

课程研究前沿 总主编 崔允漷

Curriculum Construction Based

肖思汉 雷浩 编

基于核心素养的课程建构

on Key Competencies

华东师范大学出版社

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

基于核心素养的课程建构/肖思汉,雷浩编. —上海:华东师范大学出版社,2018

(课程研究前沿)

ISBN 978-7-5675-8374-0

I. ①基… II. ①肖…②雷… III. ①基础教育—教育研究—文集 IV. ①G632.0-53

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2018)第 226096 号

基于核心素养的课程建构

编 者 肖思汉 雷 浩

策划编辑 王冰如

审读编辑 王丹丹

责任校对 王冰如

装帧设计 刘怡霖

出版发行 华东师范大学出版社

社 址 上海市中山北路 3663 号 邮编 200062

网 址 www.ecnupress.com.cn

电 话 021-60821666 行政传真 021-62572105

客服电话 021-62865537 门市(邮购)电话 021-62869887

地 址 上海市中山北路 3663 号华东师范大学校内先锋路口

网 店 <http://hdsdcbs.tmall.com>

印 刷 者 常熟高专印刷有限公司

开 本 787×1092 16 开

印 张 13.25

字 数 265 千字

版 次 2018 年 10 月第 1 版

印 次 2018 年 10 月第 1 次

书 号 ISBN 978-7-5675-8374-0/G·11532

定 价 38.00 元

出 版 人 王 焰

(如发现本版图书有印订质量问题,请寄回本社客服中心调换或电话 021-62865537 联系)

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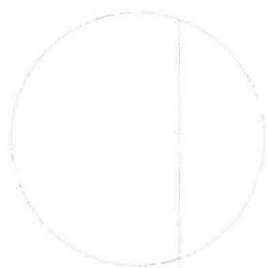
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一、核心素养理论研究的国际经验

International Comparisons of Mathematics Classrooms and Curricula: The Validity-comparability Compromise

David Clarke

Abstract: The pursuit of commensurability in international comparative research by imposing general classificatory frameworks can misrepresent valued performances, school knowledge and classroom practice as these are actually conceived by each community and sacrifice validity in the interest of comparability. The “validity-comparability compromise” is proposed as a theoretical concern with significant implications for international cross-cultural research with respect to both comparisons of curricula and of classroom practice. Differences in the prioritisation of “core competencies” in various curricula have implications for both mathematical content and the types of classroom activities by which each nation’s curricular agenda is promoted. International comparisons must accommodate such differences with care. Current international research is used to illustrate a variety of aspects of the issue and its consequences for the manner in which international research is conducted and its results interpreted. The effects extend to data generation and analysis and constitute essential contingencies on the interpretation and application of international comparative research.

Introduction

This paper identifies key considerations affecting the conduct and utility of international comparative research. Central to the design of such research studies are the dual imperatives of validity and comparability. Unfortunately, as will be illustrated, these imperatives are inevitably in tension. This paper identifies, illustrates and discusses these tensions, utilising very specific examples from current international comparative research. It is argued here that any value that might be derived from international comparisons of curricula or classroom practice is critically contingent on how the research design addresses the dual priorities of validity and comparability. It is further argued that since these priorities act against each other, researchers undertaking international comparative research must find a satisfactory balance between these competing obligations.

Perhaps only the drive to categorise is more fundamental than our inclination to compare

(cf. Lakoff, 1987). Indeed, the two activities are intrinsically entwined. In this paper, commensurability is interpreted as the right to compare (cf. Stengers, 2011). And it is our central assertion that this right to compare cannot be assumed, but is contingent on our capacity to legitimise both the act of comparison and the categories through which this act is performed. The need for such legitimisation has been raised for international comparisons of student achievement, but less frequently and less carefully for the cross-cultural comparison of curricula and classrooms.

Critical in the legitimisation of these acts of comparison are the validity of the categories we employ and of the act of comparison itself. Much of the focus in this paper is on cultural validity, which is interpreted (with Säljö, 1991) as a key determinant of practice in the international settings we aspire to compare. Research designs, especially data generation and categorisation processes, can misrepresent or conceal cultural idiosyncrasies in the interest of facilitating comparison.

This paper considers this validity-comparability compromise in relation to both curriculum and classroom practice research. Curricular comparisons raise issues related to the structure of school knowledge and the aspirational character of valued performances. Comparisons of classroom practice foreground the performative realisation of school knowledge and introduce the teacher as curricular agent (among other roles), modelling, orchestrating, facilitating and promoting performances aligned with the educational traditions of the enfolding culture. Any cross-cultural comparative analysis faces the challenge of honouring the separate cultural contexts, while employing an analytical frame that affords reasonable comparison.

The paper utilises seven “dilemmas” to reveal some of the contingencies under which international comparative research might be undertaken. The issues raised by each dilemma are not mutually exclusive sets. Specific empirical examples from current international research provide the vehicle by which the entailments of each dilemma can be explored to identify areas of cross-cultural research requiring critical examination. Relevant theory is invoked as required by each emergent contingency.

Comparability and Validity in Cross-Cultural Studies

In an international comparative study, any evaluative aspect is reflective of the cultural authorship of the study.

Culture is thus what allows us to perceive the world as meaningful, and coherent, and at the same time it operates as a constraint on our understandings and activities. (Säljö, 1991,

p. 180).

In seeking to make comparison between the practices of classrooms situated in different cultures, the most obvious comparator constructs become problematic.

Dilemma 1: Cultural-specificity of cross-cultural codes

Use of culturally-specific categories for cross-cultural coding (e. g. participation).

In the Chinese adaptation of the research design for the Middle School Mathematics and Institutional Setting of Teaching (MIST) project, the decision was made not to use the Instructional Quality Assessment (IQA) (Silver & Stein, 1996), but instead to develop a local instrument for the evaluation of mathematics classroom instruction. The reason for the rejection of the IQA instrument for use in Chinese school settings reflected the embeddedness, within the instrument, of particular values characteristic of the cultural setting and educational philosophy of the authoring culture (USA). For example, for the measurement of students' participation in classroom instruction, new criteria are needed that accommodate the larger class size and norms of social interaction of the Chinese mathematics classroom. Figure 1 shows the criteria for evaluating the level of student participation in teacher-facilitated discussion in mathematics classes.

A. Participation

Was there widespread participation in teacher-facilitated discussion?	
4	Over 50% of the students participated consistently throughout the discussion.
3	25%- 50% of the students participated consistently in the discussion OR over 50% of the students participated minimally.
2	25%- 50% of the students participated minimally in the discussion (that is, they contributed only once.)
1	Less than 25% of the students participated in the discussion.
N/A	Reason:

Figure 1 Participation criteria from the *Instructional Quality Assessment (IQA)* instrument (Silver & Stein, 1996)

In countries such as China and Korea, teachers in both primary and secondary schools make extensive use of elicited student choral response as a key instructional strategy (Clarke, 2010). In the lessons analysed from one Shanghai classroom, a large number of choral responses (approximately 80 times) were used in each lesson. In the analysis of a classroom in Tokyo, there were a similar number of individual student public statements, but no evidence of

choral response. Applying the IQA participation criteria (Figure 1), the regularity and frequency of the use of choral responses would characterise this classroom as participatory at a level comparable with the classroom in Tokyo. Yet the students in the Tokyo classroom participate primarily through individual contributions rather than choral response and the type of teacher-facilitated discussion and the nature of student participation in that discussion in the two classrooms are sufficiently different to make their comparability with respect to participation highly questionable.

Dilemma 2: Inclusive vs Distinctive

Use of inclusive categories to maximise applicability across cultures, thereby sacrificing distinctive (and potentially explanatory) detail (e. g. mathematics).

In a recent study undertaken by the author and his colleagues, we compared the ways in which mathematics curricula are framed in Australia, China, and Finland. We sought to identify the similarities and differences in the organisation of mathematics curricula in the three countries in terms of their aims, content areas and performance expectations (“core competencies”).

The key documents analysed in this study were: the Australian Mathematics Curriculum (AMC), the Chinese Mathematics Curriculum Standards (CMCS), and the Finnish National Core Curriculum (FNCC). The three curricula are structurally quite different and prioritise

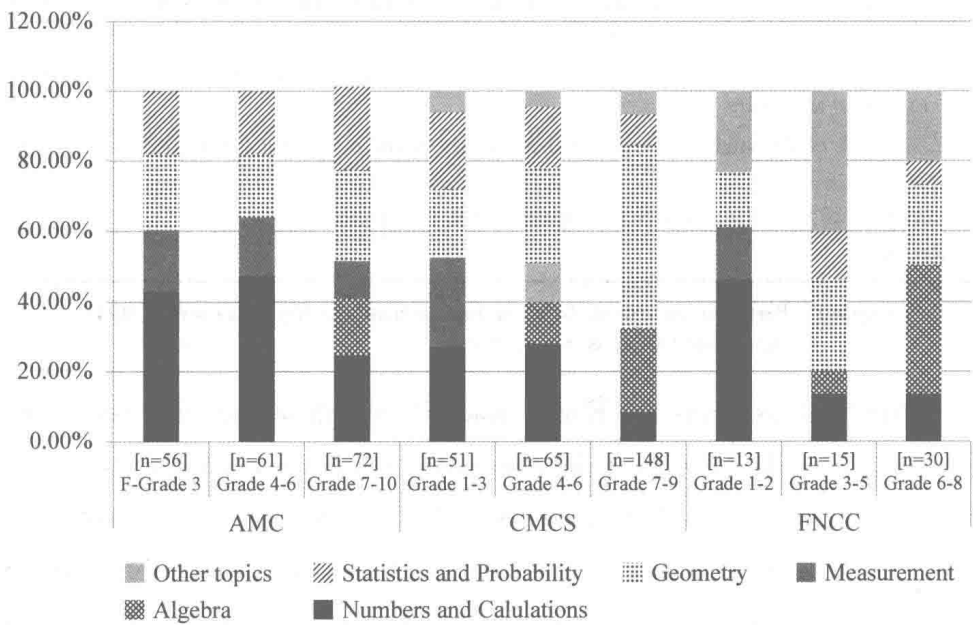


Figure 2 Topics covered in Standards Statements across the Australian, Chinese and Finnish mathematics curricula in 2012

different performance types. It is commonly assumed that disciplinary categories, such as mathematics and science, represent comparable knowledge domains. In fact, as is shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3, mathematics curricula can differ significantly with respect to both content and the performance types (core competencies) required.

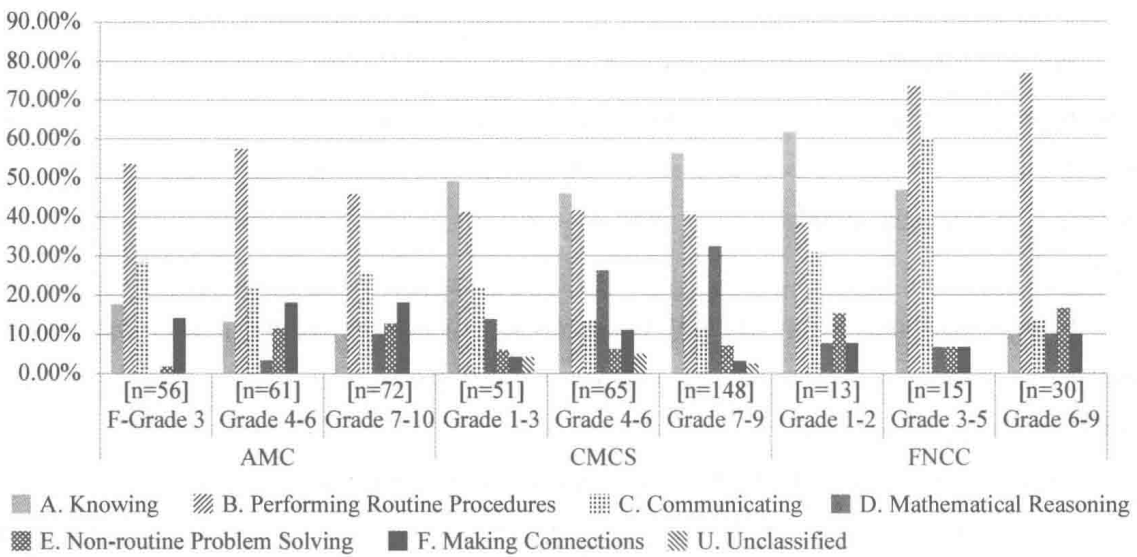


Figure 3 Core Competencies across the Australian, Chinese and Finnish mathematics curricula in 2012

An international comparative study might ask the question, “What proportion of a student’s time in class is spent studying mathematics?” However, what actually constitutes mathematics, either as content categories or as performance types, is specified differently in different countries.

Any attempt to characterise the relative emphasis given to particular types of valued performance at different grade levels can only be undertaken if a common classificatory framework can be imposed on all curricula. But such a general framework must not be allowed to mask the significant emphasis given to Geometry in Grade 7 – 9 in China, or to “Communicating” in Grade 3 – 5 in Finland. The danger is that the commensurability demands of such comparisons conceal major conceptual differences in the curricular expression of categories of school knowledge. The act of reconstructing culturally-specific categories to enable cross cultural comparisons runs the risk of distorting the knowledge categories we seek to compare. In cross-cultural research, the imposition of an “external” classification scheme for the purposes of achieving comparability can sacrifice validity by concealing cultural characteristics, and by creating artificial distinctions. Comparability is achieved through

processes of typification and omission, and each has the potential to misrepresent the setting.

Dilemma 3: Evaluative Criteria

Use of culturally-specific *criteria* for cross-cultural *evaluation* of instructional quality (e. g. Student spoken mathematics).

Where research is specifically constructed to be evaluative, the question arises as to the legitimate application of criteria developed in one culture to the practices of another culture. The use of evaluative criteria posits an ideal of effective practice that should be substantiated by reference to research. Problems arise when the research on which a criterion is based is itself culturally-specific.

In an international comparative study, any evaluative aspect is reflective of the cultural authorship of the study. If we are to make judgements of merit, whether they be about student achievement or classroom practice, we can only do so from the position of the authoring culture. The efficacy of a practice can only be judged to the extent that it achieves a specified goal. The most obvious goal against which to assess the efficacy of a practice is the goal of the individual or school system engaged in the practice. For the purposes of international comparative research, however, it is legitimate for someone outside the system being studied to evaluate a practice relative to their own goals-provided that this distinction is made explicit (Clarke, 2003).

For example, despite the emphatic advocacy in Western educational literature, classrooms in China and Korea have historically not made use of student-student spoken mathematics as a pedagogical tool. In research undertaken by Clarke, Xu and Wan (2010), classrooms were identified in which student spoken mathematics was purposefully promoted in public but not in private interactions (e. g. Shanghai classroom 1), in both public and private interactions (e. g. Melbourne classroom 1) and in neither public nor private interactions (e. g. Seoul classroom 1). Each of these classrooms models a distinctive pedagogy with respect to student spoken mathematics.

If the occurrence of student-spoken mathematics is identified with quality instruction, then the instructional practice of the classroom in Seoul would be judged to be deficient. The classrooms in Shanghai and Melbourne differed significantly in the extent to which private student-student interactions were encouraged, but the teachers in both classrooms prioritized student facility with spoken mathematics. In the Shanghai classroom, promotion of this

capability was developed solely through public discourse, whereas in the Melbourne classroom, private student-student mathematical speech was an essential pedagogical tool. Interestingly, in post-lesson interviews, the students from Melbourne and Shanghai showed comparable fluency in their use of the language of mathematics, while students from the classrooms in Seoul showed little evidence of such a capacity. Evaluative judgments of instructional quality made in the context of international comparative research must justify the model of accomplished practice implicit in the criteria employed and provide evidence of the cross-cultural legitimacy of these criteria.

Many countries and areas, especially Korea and the Netherlands, emphasised solving problems . . . Japan, Sweden, and the United States emphasized ‘recalling’ mathematical information, and Hong Kong, China and Israel emphasized ‘justification and proof’.

(Schmidt, McKnight, Valverde, Houang, & Wiley, 1997, p. 136)

We can identify these performance types with the sort of “core competencies” that are increasingly being advocated in contemporary curriculum documents. The national curriculum in China has undergone major reforms in recent years. In the 2011 mandated mathematics curriculum standards (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2011), the leading role of teachers is specified as “to deal with the relationship between lecturing and student learning, guiding students to think independently, explore actively, and interact collaboratively; in order to make students understand and grasp basic mathematical knowledge and skills, realise and apply mathematical thinking and methods, so as to obtain basic mathematical activity experience” (trans. , p. 3). Problem solving is frequently stated as a major focus in the mathematics curriculum (97 times within the whole 135 page document), with “learning to interact collaboratively with others” (trans. , p. 9), “experience the process of problem solving in collaborative interaction with others and attempting to explain own thinking process” (trans. , p. 12), and “better understand the thinking approach and conclusion of others through the process of collaboration and interaction” (trans. , p. 14) explicitly stated as curriculum goals (Chan, Cao & Clarke, 2017). It is through the articulation of such core competencies as collaborative problem solving, that each curriculum document seeks to shape the nature of the activities of the mathematics classroom and, of course, the instructional practices associated with those activities. International comparative research must be sensitive to these different prioritisations.

Dilemma 4: Form vs Function

Confusion between form and function, where an activity coded on the basis of common form is employed in differently situated classrooms to serve quite different functions (e. g. kikan-shido or between-desks-instruction).

Kikan-shido (a Japanese term meaning “between-desks-instruction”) has a *form* that is immediately recognisable in most countries around the world. In kikan-shido the teacher walks around the classroom, while the students work independently, in pairs or in small groups. Although kikan-shido is immediately recognisable to most educators by its form, it is employed in classrooms around the world to realise very different functions. A teacher undertaking kikan-shido in Australia, will do so with very different purposes in mind from those pursued by a teacher in Hong Kong, China, or, for example, a teacher in Japan. In reporting the frequency of occurrence of an activity such as kikan-shido for the purposes of comparative analysis, the researcher conflates activities that are similar in form but which may be employed in differently-situated classrooms for quite distinct functions. Such conflation can create an impression of similarity although differences in practice are actually quite profound (for more detail, see Clarke, Emanuelsson, Jablonka & Mok, 2006).

Dilemma 5: Linguistic Preclusion

Misrepresentation resulting from cultural or linguistic preclusion (e. g. Japanese classrooms as underplaying intellectual ownership).

The analysis of social interaction in one culture using expectations encrypted in classificatory schemes that reflect the linguistic norms of another culture can misrepresent the practices being studied. This can occur because characteristics of social interaction privileged in the researcher’s analytical frame may not be expressible within the linguistic conventions of the observed setting. For example, the Japanese value implicit communication that requires speaker and listener to supply the context without explicit utterances and cues. This tendency is typically found in leaving sentences unfinished. As a consequence, in Japanese discourse, agency or action are often hidden and left ambiguous. In English, when introducing a definition, the teacher might employ a do-verb: “We define”. In a Japanese mathematics classroom, the teacher often introduces a definition in the intransitive sense (*Sou Natte Iru* = “as it is” or “something manifests itself”) as if it is beyond one’s concern. Such differences in the location of

agency, embedded in language use, pose challenges for interpretive analysis and categorisation of classroom dialogue.

Dilemma 6: Omission

Misrepresentation by omission, where the authoring culture of the researcher lacks an appropriate term or construct for the activity being observed (e. g. Pudian).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that our lived experience is mediated significantly by our capacity to name and categorise our world.

We see and hear ... very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation (Sapir, 1949).

Marton and Tsui (2004) suggest that “the categories ... not only express the social structure but also create the need for people to conform to the behavior associated with these categories” (p. 28). Our interactions with classroom settings, whether as learner, teacher or researcher, are mediated by our capacity to name what we see and experience. Speakers of one language have access to terms, and therefore perceptive possibilities, that may not be available to speakers of another language. For example, in the Chinese pedagogy “Qifa Shi” (Cao, Clarke, & Xu, 2010), the activity “Pudian” is a key element. Pudian can take various forms: Connection, Transition, Contextualising, but its function is to help students develop a conceptual, associative bridge between their existing knowledge and the new content. There is no simple equivalent to Pudian in English, although teacher education programs delivered in most English-speaking countries would certainly encourage the sort of connections that Pudian is intended to facilitate. Many such pedagogical terms have been collected in a variety of languages (Clarke, 2010), describing classroom activities central to the pedagogy of one community but unnamed and frequently absent from the pedagogies of other communities. It follows that an unnamed activity will be absent from any catalogue of desirable teacher actions and consequently denied specific promotion in any program of mathematics teacher education. It is also likely that such activities will go unrecognised in reports of cross-cultural international research, where the authoring culture of the research report lacks the particular term.

Dilemma 7: Disconnection

Misrepresentation through disconnection, where activities that derive their local meaning from their connectedness are separated for independent study (e. g. teaching and learning (cf. obuchenie), public and private speech).

Whether we look to the Japanese “gakushu-shido”, the Dutch “leren” or the Russian “obuchenie”, we find that some communities have acknowledged the interdependence of instruction and learning by encompassing both activities within the one process and, most significantly, within the one word. In English, we dichotomise classroom practice into Teaching or Learning. One demonstration of the consequences of the inappropriate disconnection of actions that should be seen as fundamentally connected is evident in the comparison of two published translations involving Vygotsky’s use of the term “obuchenie” (discussed in Clarke, 2001).

From this point of view, *instruction* cannot be identified as development, but properly organized *instruction* will result in the child’s intellectual development, will bring into being an entire series of such developmental processes, which were not at all possible without *instruction* (Vygotsky, as quoted in Hedegaard, 1990, p. 350).

From this point of view, *learning* is not development; however, properly organized *learning* results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from *learning* (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90).

The analogous disconnection of public and private speech in classrooms, and of speaking and listening (Clarke, 2006) has the same effect of misrepresenting activities that may be fundamentally interrelated (not just conceptually but also functionally connected) in their enactment in particular classroom settings.

Conclusions

The pursuit of commensurability in international comparative research by imposing general classificatory frameworks can misrepresent valued performances, school knowledge and classroom practice as these are actually conceived by each community and sacrifice validity in the interest of comparability. In this paper, the “validity-comparability compromise” has been proposed as a theoretical concern that has significant implications for international comparative research. The identified dilemmas offer different perspectives and illustrate some of the consequences of ignoring this central concern. Partnerships with those being compared can minimise misrepresentation, but the necessity of the compromise is inescapable. The interpretation and application of international comparative research will be critically contingent on researchers’ capacity to address those “dilemmas” pertinent to their particular design. This