on the school's organizational arrangements. They are mainly related to the flow and communication of curriculum ideas in the school's organizational structure.

1. It is *fluid* and *eclectic* in that informative feedback and evaluation can go up to higher level(s) or down to the grass root level at any time that is deemed fit.

2. The flow and exchange of ideas is structured and sustained by various formal and informal information channels that are built into the school's organization and timetable scheduling. For example,

the school has a Curriculum Development Committee (which holds meetings every Tuesday) which oversees the whole school curriculum development. Then for each grade level, there is a Grade-level Curriculum Committee. It provides a platform for teachers of the same grade level to try out and disseminate new ideas collaboratively or individually. The Grade-level Curriculum Committee is made up of any interested and willing teachers, irrespective of their years of teaching experience and years of service in the school. Feedback can be got both from colleagues of the same grade level or from colleagues from other grade levels when the idea goes up to the school's Curriculum Development Committee for scrutiny. The school's Curriculum Development Committee is responsible for overseeing the vertical linkage of the school curriculum. Curriculum ideas worthy of inquiry or try-out can come either from the top or the bottom. There are times when the curriculum leaders in the Curriculum Development Committee intentionally introduce some worthy curriculum ideas downward to the grass root teachers for their deliberation. Also teachers of the same grade level are seated together in the same room to facilitate a better communication. There are teachers' informal sharing sessions on every Wednesday afternoon in the week when teachers causally share their curriculum stories with their colleagues. Hence, curriculum ideas in the school are structurally but fluidly channeled up or down or laterally in order to get the optimal collegial support or feedback.

3.It is *participatory* because any teacher who thinks he or she has a good curriculum idea can have the space and place (Miller, 1990) to let other colleagues know and get their feedback. This helps to nurture and exploit teachers' personal professional knowledge and expertise, to the benefit of the whole school and the students.

4.It nurtures an *ownership* ethos among teachers when dealing with their school curriculum problems. Teachers are arranged to teach in only one grade level each year. In this manner, teachers can quickly develop a mastery as well as an ownership disposition over their own curriculum in the quickest possible way. Westbury (1994) points out that an 'ownership' feeling frees the energy necessary for effective, collaborative curriculum problem solving.

5.It encourages curriculum *experimentation* among the teachers in the form of individual or collaborative action research with peers or university academics. In this way, teachers' professional curriculum knowledge can be best exploited, put to the test and refined for the benefit of the whole school (Elliott, 1998).

The Professional Relationships

In this study, the school's professional relationships is described as the school's arrangement of tasks and persons, including lines of authority, responsibility, and communication. The school's 'professional relationships' system is marked by a participative, collegial and equitable nature. It is very much influenced by the school's (or the principal's) belief that every child and every person in the school has something to contribute to the well being of the whole school. This also harks back to the school ethos of valuing 'distributed

leadership' among its staff.

In the school's foundation phase, the principal handpicked and worked together with a group of teachers who together shared very similar educational beliefs with him like democracy, equity, wide participation and collegiality. This easily precipitates a deliberative ethos of discourse and decision making. One teacher remarked on the school's democratic and deliberative kind of curriculum decision as follows:

> *In our beginning year, the Principal and some pioneering teachers wanted to experiment with a new integrated curriculum to replace the subject-based curriculum. They had a lot of meetings and later on decided to let colleagues experiment freely three possible ways of implementing the integrated curriculum. One is to try it out in one individual teacher's class, the second one is to compare and contrast the results when two classes implement an integrated curriculum, and the third one is to let the whole grade level to try it out. After one year of experimentation, the school decided to let teachers decide which mode of implementation should be forged ahead in the coming years. They had some informal and formal meetings and later on, after some voting by all teachers, the whole-grade mode of implementation was agreed upon by the majority of the teachers to become the prima facie model for the school's integrated curriculum development. In this way, it became a formal curriculum policy for the school. (Teacher A, interview excerpt, A/02/ 2003)*

In such a deliberative ethos, every teacher needs only be held accountable to his or her personal professional experience and knowledge. The line of authority does not come from the top above but from individual's personal professional knowledge and expertise. Communication channels, informal or formal, that facilitate upward, downward and lateral dissemination of ideas and reciprocal feedback are easily found wherever and whenever they are needed.

Findings in the 2007 Site Visit

Wanting to find out how the informant teachers and the Principal responded to the researcher's interpretive framework of the school's curriculum development (the 3-phase model as stipulated above), and also to see if any other significant change in the curriculum commonplaces of the school had taken place, the researcher returned to do the second site visit in July 2007 and interviewed the same eight teachers.

Contrary to the researcher's initial interpretation that the school's deliberation process is linear in nature, the informant teachers said it is not procedural, unidirectional and static. Instead it is dynamic, eclectic and sometimes the thrust of change comes from the top and sometimes from the bottom. When asked if the school curriculum is developed in a linear and systematic three-phase manner, one of the interviewed teacher said:

> *It is not linear. The ideas could both come from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top….It is a two-way traffic of ideas. Sometimes some curriculum concepts are revisited again in order to clarify some curriculum issues before moving on. It helps us with our conceptualization of things… (Teacher B, interview excerpt, B/03/2007)*

Figure 3 shows that deliberation can be a two-way traffic. The informant teachers unanimously referred to the relationship between the 3 phases as eclectic and *interactive*, albeit unidirectional and static. This echoes what McCutcheon (1995) said about the flawed linearity

of Walker's naturalistic model. In other words, the deliberation process is seen as not linear, systematic but rather simultaneous, with the process of both coming to agreement and developing the curriculum occurring at the same time.

It is clearly different from the curriculum development mode at the beginning phase of the school when most of the changes originated from the frontline workers. The reason given by the teachers and the principal is that now the school is in its ninth year of development, more of the school's curriculum focus is on evaluating the efficacy of existing curricula and sustaining the 'output' of these curricula. What is found to be doing well should be sustained and supported, and what is not should be terminated and redressed. In this manner, the school seems to have undergone from a 'total deliberation' mode at the beginning phase to its present 'maturation' or 'consolidation' mode. A maturation mode is here interpreted as characterized by the school setting up curriculum committee (comprising of both novice, experienced and curriculum co-ordinators) for making the decision and dishing out the responsibilities for staff who are in charge of curriculum matters and staff who work up front. It is in dire contrast to the fully experimental, autonomous and experiential nature of deliberation in the beginning years when frontiers teachers were given total autonomy for curriculum development. The following interview excerpt illustrates the kind of consolidation mentality grooming in the minds of the teachers in the second school visit:

> *In the past, we had integrated curriculum innovation, multiple intelligences curriculum, story curriculum, modular curriculum etc which had met with some success…Now we seem to pay more attention to how these initiatives have come to achieve their goals and purposes. In other words, innovations are good but we think it is high time that we*
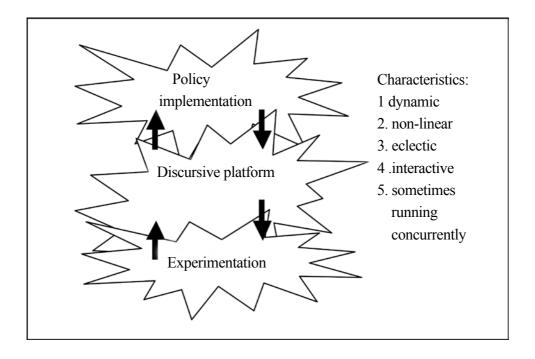
> *stop and think if what we have been doing is moving in the right direction….(Teacher C, interview excerpt, C/02/2007)*

The Principal also mentioned how he changed from the role of a 'participant' and 'initiator' in the beginning phase to that of an 'observer' in these recent years:

> *In the beginning phase, we were all concerned with the 'input' and the 'process' of curriculum planning. We made sure we had put every of our effort and resources into the two. We also tried to make sure that our teachers learned well during the process of curriculum planning. Now I can tell you that we emphasize more on the 'output' of our curriculum, or how we can better manage or align the 'input' with the 'output' process… From your observations of our school, you can see how I have changed from being a 'participant' and 'initiator' role to my present role as an 'observer'… I now pay more attention to the output, which mean the teachers' responses to our curriculum innovations, their workload and most important to our students' learning outcome in those innovations. (The Principal, interview extract, 02/2007)*

Still innovations from the bottom up are still welcomed. It is in a way very similar to the school's early days, but the scale and frequency of those formal and informal communication channels is now slightly scaled down due to the teaching staff's growing maturity in professional and curriculum development knowledge. This slight change in the deliberation model also signifies the school's change in its development phase— from an all-out experimentation to a more structured or systematic maturation model.

Figure 3. The School's Deliberative Curriculum Development Pattern Seen in the 2nd Visit

Conclusion

As curriculum matters are mainly activities involving human beings communicating with each other, the deliberative model applies to all the contacts between the curriculum developers and relevant stakeholders. It is one ideal tool for curriculum development in the modern day's democratic and participative context. Nevertheless it is not without its limitations. As this case study reveals, perhaps only those school with the said characteristics of school ethos, professional relationships and organizational arrangement would see the successful introduction of a deliberative model and for it to take root in the context. The following are some of the implications made for teachers/schools contemplating of adopting a deliberative mode of curriculum development.

1.In setting the stage for a deliberative model, a school should ensure that the essential human, ideological and organizational factors as aforementioned are in place.

2.As McCutcheon has earlier on cautioned us that conflicts are inevitable yet desirable, teachers and school administrators should understand that conflicts help the group generate and examine alternatives closely and knit the group together. Thus, they should tolerate conflicts, reflect on their normative interests and develop consensus.

3.Our study further consolidates the postulation that deliberation is non-linear, fuzzy and sometimes works in a simultaneous or even cyclical manner. Senge (1990) reminds us that reality is made up of circles and we should not see things in a linear fashion. In order not to lose track of the right direction and to avoid fragmentation in the deliberation process, it is important that teachers and administrators should see the whole of the enterprise and the interrelationships among the parts. The best way to do is to develop

the curriculum by collegially constructing and sharing a genuine vision to prevent fragmentation (McCutcheon, 1995, p. 155).

It is hoped that a more wide-spreading and in-depth academic discourse to emerge locally among academics and education practitioners on the notion of 'deliberation' and its impact on school curriculum development. The discourse should be followed by more multiple case studies on the notion and practice of deliberative mode of curriculum development in Hong Kong schools. Walker (1975) had called for an improvement in the quality of deliberation and making it more effective, but not much empirical research has been done in this area. Additionally, Reid (1978) draws our attention to the institutional context of deliberation when he says:

> Basically, what is needed is a way of understanding institutions as the necessary context for deliberation and curriculum action—institutions as the partners of practice, institution as the vehicles through which curriculum become real, and the curriculum itself as a social and cultural institution. (p. 15)

Future research done along this line will greatly illuminate for us the what, why, and how of deliberative mode of curriculum development.

References

Axley, S. R. (1996). *Communication at work: Management and the communication-intensive organization,* Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Banathy,B.H. (1987). Instructional systems design. In R. M. Gagne (Ed.) *Educational technology: Foundations*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 85-112.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Chan, K. K. (1998). Curriculum reform and school change: a case study. In Philip Stimpson & Paul, M. (ed.) *Curriculum and assessment for Hong Kong: Two components, one system*. Hong Kong: Open University of Hong Kong Press, pp. 291-310.

Cheng, Y.C. (1994). Effectiveness of curriculum change in school: An organizational perspective. In *International Journal of Educational Management*, 8(3), pp. 26-34.

Dahrendorf, R. (1959). *Class and class conflict in industrial society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). How teacher education matters. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 166-173.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Securing the right to learn: policy and practice for powerful teaching and learning. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 13-24.

Fireston, W.A. & Louis, K. S. (1999). Schools as cultures. In J. Murphy & K. S. Louis (Eds.) *Handbook of research on educational administration*, 2, 297-322. San FranciscoL Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Enthnomethodology*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Goldenberg,C. & Gallimore, R. (1991). Changing teaching takes more than a one shot workshop. *Educational Leadership*, 49(3), 69-72.

Harris, a. (2005). Leading or misleading? Distributed leadership and school improvement. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37(3), 255-265.

Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G. & James, D. (2008). Understanding learning culturally: overcoming the dualism between social and individual views of learning. *Vocations and Learning*, 1, 27-47.

Jurasaite-Harbison, E. (2009). *Learning in and from practice: Opportunities and implications for teachers' learning in informal contextsin Lithuania and the United States. Saarbruken, Germany*: Verlag Dr. Müller, AG & Co.KG.

Jurasite-Harbison, E. & Rex, L. A. (2009). School cultures as contexts for informal teacher learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 267-277.

Kessels, J. & Plomp, T. (1999). A relational approach to curriculum design. In *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 31(6), pp.679-709.

Knight, P. T. (2002). Learning from schools, *Higher Education*, 44, 283-298.

Lee, C.K.John, Dimmock, C and Au Yeung, T.Y. (2009).Who really leads and manages the curriculum in primary schools?—a Hong Kong case study. *The Curriculum Journal*, 20(1), 3-26.

Leithwood, K. & Aitken, R. (2000) *Making schools smarter: A system for monitoring school and district progress*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin.

Lieberman, A. (2000). Networks as learning communities shaping the future of teacher development. *Journal of Teacher Education*. 51(3), 221-227.

MacGilchrist,, B., Mortimer,P. Stedman, J. & Beresford, C.R. (1995). *Planning matters: The impact of development planning in primary schools*. London: P. Chapman Pub.

Marsh, C.J. & Willis, G. (1999). *Curriculum: Alternative approaches, ongoing issues*. (2nd. Ed.). NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

McCutcheon, G. (1995). *Developing the curriculum: solo and group deliberation*. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.

Miller, J. (1990).*Creating spaces and finding voice: Teachers collaborating for empowerment*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Mitchell, C. (1995). *Teachers learning together: Organizational learning in an elementary school.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

Morris, P. and Adamson, B. (2010). *Curriculum, schooling and society in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Mulford, B. (2005). Organizational learning and educational change. In A. Hargreaves (ed.) *Extending Educational Change*, The Netherlands: Springer, pp. 336-361.

Reid, W. (1978). *Thinking about the curriculum*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Schein, E.H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership* (2md. Ed.) . San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schwab, J.J. (1978). *The practical: A language for curriculum*. In I. Westbury & N.J. Wilkof (Eds.) Science, curriculum , and liberal education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. New York: Doubleday.

Spillane, J. P., Diamond, J. B. and Jita, L. (2003). Leading instruction: the distribution of leadership for instruction. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 35(5), 533-543.

Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R. and Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership practice: a distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriuclum Studies*, 36(1), 3-34.

Walker, D. (1971). A naturalistic model for curriculum development. *School Review*, 80, I, pp. 51-65.

Westbury, I. (1994). Deliberation and the improvement of schooling. In J.T. Dillon (ed.) *Deliberation in education and society*. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, pp. 37-66.

Author

Tak Shing LAM John, Assistant Professor,
Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction,
The Hong Kong Institute of Education
[jlam@ied.edu.hk]