

# **Construction of Normalization Implementation Mechanism of Integrative Practical Activities in Rural-village School**

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**Abstract:** Integrative Practical Activities Curriculum (IPAC) is a new opened compulsory course in primary and middle school. The questionnaire on 101 IPAC teachers in 70 rural primary schools of Chongqing reveals the main problems of normalization on course implementation. The main problems are low emphasis, unclear teaching concept, unconformable teacher quality and imperfect course support system. The normalization on IPAC implementation is a systematic project in rural schools. It is suggested that scientific course policy is the premise, with right realization as the foundation, construction of teaching staff as the key point, support system serves as the guarantee, school advantages as the emphasis and core of course and student development. The excellent operating mechanism needs the cooperation of government education executive department, local government, community and school; each performs its own functions.

**Key words:** Rural-village Primary School; General Curriculum; Normalization Implementation; Mechanism Construction.

## **Introduction**

In June 2001, with the agreement of the State Council “The outline on basic education curriculum reform (temp)” was promulgated by the Ministry of Education, which provided that “the Integrative Practical Activities Curriculum (IPAC) as the compulsory curriculum would be set up from primary school to high school, which includes information technology education, research study, community service and social practices, and labor-technical education”.<sup>1</sup> Since then, this curriculum becomes the highlight of the new curriculum reform for its uniqueness and importance. Nowadays how to promote the normalization implementation of the Integrative Practical Activities has been a major focus and difficulty of current research. To this end, we have a survey on the normalization implementation of the Integrative Practical Activities through sending out questionnaires to 101 teachers of 70 primary school in rural areas who participate in “The training on the Integrative Practical Activities for rural primary school in Chongqing”, and have an deep interview on some teachers. Besides, we also do some field survey on some school to ensure the reliability and validity of this research.

### **1. The effectiveness and problem on the implementation of Integrative Practical Activities in Rural School**

#### **1.1 The effectiveness**

In general, the implementation of Integrative Practical Activities in Rural School has gained some achievement, which is embodied in:

- All the investigated schools have set up the Integrative Practical Activities.
- Most teachers were aware of the value on this curriculum, which is reflected in :91.3% of teachers believed that it is “necessary” or “very necessary” to set up this curriculum, 75.7% of teachers were “willing” to guide this curriculum, 78.3% of teachers held that this curriculum can “promote” the learning for other courses.
- Many teachers reflected that they gain new understanding on education and better communication with the students through instructing this curriculum. They believed that there have been some substantial changes in the classroom teaching.
- Most teachers believed that the implementation of this curriculum have good effect on correcting the long-standing tendency of “knowledge weigh more than practice” existed in the primary and secondary education.

Therefore it can be said that most schools have benefit from this curriculum to some extent for the development of students, the professional growing of teachers, and the cultivation of school character.

#### **1.2 The problems**

Through the survey we also found that only 11.3% of teachers thought that their schools get good implementation of this curriculum, and 34.8% of teachers held that their schools still are lacking in normalization implementation of this

curriculum, which means that there are still some problems to be deeply solved on the normalization implementation of this curriculum in rural school.

The main problems as follows:

#### 1.2.1 Lack of enough emphasis on this curriculum at school.

Although the Integrative Practical Activities is classified as a compulsory course in the new curriculum program ,it does not got the same emphasis as other compulsory courses, and especially in some school it is just in the class schedule but not in the real instruction. This can be seen from the actual class hours of Integrative Practical Activities: the class hours of this course are “often” diverted to other so-called “main course”in 33.9% of schools and it can come up to the national standard(three class hours weekly) in only 17.4% of schools. In addition, “the attitude to this course from school leaders” can reflect this. 43.5% of teachers thought that their school leaders are “not positive ” in the implementation of this curriculum and only 18.3% of teachers thought that their school leaders perform actively . Insufficient class hours will directly have an bad effect on the successful implementation of Integrative Practical Activities and finally make it invalid. The negative attitude from the school leaders will result in the superficial participation of teachers, and thus will affect the quality and effectiveness of this curriculum badly.

#### 1.2.2 Being unclear in the basic concept of Integrative Practical Activities for teachers

The survey found that 64.3 percent of teachers only got “superficial understanding” of this curriculum and even more than eighty percent of teachers did not read “the guideline for Integrative Practical Activities as nine-year compulsory National Curriculum”, which lead to the situation that the teachers show unclearness in grasping the basic concept of this curriculum and adopt the same instruction methods like other traditional disciplines habitually. Meanwhile , the instruction get trapped in randomness and blindness due to lack of awareness from teachers on the special difficulty of this course. All these finally contribute to the lost of unique features and performance of this curriculum .

The main problems are reflected in the following aspects through the survey:

- The main place for Integrative Practical Activities was still “normal classroom” in 78.3% of schools.
- The main instruction methods were “traditional lecture method” in 57.4% of schools.
- The main project topics of Integrative Practical Activities come from “teacher, textbooks or other outstanding cases ” in 80.8% of schools.
- 63.5% of teachers “did not” develop specific guidance programs on the theme of students’ activities.
- 58.3% of teachers believed that the evaluation of students’ accomplishment in this course is “only made by teachers” and 33.8% of teachers “barely carried out an evaluation” of students’ performance after the activities.
- There was “less communication” or “even no exchange “among different grades on the Integrative Practical Activities in more than 60% of schools.

#### 1.2.3 The teachers were not ready for implementing this course because of this special teacher quality standard.

Nowadays there were not adequate full-time teachers for Integrative Practical Activities, which made the part-time teachers have heavy burden. There was a lack of counterpart graduates and relatively mature professional teachers for guidance task, which could not satisfy the requirements of curriculum implementation seriously. Among the investigated teachers, there were 38.3% of teachers who instruct Chinese and 49.6% instruct mathematics, and some of them even served as music and art teachers besides this. As we know, there need to be more class hours and higher academic requirement in Language and Mathematics as the main course of primary school than other discipline courses. So it will inevitably be a tremendous change to the energy and capacity of the Language and Mathematics teachers who need to do some part-time work on instructing Integrative Practical Activities. In fact, it is a common phenomenon that one teacher serves several courses because of the shortage of primary teachers in rural areas currently. Excessive burden on instruction will contribute to the situation that teachers are selective and biased in the allocation of their time and effort to the instruction on different courses. In many cases the teachers spent considerable time and effort on the courses which is closely related to their performance assessment and professional title appraisal for utilitarian purpose and gave perfunctory performance to those so-called “minor subjects”. Due to the imperfect management mechanism of Integrative Practical Activities, many teachers who instruct this course are not out of their personal expertise and interest but for the sake of the school

arrangement. Coupled with the lack of corresponding school teaching evaluation system of Integrative Practical Activities, these cases result in that teachers performed arbitrarily in the process of instruction and then the actual teaching quality could not be guaranteed. In addition, among the teachers surveyed there were 90.4% of teachers who had not received professional training at the county level or above, 73.0% of teachers who thought that instructing Integrative Practical Activities is more difficult compared to other curricula, and 93.9% of teachers who believed that it is “urgent” or “very urgent” to training professional teachers for this curriculum.

#### 1.2.4 Imperfect support system of the curriculum

It is very necessary and important to establish relevant management mechanism for Integrative Practical Activities as the compulsory curriculum in order to ensure its smooth, orderly and efficient implementation. However, through the survey it is found that only 14.8% of primary schools in rural-village established teaching-research group or the similar organization for Integrative Practical Activities, 11.3% of schools had the evaluation system and 7.0% of schools developed the assessment system of teacher workload. Without the sound management mechanism, the related personnel would not enhance the sense of responsibility, not to mention that the teachers have enough enthusiasm of teaching, and thus the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities in rural-village primary school can not turn into reality.

## **2. The strategy for promoting the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities in rural-village primary school**

Integrative Practical Activities is a structural breakthrough in basic education curriculum system, which is a important approach to solving the current educational problem that our students have the weak innovation ability and practical ability while they gain a lot of knowledge. Therefore, we should adopt kinds of effective means to promote the normalization implementation of this curriculum. As Chen Stushie said, the standard of normalization implementation for this curriculum was “it become compulsory curriculum and get universal implementation; the teachers are capable of instruction and can operate easily; the students are fond of learning and involved actively; the achievement is real and notable”.<sup>ii</sup> The normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities depends on the improving of curriculum implementation mechanism, which need the fulfillment of the duty of the nation, local government, school and community along with their close cooperation.

### **2.1 The national education administrative departments: to improve the curriculum policies and the monitoring system**

The scientific curriculum policies are the essential condition for the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities in rural-village primary school.

#### 2.1.1 To revise and improve the “the guideline for Integrative Practical Activities as nine-year compulsory National Curriculum”

After ten years of experiment, “the guideline for Integrative Practical Activities as nine-year compulsory National Curriculum (temp)” plays an important role in the spreading and implementation of this curriculum. However, there exists some unfitness. Therefore it is suggested that the Ministry of Education should organize the experts, teachers, educational administrators, revise and officially promulgate “the guideline for Integrative Practical Activities as nine-year compulsory National Curriculum” on the basis of full investigation and research, and meet the needs of domestic and international educational development.

#### 2.1.2 To construct the educational quality monitoring system of Integrative Practical Activities at four level including nation, province, municipality and county

It is very necessary to establish the educational quality monitoring system of Integrative Practical Activities at four level including nation, province, municipality and county in view of the fact that it is just a new national compulsory curriculum. It is recommended that the national assessment of education quality should be the leading organization, construct the educational quality monitoring system of Integrative Practical Activities, take the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities in rural-village primary schools as one of the focus of the monitoring system, guide and supervise the implementation of curriculum plan carefully, and finally promote the normalization implementation.

2.1.3 To lead the normal universities (and colleges) to train the professional teachers for the implementation of Integrative Practical Activities.

In order to promote the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities, there must be a group of qualified professional teachers. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should lead the normal universities (and colleges) to adjust actively the talent cultivating goals, curriculum programs and teaching methods, and train the professional teachers for the “normalization” implementation of Integrative Practical Activities.

2.2 The local government: to increase the financial investment on rural-village primary school in order to ensure the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities.

Currently the primary issue restricting the effective implementation of Integrative Practical Activities in rural-village schools is a serious shortage of school’s funding and educational resources. Without the support of basic school’s funding and educational resources, the implementation of Integrative Practical Activities would turn into empty words. The local government should fully consider the difference of regions and schools when formulating the educational policies, and tilt towards the rural-village school on the basis of a balanced arrangement on the funds of compulsory education, which can promote the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities in rural-village primary schools. Besides the local government can make it free to train professional teachers for Integrative Practical Activities through allocating the special funds.

2.3 Local educational administrative departments: to deepen understanding, strengthen the supervision and construction of the group of teachers

Although Integrative Practical Activities is a compulsory curriculum required by the nation, the Ministry of Education just focus on macro guidance, and leave greater autonomy and development space to the local governments and schools. But more opportunities means higher requirements and more difficulties at the same time. Therefore it is urgent that the administrative department of education including the provincial, prefectural and county level ought to strengthen the propaganda, supervision and management of Integrative Practical Activities, and provide the necessary professional support, especially in rural areas.

2.3.1 To deepen the propaganda of the importance of Integrative Practical Activities

The normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities is on the premise of the profound understanding. Professor Hong Aliquant believed that the lack of change in the thought is more severe than the lack of education funding, personnel, technology in the process of educational development in our nation. <sup>iii</sup> Integrative Practical Activities as the important part of the new curriculum reform is the highlight but also the aporia, which means entirely new educational concept and way of thinking in view of the school leaders, teachers and community members. The new things and ideas often spread more slowly and difficultly in rural-village school due to geographical remoteness, lack of information, and backward ideas. To achieve the change of the way of thinking, the provincial, prefectural and county administrative department of education must strengthen the propaganda of Integrative Practical Activities so that the school leaders , teachers, parents and community members can be familiar with the concept , objective and content, and understand its unique value, status and role.

2.3.2 To make the specification of normalization implementation, and enhance the quality of curriculum implementation

According to the national curriculum plan and local educational reality, the educational administrative departments of province, municipality (or city) and county should respectively make their own relevant provisions for the “normalization implementation” of Integrative Practical Activities, which involve the rules and regulations of the teacher equipment , curriculum resource development, teaching evaluation, teaching research, security guarantees, the way and procedures of title assessment and so on. The establishment of these provisions will enhance the effectiveness of the implementation of Integrative Practical Activities. When developing the curriculum norms, it is very necessary to take the limitations of the rural-village primary schools into account, leave some flexibility in order to mobilize their enthusiasm.

2.3.3 To strengthen the supervision on the Integrative Practical Activities in rural-village primary school

The teaching and research departments of province, municipality (or city) and county should promptly participate in

the theoretical study and practical research of Integrative Practical Activities, and provide professional guidance to the schools and teachers. Besides they should supervise and inspect the implementation state of Integrative Practical Activities, lead the rural-village school to follow the curriculum plan seriously. The schools which perform well in the implementation of Integrative Practical Activities should be awarded. At the same time, they should find out the reasons why some schools can't effectively set up Integrative Practical Activities and take corresponding measures, which means that the school trapped in objective conditions should get appropriate support and help, and the school only lack of enthusiasm should be criticized.

#### 2.3.4 To construct a group of high-quality teachers combining the professional and the part-time

Constructing a group of high-quality teachers combining the professional and the part-time, is the key to the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities. Integrative Practical Activities involve broad professional fields, which easily cause the situation that the teachers can't provide effective guidance to students in short term for lack of the comprehensive professional training. This situation is extremely universal for the teachers in rural-village primary school. The educational administrative departments of the province, municipality and county can strengthen the training for teachers about Integrative Practical Activities through the implementation of "National Teacher Training Program", "Provincial Teacher Training Program" and long-distance training, which aims at spurring the teachers to be familiar with the new requirements and methods of Integrative Practical Activities, play their own subject role and improve their competence of instruction. All these will help the rural-village primary school construct a group of high-quality teachers combining the professional and the part-time.

#### 2.3.5 To make efforts to enhance the executive ability of the presidents for Integrative Practical Activities

Currently the educational administrative departments of the province, municipality and county should further strengthen the training for the presidents on the value, concept, objective ,content, the principles and methods of implementation , and the principles and methods of teaching evaluation about Integrative Practical Activities, deepen their understanding, enhance the executive ability of the presidents so that the presidents can fully play the role of leaders, which finally ensure the national curriculum plan can be carried out seriously.

### **2.4 The community: to provide the necessary social support**

Today the mutual interaction between school education and the community has become the main trend of educational development. But for a long time, the party leaders of the community where the rural-village primary school is located are not aware of the significant impact on the school education from the community, not to mention their own responsibility to school education as public utilities. Some party leaders hold the idea that education is only school's work and have nothing to do with the community, so they often are indifferent to the school curriculum and reluctant to provide the community resources to the school. The implementation of Integrative Practical Activities is a kind of social, open educational practice involving many aspects, which deeply requires the participation and support of the community. Therefore, the party leaders in rural communities should seriously study the relevant provisions of the new curriculum reform, understand the new curriculum concept, encourage the parents and other community members to actively participate in school education, and provide a variety of facilities for Integrative Practical Activities, such as the establishment of activity base.

On the other hand, the rural-village primary school also should take the initiative to communicate with the party leaders of community and invite them to participate in and supervise the activities of school education. Besides the school can develop curriculum resources through fully utilizing the community resource, which can contribute to the integration of Integrative Practical Activities and community's culture and economy, mobilize the initiative of the community for participating in education, and thus get enough support from the community.

### **2.5 Rural-village primary school: to transform concept; to combine the theory with practice; to exploit the advantage fully**

#### 2.5.1 To transform concept at first

Any valid educational activities are based on certain concept of education, and any educational activities should be based on understanding and mastering the concept of education firstly. There are many principals and teachers in rural-village primary school who mistakenly believe that the concept of Integrative Practical Activities imply "the tendency

of (this curriculum) being far away from rural areas ” , which means that Integrative Practical Activities is closely related to the urban school and not suitable for rural-village primary school because the most rural school doesn't have the school condition required by Integrative Practical Activities. So they deeply doubt that this curriculum plan can be implemented well in rural school. This mentality stems from their sticking to the traditional ideas of "examination-oriented education" and misunderstanding of the basic concept of Integrative Practical Activities. In fact, the maximum value of of Integrative Practical Activities doesn't lie in its content which is a supplement to the traditional curriculum, nor its relatively new form of teaching, but the educational concept it advocates— paying more attention to the subjectivity of students, the life world of students and individual experience of students. These concept have great value on correcting the tendency in current education that our students have the weak innovation ability and practical ability while they gain a lot of knowledge. In the guideline for Integrative Practical Activities , the nation just described the whole characteristic, value, goal and major content areas of this curriculum, and didn't make any provisions to the special content and form, which give full autonomy to the local and the schools. All these can prove that there isn't the so-called “ tendency of (this curriculum) being far away from rural areas “in the concept of Integrative Practical Activities. Therefore, in order to promote the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities, the principals and teachers in rural-village primary school must change the old philosophy of education and master the basic concept of Integrative Practical Activities.

2.5.2 To establish the compatible school institution for the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities

The construction of school-based management system is a guarantee of the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities. The schools should establish the basic norms of guidance behavior, the conventional and collaborative system of guidance behavior as well as the workload standard for teachers in order to enhance the effectiveness of instruction.

2.5.3 To take full advantage of school resource

For Integrative Practical Activities, there is not uniform constant national course, so the implementation is characteristic of bioregionalism and being school-based, which provide conditions for the individual school curriculum implementation .Therefore, the normalization implementation of Integrative Practical Activities in rural-village primary school should focus on highlighting the schools' advantages and aim at promote the development of students. Within the content areas of the state, the rural-village primary schools do not have to follow the content and form of the city schools. On the contrary, according to the actual situation of community and the rural-village primary school, the schools should carefully analyze their educational resources, community resources, students' educational foundation and individual needs, and then design and develop the curriculum.

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## **References**

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