

Review of the Practice and Research on the Integration of International Curriculum in Chinese Schools

Siyang Yang^{1,a,*}

¹*Macau University of Science and Technology, Avenida Wai Long, Taipa, Macau, China
a. 2689286577@qq.com*

**corresponding author*

Abstract: With the acceleration of globalization, the integration of international curricula has become increasingly important in the field of Chinese education, aiming to cultivate talents with a global perspective and local wisdom. This review, through an in-depth examination of existing literature, reveals the current research status and trends in the field of international curriculum integration. The study finds that, despite significant progress in the introduction of curriculum systems, innovation in teaching models, and professional development of teachers, there are still issues such as insufficient exploration of the correlation between teaching models and student learning outcomes, a lack of systematic research on curriculum localization and cross-cultural competence development, and a need for more in-depth strategies to support the professional growth of teachers. Therefore, future research needs to further explore the empirical effects of teaching model innovations, systematic strategies for curriculum localization, and multi-dimensional approaches to promote the professional development of teachers, in order to advance the integration of international curricula and improve the quality of education.

Keywords: International Curriculum Integration, International Schools, Internationalization of Basic Education, Localization.

1. Introduction

With the deepening of globalization, the field of education is undergoing unprecedented changes. In China, international education, particularly the integration of international curricula, has gradually become a focal point for scholars and educational practitioners. This focus is not accidental. Globalization has not only facilitated cultural exchange and the dissemination of knowledge but also posed new requirements for educational systems. Education must not only meet localized demands but also possess an international perspective to cultivate talents capable of effective communication and work in diverse cultural contexts. Therefore, the integration of international curricula is not only an inevitable trend in educational development but also a critical strategy to address the challenges of globalization.

From a temporal perspective, the importance of international curriculum integration in China has become increasingly prominent. With the acceleration of global economic integration and cultural exchange, the internationalization of education has become a significant indicator of a country's educational level. However, despite a series of exploratory studies conducted by the academic community, the existing literature lacks a systematic review of these research outcomes. Thus, it is

both urgent and necessary to conduct a comprehensive literature review to thoroughly examine and summarize the current state, challenges, and future development directions of research on international curriculum integration. This will not only help fill existing research gaps but also provide theoretical and practical significance for guiding practice and promoting the internationalization of education.

Through an in-depth review of the literature, we have found that current research on international curriculum integration in academia primarily focuses on three core areas: first, the introduction and optimization of foreign international curriculum systems and structures in China; second, issues related to the localization and implementation strategies of international curricula; and third, the role and professional development of teachers in the process of international curriculum introduction and localization.

Based on the review and analysis of the above three categories of research, this paper will present the current research progress in the field of international curriculum integration, reveal the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, and propose future research directions.

2. Introduction and Optimization of Curriculum Systems and Teaching Models

Existing research has paid considerable attention to the curriculum systems and structures of international curricula, emphasizing the internationalization of curriculum content and the achievement of subject goals. These studies provide theoretical support and practical guidance for constructing internationalized curriculum systems, which helps improve educational quality and meet the demands of educational internationalization.

Current research mainly focuses on the following aspects:

Firstly, the introduction of curriculum systems. In the field of international education, the introduction of curriculum systems not only enriches educational content but also challenges and innovates traditional educational models. Natalie A. E. Young's research offers a perspective that the emergence of international schools in China is a response to the discrimination and academic frustration existing in the traditional Chinese educational system [1]. This indicates that the introduction of international curricula is not just an enrichment of educational content but also a supplement and response to the deficiencies of the existing educational system. This research provides theoretical support and practical guidance for constructing internationalized curriculum systems, which helps improve educational quality and meet the demands of educational internationalization.

In this regard, research by Tang Shengchang, Teng Jun, and others has focused more on the internationalization of curriculum content, such as the introduction of IB, AP, and A-Level curriculum systems [2-3]. These curricula not only enrich educational resources but also provide students with broader international perspectives. However, Tang Shengchang points out that the implementation of international curricula needs to consider the selectivity of subjects under the guidance of disciplinary group thinking and differences in experimental concepts [2]. For example, the IB curriculum, characterized by its comprehensive subject groups and core components (such as TOK, CAS, and EE), emphasizes the connection between knowledge and life, which is elaborated in detail by Tang Shengchang. Teng Jun and others highlight that the AP curriculum, with its focus on college preparatory courses, offers a variety of subject choices, emphasizing the individual development and academic inquiry of students. Additionally, the A-Level curriculum, as the UK's high school curriculum system, provides students with a wide range of subject choices and in-depth learning opportunities [4].

Secondly, existing research has largely overlooked the study and innovation of teaching models. Although some literature mentions reforms in teaching methods, there is still a lack of in-depth discussion and systematic research on teaching models. This tendency to emphasize curriculum

content while neglecting teaching methods may lead to a disconnect between teaching practice and curriculum concepts, lacking attention to the innovation of teaching models and the needs for students' active learning.

For instance, Yang Mingquan mentions the relationship between the high selectivity of international curricula and the changes in teaching organization and methods, emphasizing the emergence of class-based and small-class teaching models, which challenge traditional classroom teaching methods. Additionally, Yang Mingquan also discusses the flipped classroom as an emerging teaching model that plays an important role in the implementation of international curricula [4].

The core of the flipped classroom lies in reversing the traditional classroom teaching model by placing the knowledge transmission process before class and using class time for discussion, inquiry, and application. This model emphasizes students' active learning ability and critical thinking, promoting interaction between students and teachers and improving teaching effectiveness. For example, Yang Mingquan mentions that the flipped classroom stimulates students' interest and participation in learning through video lectures, classroom interactions, and group discussions [4].

3. Localization and Implementation Strategies of International Curricula

In terms of the localization and implementation strategies of international curricula, existing research mainly focuses on the following aspects:

Firstly, the strategies for localization. Lü Yunzhen et al. emphasize the importance of considering China's national conditions and the actual circumstances of schools during the localization of international curricula. They believe that such adaptive adjustments help cultivate students' global perspectives while preserving and promoting China's cultural characteristics. For instance, Lü Yunzhen et al. mention that practical issues to be addressed in the localization of international curricula include strengthening in-depth research on international curricula and enhancing regional coordination and management of these curricula [5].

Adam Poole proposes the idea of decoupling Chinese international schools from the traditional concept of international schools, highlighting the uniqueness of Chinese international schools and their integration with local culture and educational practices [6]. This resonates with Lü Yunzhen et al.'s research, as both emphasize the importance of considering China's national conditions and the actual circumstances of schools in the process of localizing international curricula.

Chen Yuyun's research further points out that the localization of international curricula needs to find a convergence point between international standards and local characteristics, forming an international curriculum that unifies "internationality and nationality." [7] This indicates that localization is not merely a simple adjustment of curriculum content but a deep integration of educational concepts and practices.

Secondly, there are also challenges related to cultural conflicts and teaching practices. Liu Maoxiang et al. propose a theoretical framework for the localization of international curricula in their research. They emphasize the importance of localization, pointing out the need to find a balance between international standards and local characteristics to create a curriculum system that unifies "internationality and nationality." [8] Although existing studies recognize the necessity of localization, they often lack in-depth analysis of cultural conflicts and teaching practice challenges during the localization process, especially in discussing specific methods to balance international standards with local characteristics in different educational environments.

Zhao Na's research further addresses practical implementation by proposing a series of solutions, including establishing a Sino-Western integrated autonomous curriculum system, cultivating a stable internationalized teaching staff, and constructing international talent cultivation goals [9]. These strategies aim to address the challenges of cultural conflicts and teaching practices, providing specific and feasible paths for the localization of international curricula.

Wu Jinke's research focuses on the standardized management of pilot international curricula in regular high schools, suggesting categorized management in areas such as admissions, student records, and tuition guidance, while maintaining a balance between Chinese foundations and international perspectives in curriculum design [10]. This indicates that implementation strategies need to be compared and flexibly adjusted according to different educational stages and school characteristics to find the most suitable strategies for the Chinese educational environment.

The research by these three scholars forms a logical chain, from theoretical framework to practical strategies to specific application guidance in particular educational environments, providing a comprehensive perspective on the localization of international curricula. Liu Maoxiang et al.'s research lays the theoretical foundation, Zhao Na's research offers practical solutions, and Wu Jinke's research provides guidance for the specific implementation of these strategies in the Chinese educational context. These complementary studies collectively advance the field of international curriculum localization.

4. Teacher Roles and Professional Development

In international curricula, the roles and professional development of teachers are also key factors. Existing research primarily focuses on the following aspects:

The first aspect is the transformation of teacher roles. In the field of international curriculum implementation, scholars have proposed various perspectives, which, despite some overlap, also reflect different focal points and logical levels.

Xu Xiaozhou's research emphasizes the importance of teachers' professional capabilities, particularly in teaching international curricula, mastering professional knowledge, and expanding international perspectives. Xu Xiaozhou believes that teachers should possess basic competencies in inquiry-based learning and project research, which are crucial for enhancing their professional abilities [11]. This viewpoint reflects a deep understanding of the teacher's role, seeing teachers not just as transmitters of knowledge but also as guides in the learning process and promoters of research.

Zhao Na's research focuses on the role of teachers in cross-cultural education, suggesting that professional training for teachers should go beyond traditional teaching methods and pay more attention to the guiding role of teachers in cross-cultural understanding and education. Zhao Na's perspective emphasizes the critical role of teachers in developing students' cross-cultural competencies. This not only requires teachers to have a diverse cultural knowledge background but also demands that they effectively transmit and cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills in teaching practice [9].

Aaron Koh and others, through comparative studies, reveal how different international schools position themselves in various ways and emphasize the professional development and role transformation of teachers in this process [12]. This complements the research of Xu Xiaozhou and Zhao Na by underscoring the enhancement of teachers' professional capabilities and their role in cross-cultural education, pointing out that teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also guides in the learning process and promoters of research.

Chen Yuyun, from a more macro perspective, notes that existing research recognizes the importance of personnel challenges but falls short in providing specific solutions and strategies. Chen Yuyun suggests that teachers' professional development should be achieved through diversified approaches such as project collaboration and international exchanges to enhance their international teaching capabilities [7]. This perspective reveals that professional development for teachers is a multi-dimensional and multi-layered process that requires a comprehensive consideration of both individual capability enhancement and external support.

Combining the viewpoints of these scholars, it is evident that the research not only interrelates but also forms a logically layered system of perspectives. Chen Yuyun's research provides a broader

background and perspective on this issue, while the studies by Xu Xiaozhou, Zhao Na, and Aaron Koh, to some extent, concretize the problems raised by Chen Yuyun, offering potential paths for achieving professional development for teachers. From these combined perspectives, it can be concluded that teachers' professional development is a complex process that requires a comprehensive consideration of both individual capability enhancement and external environmental support. These studies complement each other, collectively advancing the understanding of the importance of teachers' roles and professional development in the implementation of international curricula.

Secondly, teacher training and support are also key research focuses. In exploring the relationship between the implementation of international curricula and teachers' professional development, Huang Wenliang and Zhao Na each offer unique insights. While their viewpoints intersect in some aspects, they also exhibit different focal points and levels of depth.

Huang Wenliang's research proposes a comprehensive framework for teachers' professional development, emphasizing its importance and suggesting multi-dimensional approaches to achieve this goal. He points out that teachers' professional growth needs to be realized through systematic teacher training, the accumulation of rich teaching experience, and the application of effective teaching strategies. Huang Wenliang particularly highlights project collaboration and international exchanges as crucial means to enhance teachers' capabilities in international education. Additionally, he emphasizes the necessity of establishing effective teacher evaluation and incentive mechanisms, considering them as key factors in promoting teachers' professional development and improving teaching quality [13].

Zhao Na's research focuses on the importance of professional training for teachers, especially in cultivating cross-cultural education capabilities. He believes this is fundamental to meeting the demands of teaching international curricula. Zhao Na also suggests that professional training for teachers should not only cover teaching methods but also strengthen teachers' abilities in cross-cultural education to enhance students' understanding and adaptation to diverse cultures [9].

Logically, the research of Huang Wenliang and Zhao Na complement each other: Huang Wenliang provides a macro perspective on teachers' professional development, while Zhao Na deepens the specific content of teacher training under this perspective. Combining their research can offer solid theoretical and practical guidance for the effective implementation of international curricula.

5. Conclusion

Through the review of the entire text, we can clearly see the current state and trends in the field of international curriculum integration. The following is a summary of the existing research and a perspective on future research directions.

Overall, research on international curriculum integration has shifted from theoretical exploration to empirical studies and practical applications. Researchers are increasingly focusing on the integration of international curricula with local educational environments and the professional growth of teachers in this process. Future research needs to further deepen the understanding and practice of international curriculum integration, especially in areas such as innovative teaching models, cultural adaptability, and professional development of teachers.

With these efforts, we can expect international curriculum integration to play a greater role in future educational practices, providing stronger support for cultivating talents with global perspectives and local wisdom.

A review of the existing literature shows that scholars have made significant academic contributions to the field of international curriculum integration. They have not only provided theoretical support and practical guidance for the introduction of international curricula, ensuring the internationalization of curriculum content and the achievement of disciplinary objectives, but have

also driven innovations in teaching models, such as flipped classrooms, to meet students' needs for active learning. Additionally, researchers have explored the localization strategies and implementation of international curricula, proposing methods to balance international standards with local characteristics, and offering concrete solutions and strategies for addressing cultural conflicts and teaching practice challenges. They have also highlighted the importance of teachers' professional development, suggesting multi-dimensional approaches to teacher training and enhancing cross-cultural education capabilities to support teachers' key roles in implementing international curricula. These research results not only provide a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent studies on international curriculum integration but also offer valuable guidance for educational practitioners, effectively advancing the process of educational internationalization.

Despite the progress made in the above areas, there are still deficiencies in deeply exploring cultural adaptability in international curriculum integration, innovations in teaching models, and practical pathways for teachers' professional development. Specifically, there is a relative scarcity of solutions and empirical research on how to effectively localize international curricula in different educational environments and how to promote students' active learning and critical thinking through innovations in teaching models.

At present, the existing literature reveals several gaps:

Firstly, there is insufficient exploration of the relationship between innovative teaching models and student learning outcomes. More empirical research is needed to validate the impact of different teaching models on students' learning experiences and results. Secondly, there is a lack of systematic research on the localization of curricula and the development of students' cross-cultural competencies within international curriculum integration. There is a need for comprehensive studies on the effectiveness of curriculum implementation in various cultural contexts. Lastly, there is still a need for deeper investigation into how to specifically support teachers' professional growth, evaluate the effectiveness of teachers' professional development, and closely integrate teacher development with teaching practices.

Given these limitations in current research, future studies could further explore the following directions:

(1) Empirical Research on Teaching Model Innovations: Conduct empirical studies to investigate the practical effects of different teaching models in international curriculum integration, particularly their role in promoting students' active learning and critical thinking.

(2) Systematic Research on Curriculum Localization: Delve deeper into the process of localizing international curricula in various educational environments and explore methods for evaluating and optimizing these processes.

(3) Specific Strategies for Teacher Professional Development: Research how to provide teachers with more effective professional development opportunities, including training, resource support, and career development pathways.

References

- [1] Young, N. A. E. (2018). *Departing from the beaten path: international schools in China as a response to discrimination and academic failure in the Chinese educational system*, *Comparative Education*, 54:2, 159-180, DOI: 10.1080/03050068.2017.1360566
- [2] Tang, S. C. (2011). *On the bottlenecks and breakthroughs of implementing international curricula in Chinese schools*. *Modern Basic Education Research*, 1(01), 12-17.
- [3] Teng, J., Hu, J. Y., & Li, M. (2016). *International curricula in China: Development status, cognitive dimensions, and value analysis*. *Comparative Education Review*, 38(12), 54-60. <https://doi.org/10.20013/j.cnki.ice.2016.12.008>
- [4] Yang, M. Q. (2018). *Misconceptions and localization choices of basic education international curricula*. *Chinese Journal of Education*, (01), 67-71.
- [5] Lv, Y. Z., & Song, W. W. (2020). *The development status of international curricula in China*. *World Education Information*, 33(07), 57-60+67.

- [6] Poole, A. (2020). *Decoupling Chinese internationalized schools from normative constructions of the international school*. *Compare A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 50(3), 447-454.
- [7] Chen, Y. Y. (2003). *Issues of educational internationalization and educational nationalism*. *Educational Exploration*, (10), 55-57.
- [8] Liu, M. X., & Jin, S. (2019). *Research on the standardized management of pilot international curricula in regular high schools: A case study of Shanghai*. *Shanghai Research on Education*, (10), 81-86. <https://doi.org/10.16194/j.cnki.31-1059/g4.2019.10.020>
- [9] Zhao, N. (2016). *Overview of the current status of international schools*. *Cultural and Educational Resources*, (32), 105-107.
- [10] Wu, J. K. (2016). *The current situation, problems, and suggestions for offering international curricula in private primary and secondary schools: A case study of Beijing*. *Journal of Huanghe Science and Technology University*, 18(05), 16-22. <https://doi.org/10.19576/j.issn.1008-5424.2016.05.004>
- [11] Xu, X. Z., Zheng, S. X., & Han, G. S. (2022). *Concept innovation and organizational reshaping of higher education internationalization in the era of major reforms*. *China Higher Education Research*, (06), 19-25. <https://doi.org/10.16298/j.cnki.1004-3667.2022.06.04>
- [12] Wu, W. & Koh, A. (2022). *Being “international” differently: a comparative study of transnational approaches to international schooling in China*, *Educational Review*, 74:1, 57-75, DOI: 10.1080/00131911.2021.1887819
- [13] Huang, W. L. (2009). *A study on the characteristics of international schools and their students*. *Science & Technology Vision*, (07), 87-88. <https://doi.org/10.19392/j.cnki.1671-7341.2009.07.071>