

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

After the identification and explication of some significant themes in the previous chapter, this chapter provides the pedagogical implications for curriculum implementers, including junior high school EFL teachers, school administrators, and the government authority. In addition, limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research are also mentioned in this chapter.

#### 6.1 Pedagogical Implications

This qualitative study of teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward Grade 1-9 Curriculum provides a limited lens for viewing the personal experience of junior high school EFL teachers in Taiwan. Some pedagogical implications stemmed from the findings and discussions are discussed in this section.

##### 6.1.1 Implications for the Central Authority

###### Listening to Teachers' Voice about Curriculum Reform

Curriculum planners make effort to build a new structure for Grade 1-9 Curriculum. This fundamental change of the curriculum is expected to result in a better curriculum for students and offer opportunities for teachers to create their own curricula. However, many problems are revealed from the school level and teachers' workplace after Grade 1-9 Curriculum has been implemented for two years. For instance, the limitation of teacher autonomy in teachers' workplace, unfinished compilation of textbooks, overwhelming paperwork chores, and so on. What is worse, there are only

60% of the junior high school EFL teachers think they have a thorough understanding of the curriculum goals (Huang et al., 2004). These phenomena show that this curriculum reform hastens to be implemented and lacks sufficient communication with these related implementers before the implementation of Grade 1-9 Curriculum. Accordingly, teachers may not be able to change their habitual perceptions which finally lead to no change or the failure of the implementation.

Since Grade 1-9 Curriculum has been implemented under such a situation, what needs to do now is to offer adequate explanations for teachers' questions and assist in solving the problems that teachers have in their workplace. The ambiguous notions of Grade 1-9 Curriculum should be clarified and teachers should be informed about know-how. In addition, it is necessary to look for suggestions from educational experts and teachers, and then equip these suggestions with established procedures and practicality in order to dissolve the difficulties and impediments that teachers encounter in their workplace. Indeed, the central authority has already had plans for these. For example, "the Plan of Deep Plowing" (the MOE, 2003) aims to provide practitioners with direct assistance and consultation. "Guidepost 100" discussed in Chapter 5 is one of the activities which belong to the plan.

### 6.1.2 Implications for School Administrators

#### Providing Teachers with Administrative Support

Support from school administrators is one of the most important factors that influence teaching confidence of teachers in Taiwan (Sue, 2003). Administrative

encouragement can contribute to teacher satisfaction about their teaching. Consequently, administrators should hold positive attitudes toward providing a school environment in which teachers' work is valued and supported rather than obstructed by unrelated tasks. For example, when teachers have needs to attend seminars for professional growth outside of the school, school administrators can assist in finding substitutes for the classes that teachers leave rather than ask teachers to deal with the problem alone. Furthermore, school administrators can also help teachers plan regular workshops in school, as which really aid teachers' development. Instead of unproductive discussion, teachers need such support as inviting native-speaking teachers to interact with school teachers, grouping school teachers to set up a study group, or going outside to observe others' teaching, which are recommended methods for professional development.

As a matter of fact, junior high school teachers often suffer from many hindrances, such as the limitation of large class size, the pressure of the Basic Achievement Test, the burden of teaching duties, the demand of bureaucratic requirements, and so on. Therefore, school administrators, in a position of power, should be more concerned about teachers' need and give teachers support and encouragement to develop in their work.

#### Carrying Out the Supervisory Design for Novice Teachers

As revealed in the participants' cases, the novice teacher finds it hard to gain help from colleagues, whereas the experienced teacher complains about having no opportunities to share teaching ideas and experience with others. In fact, most junior high schools in Taiwan have a supervisory design in which experienced teachers in the same

teaching area are responsible for providing assistance and feedback to novice teachers over a period of time. Generally speaking, these experienced teachers are often headteachers or senior staff who have rich teaching experience. Novice teachers could really benefit from experienced teachers' help and supervision. However, the isolation and individualism may ill-serve such a good design, which "prevent teachers from enjoying the rewards of collegial interaction – support and praise for work well done, stimulation of new ideas" (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p.511). Therefore, school administrators may need to keep examining the effect of the supervisory design.

To fulfill the purpose of this design, it is necessary for school administrators to encourage discourse and inquiry between experienced practitioners and new teachers about real, immediate problems of practice. Experienced practitioners can actively share their teaching ideas and experience with novice teachers, whereas novice teachers can consult with experienced ones to improve their teaching. Carrying out the supervisory design cannot only help new teachers gain support in implementing Grade 1-9 Curriculum but also increase the interaction between experienced teachers and novice ones. Perhaps the phenomena of isolation and individualism among teachers cannot be improved in a short time, but, at least, the supervisory system offers teachers a chance to exchange teaching ideas and collaborate to solve problems.

### 6.1.3 Implications for Junior High School EFL Teachers

#### Keeping Self-assessment and Critical Reflection

In terms of Grade 1-9 Curriculum, teachers are not only curriculum implementers but also curriculum designers. Teachers are expected to be professionals rather than

technicians. Thus, teachers need to remain aware that mastery of basic teaching techniques and skills cannot contribute to professionalism, which involves not only skills but also knowledge and awareness. For continued professional growth, teachers should keep critical reflection and self-assessment. Reflection, or critical reflection, helps teachers recall and evaluate a past experience as a source for planning and action (Bartlett, 1990) It is a key component of teacher development (Richards, 1998). With the ability of critical reflection, teachers can self-assess and articulate the assumptions that underlie their teaching and develop personal principles of best practice that can support their approach to teaching. Moreover, it also helps teachers engage in a deeper level of awareness and response to teaching rather than in a surface level of teaching procedures. Therefore, skill-specific training activities, with short-term effect, are not enough for professionalism because they do not support staff learning and teacher change. To be professionals, teachers are suggested to keep renewing their personal theory and philosophy of teaching by critical thinking and self-assessment which exactly influence teachers' teaching in classrooms.

#### Balancing Linguistic Form and Communicative Function

Because English teaching is incorporated into elementary school education, junior high school EFL teachers no longer teach students who do not have any English learning experience. As a consequence, EFL teachers may need to achieve a better balance between communicative functions and linguistic forms. They do not have to treat their students as novice learners in English learning as before. Instead, they can give their students some tasks to accomplish based on their proficiency level. Although EFL

teachers are limited by external factors such as examinations, I believe junior high school EFL teachers can still make their effort to improve the situation in which grammar and language accuracy are over-emphasized in teaching. Basically, these junior high school students under Grade 1-9 Curriculum at least own the proficiency level from novice to intermediate. As Yalden (1987) suggested, communicative function should serve as equally important as linguistic form in this phase. Accordingly, EFL teachers are encouraged to increase communicative activities in classrooms, which can really help students cultivate learning interests and develop their communicative competence at the same time.

## **6.2 Limitations of the Present Study and Suggestions for Future Research**

In this qualitative research, some insightful findings about EFL teachers' attitudes and teaching behaviors toward Grade 1-9 Curriculum are provided. But the study still has several limitations. First, this qualitative study offers the unique experiences of the participants, but could not provide the statistical measurement that a quantitative study can achieve. In this study, two of the EFL teachers in a public junior high school were not randomly sampled, but selected on the basis of the research into teacher efficacy and availability. Their behaviors and attitudes are heavily mediated by the context in which they occur. Therefore, the results of this study will probably be relevant to some extent to others in similar situations, but can not be applied in all the settings. Second, experience is also a limitation. As the researcher is a novice observer and investigator, the previous assumptions and subjectivity which bias interpretations may not be avoided, although

multi-methods to validate results are used. Besides, time is another limitation. The study spanned only six weeks, so some representative data might be lost. If the study takes longer time, richer patterns of thought, activity and behavior could be presented.

In future research, three suggestions are made. Firstly, future research about similar topics can be carried out in different situations. In this present study, confined by time and teacher availability, a convenient sample of junior high school EFL teachers in the Taipei City was used. It is suggested that future research can be undertaken in different settings so that a more complete picture can be drawn and generalizability can be enhanced. For instance, changing the circumstances from a public school to a private one, from a metropolitan city with many resources to other cities with less information, or from a big school to a small-sized one, can help reveal different attitudes and manners of EFL teachers. Secondly, involvement of senior experienced EFL teachers is called for. As teaching experience is an important factor to influence the receptivity of curriculum reform, shown in the previous research, the views of senior experienced EFL teachers and their coping behaviors when facing a new curriculum deserve to be further understood and analyzed. In this present study, the most experienced EFL teacher in the school was originally included to compare with the other two cases but this participant decided to withdraw because of personal factors. Thus, further studies can particularly investigate how senior experienced EFL teachers manage a new curriculum and compare their situations with those of other generations of EFL teachers. Moreover, the attitudes and teaching behaviors of elementary school EFL teachers should be also taken into consideration because Grade 1-9 Curriculum is implemented in both elementary schools and junior high schools.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

In this present study, the researcher has examined EFL teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward Grade 1-9 English Curriculum, and the factors that have an impact on their implementation of the new curriculum. The researcher offers what is believed to be some significant issues and themes that should be considered by those working to implement the new curriculum, including teachers, school administrators and the educational authority. Although the participants and events in this research will not be replicated in another setting, reading their stories offers an insider's view of the practice of the new curriculum in a public junior high school. From the stories of these two participants, one can make sure that a successful curriculum reform depends on not only an ideal and overall plan but also teachers' enthusiasm and initiative to go the extra mile. If the central authority and school administrators can assist EFL in overcoming the constraints and difficulties that occur during the process of curriculum reform, naturally, EFL teachers will be more willing to advocate the policy of curricular change.