

Teachers' Views on Mother Tongue Language Curriculum Development

Authors : Wai Ha Leung

Abstract : Mother tongue language (MTL) curriculum is core to school education in most countries/regions' school curriculum. Through mother tongue language learning, students are expected to enhance their understanding of the nation's culture and foster the sense of cultural and ethnic identity. However, MTL education in Hong Kong is complicated by the colonial history. This study examines Hong Kong Chinese language teachers' perceptions of MTL education, and the implication on MTL curriculum development. The questionnaire was administrated to 97 teachers, and interviews were carried out on 17 teachers. Usually, MTL is both the tool with which knowledge and skills are taught and learned and the vehicle for students to learn about the traditions of the countries' literature and culture. In Hong Kong, 95% of the population is of Chinese descent. Traditionally, education in China was a mixture of philosophy, history, politics and literacy. Chinese as an MTL subject in pre-colonial Hong Kong has always been assigned the mission of developing students' cultural identity in addition to the development of linguistic proficiency. During the colonial period, the Chinese Language curriculum shifted to be more language skills based with less emphasis on Chinese culture and moral education. After the sovereignty of Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, although a new curriculum was implemented in 2002, teaching and learning in school as well as public examinations seem to be remaining language skills oriented instead of culturally based. This deviation from the trend of both Chinese traditional education and global mother tongue language education makes some Chinese language teachers feel confused. In addition, there is comment that in general Hong Kong students' Chinese language proficiency is becoming weaker and weaker in recent years. Thus, effectiveness of the skills oriented language curriculum has come under question. How a language teacher views the aims and objectives of the language subject he or she is teaching has a direct effect on the curriculum delivery and pedagogies used. It is, therefore, important to investigate what is the language teachers' perception of MTL education, and whether the current school curriculum can meet the teachers' expectation as well as achieve the aims of MTL education. Given this context, this study explored the views of Hong Kong Chinese language teachers on MTL education. The data indicate that teachers showed a strong resentment towards the current curriculum. Results may have implications on mother tongue language curriculum development.

Keywords : Chinese language education, curriculum development, mother tongue language education, teachers' perception

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