

THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH EDUCATION POLICIES IN BASIC EDUCATION STAGE IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

English education has long been practiced in China. Until the modern times, the Opium War opened the door of China and also opened its modern history of foreign language education. After the founding of PRC, English education has begun to draw much attention, especially since the reform and opening-up, and great progress has been made in English education. Reviewing and studying the history and development of English education policy in China is of great significance for us to clarify the evolution of English education policy and better understand the development and reform of Chinese English language education.

Keywords: English education policies, history, evolution, basic education stage, China.

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language teaching in China can be traced back with a long history. Early as the beginning of the 20th century, foreign languages were included as compulsory subjects in primary and secondary school curricula (Fu, 1986). However, due to various political factors and social problems, as well as the low living standards of people and many other factors, the development of foreign language teaching has been slow (Shen, 2019; Luo, 2014). In 1949, when PRC was established, in the first fifteen years, due to the influence of political factors, middle schools and universities took Russian as the main instructional language at school (Zhang, 2017). It was not until the deterioration of relations between China and the Soviet Union in the early 1960s that the teaching of Russian was turned to English. Later, the “Cultural Revolution” of 1967-1977 stagnated foreign language teaching in China. In 1978, English officially replaced Russian as a compulsory course in foreign language teaching in primary and secondary schools. Since then, English teaching in China has made great strides. The evolution of English teaching syllabus and curriculum standards reflects the development trend and progress of foreign language teaching in China to a certain extent (Guo, 2021; Yang, 2015). Historically, the development of English education policy can be roughly divided into five stages: the budding period, the transformation period, the development period, the reform period and the innovation period.

The modern Chinese history began from the Opium War when the Western powers opened the door to China by force, thus officially opening its history of foreign language education (Hu, 1999). In this sense, foreign language education was originally a last resort in China, but its subsequent development has experienced a process from passive to active. After the founding of the new China, the humiliating history of foreign language education in China is gone forever. Since China’s reform and opening up, hundreds of millions of people have consciously and actively studied foreign languages to make more and greater contributions to the prosperity of the motherland and to all mankind (Wang, 2018). Reviewing and studying the development process

of China's foreign language education policy is of great significance for us to clarify the future development direction of China's foreign language education policy and understand the current foreign language education reform.

2. THE BUDDING PERIOD: THE EARLY ENGLISH EDUCATION POLICY IN CHINA BEFORE 1949

Foreign language education in China has existed for a long time since ancient times. The history of foreign language teaching in China can be traced back at least to the Tang Dynasty. At that time, translation played a role in communication and understanding between peoples of various ethnic groups and countries in ancient times. With translation activities, foreign language translation teaching related to it came into being. There are well-documented foreign language translation schools in China, such as Huihui Chinese Culture Institution in Yuan Dynasty, Siyi Institution in Ming Dynasty, and Russian Institution in early Qing Dynasty.

In 1664, the British colonialists established the first trading port in Guangzhou, and Chinese began to come into contact with English. At that time, for the convenience of communication, people created Pidgin English, which was popular in the coastal areas of Guangdong. But the real English as a formal foreign language education was after the end of the Second Opium War. At that time, China was forced to open its doors and successively established trading ports in coastal areas. English was originally taught by the church. The increasingly close diplomatic and trade exchanges between China and Western countries have highlighted the importance of foreign language learning. The Qing government at that time also realized the significance of foreign language education. Therefore, foreign language schools were established in various places with government funding, such as the earliest Tongwen Institution in Beijing (1862), Guangfangyan Institution in Shanghai (1863) and Tongwen Institution in Guangzhou (1864). In 1867, the Jiangnan Factory was established in Shanghai, with a translation bureau, and began to publish translations of military science, natural science and other disciplines. Foreign languages and foreign language translation became the best way to understand and learn foreign cultures and advanced sciences. More than 600 Western novels were translated into Chinese between 1867 and 1911. English was a compulsory subject in high schools in big cities. In church schools, English was the medium of instruction.

China's foreign language education policy was formally formulated in the late Qing Dynasty. The decline of the country has made people of insight realize the importance of foreign language education. In 1904, *the Appointed Middle School Regulations* listed "foreign language" as a middle school subject. After the 1911 Revolution, in 1912, the Department of Education at that time promulgated *the Primary School Regulations*, which mentioned in the charter Subjects and Organization that English or other foreign languages could be added. Foreign language was arranged in the third year of high school, three hours a week, teaching reading, handwriting, practice, and grammar. In the same year, the department promulgated *the Enforcement Rules for the Regulations of Secondary Schools*, which stipulated that foreign languages should be mainly English, and proposed that foreign languages should be designed to understand foreign languages, have the ability to use them, and enhance intelligence, and pointed out that pronunciation and spelling should be taught in foreign language teaching when progressing, followed by simple reading, writing, translation, dictation, and then general essay, grammar, conversation and writing. In 1916, the Ministry of Education promulgated *the Implementation Rules for the Regulations of*

Higher Elementary Schools, offering foreign languages for two school years, two hours a week, with the gist of making children familiar with foreign languages for practical use.

In 1923, the Department of Education formulated *the New Academic Curriculum Outline for Junior High School Foreign Language Curriculum* (Taking English as an example), which clarified the purpose, content and methods of foreign language teaching and the minimum standards for graduation. In the same year, *the Syllabus of the New Academic System Curriculum for Public Compulsory Foreign Language Courses in Senior Middle Schools*, was issued to stipulate the teaching time, credits, teaching themes, and teaching materials. In 1929, the department formulated *the Interim English Curriculum Standards for Junior Middle Schools* and *Interim English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools*, which further stipulated the goals of English teaching, homework items, time control, teaching syllabus, teaching methods and minimum graduation requirements as well as the minimum limit of content. In 1932, *the English Curriculum Standards for Junior Secondary Schools* and *the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools* were officially announced. The standards this time were basically the same as in 1929, but simplified.

During the period of Anti-Japanese War, Japanese was once instructed in enemy-occupied areas and the Northeast of China. However, this kind of education, aimed at enslaving the people by imposing on the public, could not last long. After the victory of the Anti-Japan War, English became China's first foreign language again. In 1941, the Ministry of Education of the Kuomintang government issued *the Draft Standard of English Curriculum for Six-Year Secondary Schools in September* in accordance with the resolution of Setting up six-year middle schools without distinction between junior and senior high schools made by the Third National Education Conference, which covered the outline of teaching materials and methods of implementation. In December 1941, *the English Curriculum Standards for Junior Secondary Schools* and *the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools* were promulgated, as well as the revised versions of both promulgated in 1948, all of which were the recovery of English curriculum standards and implementation methods.

3. THE TRANSFORMING PERIOD: THE ENGLISH EDUCATION POLICY IN CHINA FROM 1949 TO 1967

Since 1949, the government has made great efforts to language policy and planning. In October 1949, the Chinese Language Reform Committee was established, directly under the leadership of the State Council. In December 1985, it was renamed the State Language Committee, but it is still an agency directly under the State Council. On February 14, 1994, the State Language Committee was transformed into a national bureau managed by the State Education Commission. In 1998, the State Language Committee was merged into the Ministry of Education (MOE). However, foreign language teaching affair, which also belongs to language, is not included in its scope of work. For many years, foreign language education and teaching work has not been managed by a special government agency. It has always been managed by a department or discipline under the Ministry of Education, and the government department has not made long-term plans for China's foreign language education. It can be said that the status and role of foreign languages in China has never been formally stated. It is not unrelated to the ups and downs of China's foreign language education since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

In the early days of liberation, because of the blockade of the Western world, China allied with the socialist country the Soviet Union. Not only did it rely on the help of the Soviet Union in economic construction, it also hired a large number of Soviet experts in education, and sent a large number of students to study in the Soviet Union. For a time, there was a Russian craze in China. In 1951, there were 34 colleges and universities that established Russian departments, while only 13 schools had Russian majors before the founding of the new China. The popularity of Russian has even changed people's choice of foreign language learning. Many middle school students are reluctant to learn English and instead study Russian. In view of the situation, the Ministry of Education issued a document in July 1953 to make a decision to close most of the English departments of normal colleges and universities.

In April 1954, the MOE issued a notice that no foreign language classes would be offered in junior high schools, and that foreign language classes in senior high schools would be dominated by Russian. The English teachers of junior school transferred to other subjects, or changed to teach Russian. The sudden "reform" had a negative impact on China's foreign language education. Under the guidance of this policy, Russian has become China's first foreign language, while English education has been greatly reduced and the quality of education has also greatly reduced, and a large number of English teachers had to change their professions. However, in fact, Russian education has developed too rapidly, beyond what was actually needed.

This period is a period of reform and adjustment of foreign language teaching in China, and there are many drawbacks. First, the government mandated that Russian should be the main language in secondary schools, and the English language was canceled on a large scale, which greatly weakened English teaching. Second, there have been many repetitions on whether to set up foreign language courses in primary and secondary schools. In 1951, *the Draft Standard of English Curriculum for Middle Schools* was formulated, which covered the draft standard of English curriculum for junior middle school and high schools, including objectives, time allocation, teaching syllabus and key points of teaching methods. However, in 1954, *the Notice on the Setting up of Foreign Language Courses in Middle Schools from the Fall of 1954* was issued. Through the suspension of foreign language courses in junior high schools, Russian courses were gradually taken to high schools. In 1956, the MOE promulgated *the English Teaching Syllabus for Senior Middle Schools (Draft) in New China*. In 1959, the Ministry of Education issued *the Notice on Strengthening and Opening Foreign Languages in Secondary Schools*, which pointed out the proportion of various foreign languages in secondary schools, "In general, it can be stipulated that about one-third of schools teach Russian, and two-thirds of schools teach English and other foreign languages", and stipulated that full-time first level middle schools offer foreign languages, while the other middle schools generally do not offer foreign languages.

In all, the curriculum standards and syllabus of this period were generally characterized by the "one-size-fits-all" administrative order, and the changeable policies hindered foreign language teaching. Due to much emphasis on the political nature of foreign language learning, over-emphasis on the knowledge function of foreign language learning, ignoring the law of foreign language learning, it also restricts the development of foreign language teaching to a certain extent.

In the 1960s, the situation of foreign language education in China took a turn for the better. Foreign language teaching improved, and English-based foreign language education began to become formal. At that time, Sino-Soviet relations broke down on the one hand, and on the other hand, China's relations with Western countries also eased, and more ties were established with third world countries. In 1962, *the Opinions on Issues Concerning the Opening of Foreign*

Language Classes in Primary Schools was issued, pointing out specific opinions and agreeing to offer foreign language classes in the fourth and fifth grades of the five-year elementary schools experimenting with the new school system. If there are foreign language teachers, foreign language classes can also be offered in the fifth and sixth grades in the six-year elementary schools, but no syllabus has been issued. In 1963, on the basis of comprehensively summarizing the historical experience of foreign language teaching and textbook editing, *the English Teaching Syllabus for Full-time Middle Schools (Draft)* was formulated and issued. This is a syllabus with the highest teaching requirements, the most teaching content and the most class hours since the founding of new China.

In 1964, a Foreign Language Planning Group under the State Council was established. It was attended by various departments including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Higher Education, showing the government's renewed understanding of the importance of foreign language education. After founding, *the Outline of the Seven-year Plan for Foreign Language Education* was first formulated. The outline reviewed the experience and lessons of China's foreign language education policy since 1949, and made a profound reflection on the mistakes. The outline proposed many important measures to correct the phenomenon of underestimating foreign language education in the previous period, such as equal emphasis on professional foreign language education and common foreign language education, and equal emphasis on school foreign language education and amateur foreign language education. As the first programmatic document for foreign language education of China, the outline proposed for the first time that foreign language education should be dominated by English and supplemented by other languages.

This measure conforms to the international trend and also meets the needs of domestic economic development at that time. Although the outline was terminated due to the Cultural Revolution, in fact the current foreign language education of China is still affected by it; for example, the choice of foreign languages still follows the seven-year plan.

With the guidance of the seven-year plan and the opening of foreign language schools in big cities, foreign language education in China took a new turn. Foreign language education, especially English teaching, has been gradually restored and paid attention to.

However, the movement of the Cultural Revolution from 1967 to 1977 once again brought the newly emerging English education to the brink of collapse. Suspension of classes, suspension of school has almost deprived a generation of opportunities to learn foreign languages.

4. THE DEVELOPING PERIOD: THE ENGLISH EDUCATION POLICY IN CHINA FROM 1978 TO 1990

From 1978 to 1990 in the early period of the Reform and Opening-up, foreign language teaching with English as the main language received unprecedented attention. In the past few decades, the development of foreign language syllabus for primary and secondary schools has made great progress, and this period can be described as a period of progress for the syllabus. Four syllabuses have been promulgated. They are *the English Teaching Syllabus for Full-time Ten-year Primary and Secondary Schools (Trial Draft)* in 1978; *the English Teaching Syllabus for Full-time Six-year Key Middle Schools (Draft for Comment)* in 1981; *the English Teaching Syllabus in Full-time Middle Schools* in 1986; and in 1988, *the English teaching syllabus in Nine-year Compulsory Education Full-time Middle Schools (preliminary draft)*.

The chaotic ten years of the Cultural Revolution have finally come to an end. After making things right, foreign language education has once again received attention. After the Reform and Opening-up, foreign language education has developed even more rapidly, especially English education.

In August 1978, the National Symposium on Foreign Language Education was held, and put forward *Several Opinions on Strengthening Foreign Language Education*, which proposed that language layout should have a strategic vision and long-term planning, and proposed that the current main task is to vigorously develop English education. Due attention should be paid to the education of Japanese, French, German, Russian and other common languages .

First, the status of foreign language teaching in basic education is clarified, that is, foreign language is an important tool for learning cultural and scientific knowledge, acquiring information and communicating with foreign countries. The second is to notice the differences in foreign language education. The starting points for each stage of study are taken into account when developing the syllabus. The third is to correctly handle the relationship between foreign language teaching and political education, and change the way of ignoring the laws of foreign language teaching and blindly emphasizing politics.

In the early days of the Reform and Opening-up, although English was a major basic subject in middle schools, the development of the syllabus was still in a closed state, at the stage of emancipating the mind and breaking through the shackles of rational thinking. The formulation of the syllabus lacked the guidance of curriculum theory. But one thing worth affirming is that the 1978 syllabus is the first complete syllabus for primary and secondary schools since the founding of new China, and it is also the first syllabus that has been fully implemented from beginning to end. Unfortunately, foreign language teaching in primary schools has experienced ups and downs. After the introduction of the 1978 syllabus, foreign language classes were offered in most regions of the country, but most of them stopped offering foreign language classes two years later. The 1978 syllabus and the 1981 syllabus were mainly aimed at key urban primary and secondary schools, and had much higher requirements for schools in rural areas at that time, and could not be implemented nationwide. In the years that followed, there was a heated debate in the foreign language teaching community on whether to open foreign language classes in primary schools. The development of foreign language syllabus for primary schools and the construction of foreign language textbooks have been downplayed. It is difficult to connect primary and junior high schools. No matter whether primary schools offer foreign language classes or not, English teaching in junior high schools always starts from scratch. The overlapping phenomenon is extremely serious, resulting in a waste of foreign language resources.

But it is worth affirming that the syllabus of this period clarified the instrumentality of foreign languages, and further clarified that foreign languages are important tools for learning cultural and scientific knowledge and conducting international exchanges. Foreign language, Chinese and mathematics are listed as the three main subjects in middle school, which improves the status of foreign language in middle schools. This greatly promotes the improvement of foreign language teaching quality, and put forward that the goal of English teaching is to focus on cultivating students' ability to read and learn English autonomously and to cultivate certain abilities of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, so as to lay a solid foundation for further study and use of English.

In 1986, the State Education Commission formulated and promulgated *the English Teaching Syllabus for Full-time Middle Schools* with a glossary for the first time attached to the

syllabus in China. In 1993, *the Outline of China's Education Reform and Development* promulgated by the State Council and *the Education Law* promulgated by the State in 1995 provided legal protection for the development of China's foreign language education.

5. THE REFORMING PERIOD: THE ENGLISH EDUCATION POLICY IN CHINA FROM 1990 TO 2000

With the rapid development of China's society and economy, the implementation of the nine-year compulsory education and the introduction of the communicative teaching method were taken into China, which caused English teachers to rethink why and how to teach English. The nationwide reform of English teaching has begun since then.

This stage is a transition between the previous and the next, and there has been considerable progress in the scientific, normative and completeness of the development of foreign language curriculum, which are achieved on the basis of investigation and research. The syllabus compilers studied the advanced foreign language teaching theories at that time, and also listened to the opinions and suggestions of the front-line teachers and research personnel, such as the connection of teaching at all levels and the importance of students' learning tasks.

The new syllabus and the introduction of textbooks adapted to the syllabus have undoubtedly further promoted the development process of the reform. At this stage, three junior high school syllabuses and three senior high school syllabuses were promulgated, namely, *the English Teaching Syllabus for Full-time Secondary School (Revised)* in 1990; *the English Teaching Syllabus for Nine-Year Compulsory Education Full-time Junior Middle Schools (Trial)* in 1992; *the English Syllabus for Nine-year Compulsory Education Full-time Junior Middle Schools (Revised Trial Version)*; *the English Syllabus for Full-time Senior Middle School (Preliminary Draft)* in 1993; *the English Syllabus for Full-time Senior Middle Schools (for experimental use)* in 1996; and *the English Teaching Syllabus for Full-time Senior High School (trial revision)* in 2000.

The salient features of the syllabus in this period are as followings. Firstly, the state has compiled the English teaching syllabus for junior secondary school and senior high school respectively, and the teaching requirements and content of the high school English teaching syllabus have been adjusted accordingly; secondly, the implementation of the syllabus is more standardized than that in the past through the procedures of trial, experimental and revised, and the quality of the syllabus has been continuously improved; and thirdly, the teaching concept has been updated, for example, the 1993 syllabus clearly emphasized the cultivation of students' English communicative competence.

First of all, in terms of teaching objectives, the 1988 syllabus proposed to "improve the moral quality and scientific and cultural quality of the entire Chinese nation", and the 1992 syllabus added "to stimulate students' interest in learning, develop good study habits", the teaching goal of "enable students to receive education in ideological and morality, patriotism and socialism, and develop students' thinking ability and self-learning ability". The teaching goal has been upgraded from the original single language knowledge and skills requirements to the comprehensive quality training. Regarding teaching requirements, the formulation of the later syllabus is also more practical and rational, such as opposing the tendency to blindly pursue the rate of entering the higher schools, and clarifying the dual purpose of English classes in middle schools: further studies and employment. The junior high school syllabus at this time began to stipulate the grading

requirements: first and second. English is a compulsory course for the first and second grades of junior high school, and an elective course for the third grade of junior high school.

The general high school syllabus after 1996 also stipulates the requirements for the first and second grades. English for the first and second grades of senior high school is a compulsory course, and English for the third grade of senior high school is an elective course. At that time, communicative teaching method was very popular in China. Influenced by the communicative approach, the syllabus of junior high school proposes “the ability to use English initially for communication”, while the syllabus of senior high school proposes “to develop preliminary use of English to communicate in oral and written English”. Both syllabuses clearly state the purpose of teaching is to cultivate students’ ability to use language for communication, and at the same time, the list of function and notion items has been added to the teaching content.

The only shortcoming is that the English syllabus for elementary and junior high schools and the English syllabus for senior high schools are not clearly separated. The primary and secondary schools were initially merged, and the junior high schools and high schools were separated, and the requirements for foreign languages in middle schools seemed to be lowered. However, the makers of the syllabus have carefully summed up the experience and lessons of the research on English syllabus for secondary schools in China’s history, drawing on relevant foreign research materials, especially absorbing the results of foreign language teaching research, and introducing the idea of communicative language teaching, which has a great impact on the new curriculum reform.

Since 1949, the construction of foreign language teaching syllabus has grown from scratch, from the beginning before the “Cultural Revolution”, from relatively lagging to a relatively scientific, complete and open development process, which more objectively reflects the various stages of foreign language teaching in China. The guiding ideology and focus of the revision of the syllabus in 2000 are to move closer to the direction of curriculum standards, which is conducive to the integration of foreign languages in Chinese primary and secondary schools with the implementation of standards.

6. THE INNOVATIVE PERIOD: THE ENGLISH EDUCATION POLICY IN CHINA FROM 2000 TO 2020

Entering the new century, with the in-depth advancement of quality education, in order to realize the education priority development strategy and China’s grand goal of “rejuvenating the country through science and education”, the curriculum reform of basic education is imminent. The original English teaching syllabus no longer meets the needs of the times and social development, and some problems are exposed. At this stage the syllabus is changed to the curriculum standard. Foreign language education took the opportunity of formulating and implementing new curriculum standards to launch a new round of reform. The curriculum standards have been improved both in depth and breadth, and emphasized the systematic connection of teaching.

In 2001, *the National Basic Education Conference* and *the Decision of the State Council on the Reform and Development of Basic Education* clearly put forward the guiding ideology of a new round of curriculum reform, and pointed out that it is necessary to speed up the construction of a new basic education curriculum system that meets the requirements of the development of the times. In 2001, China launched a new round of basic education curriculum reform, and the new compulsory education curriculum was first tested in 42 national-level experimental areas. In order

to effectively guide and plan the reform of the English curriculum, the Ministry of Education issued *the English Curriculum Standards for Full-time Compulsory Education (Experimental Draft)* in July 2001.

In April 2003, *the English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools (Experiment)* was issued to guide the English curriculum reform in senior high schools. In 2005, the new curriculum was implemented for all the students in the starting grades of primary and junior high schools nationwide. In April 2007, the MOE held a kick-off meeting for the revision of the compulsory education curriculum standards in Beijing, and *the English Curriculum Standards for Full-time Compulsory Education (Experimental Draft)* began to be fully revised, and *the English Curriculum Standards in Compulsory Education (2011 version)* and *the English Curriculum Standard for Senior High Schools (2017 version)* were completed in 2011 and in 2017 respectively. The newly introduced curriculum standards have made great innovations in many aspects such as guiding ideology, curriculum concept, structure design, target description, curriculum content, and curriculum evaluation. The difference from the traditional syllabus is that it jumps out of the perspective of the focus of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary teaching, and looks at problems from the perspective of human development, the overall development, and the lifelong development, which causes the English teaching reform to a “qualitative” leap.

The disconnection of English teaching in primary and secondary schools has been criticized by experts and scholars for a long time because it wastes precious teaching resources and causes educational chaos. The curriculum complied attempts to address this “old-fashioned” problem. The curriculum standards take into account the English curriculum from elementary school to high school, and set up a curriculum system from grades one to nine. The seventh grade of high school is the graduation requirement for all high school students, and the eighth and ninth grades are optional courses for students with interest and potential to choose. Regarding the nature of foreign language courses, the curriculum standards clarified the instrumental and humanistic nature, emphasizing the significance of constructing humanistic quality from the perspective of quality education and students’ personal development, and its value to national development. In order to cultivate students’ comprehensive ability to use foreign languages, the curriculum standards also put forward for the first time the training goals of five qualities of language skills, language knowledge, emotional attitudes, learning strategies and cultural awareness in the compulsory education stage, as well as the cultivation of language skills, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability as the core quality of English in senior high schools. Curriculum standards also bring people new teaching concepts, such as autonomous learning, inquiry learning, cooperative learning, task-based learning, formative evaluation, school-based resource development and so on.

This is an innovative move in China’s English syllabus and English curriculum standards. The formulation of China’s English curriculum standards has entered a period of innovation.

7. THE EXPLORING PERIOD: THE ENGLISH EDUCATION POLICY IN CHINA FROM 2020 TO TODAY

With deepening reform of basic education, the goal of comprehensive language application ability, required in the 2011 English curriculum, can no longer meet the needs of the country for future. In 2010, the Chinese government issued *the Outline of the National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)*, which proposes to “cultivate a large

number of international talents with an international perspective, familiar with international rules, and able to participate in international affairs and international competition.” In 2014, the MOE’s *Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening Curriculum Reform and Implementing the Fundamental Task of Cultivating virtues and Talents* pointed out that “cultivating virtues and talents is the core of the development of socialist education with Chinese characteristics, and the essential requirement for cultivating socialist builders and successors with all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical beauty”. These important instructions and documents clearly define the orientation of English curriculum, and clarify the issues of “for whom to train people” and “what kind of people to train” in English curriculum.

In order to carry out the fundamental task of cultivating morality and talents and realize the new tasks in the new era of discipline education, the MOE issued *the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools* in 2017 and 2020 (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision). In March 2022, *the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 edition)* was officially promulgated. These standards reconstruct the curriculum objectives of English subject and puts forward the core competence objectives of English which mainly consists of four aspects, namely language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. The revised curriculum standards emphasize the education orientation of English curriculum, optimize the content structure of the curriculum, develop the academic quality standards, strengthen the implementation guidance of the curriculum, and emphasize the link between learning segments, whether in the stage of senior high school or compulsory education. It meets the need to implement the fundamental task of moral education, the need of English curriculum reform and development, and the need of development of the times.

The establishment of the core competence of English reflects the education value of English, and these standards, guided by the thought of socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the new era and based on the development requirements of the times, select carefully important concepts, theme and content, design carefully about the goals and structure as well as the interdisciplinary learning activities, strengthen the correlation between disciplines and practical requirements. The Curriculum Standards are composed of content and learning activities. The comprehensive English practice activities are promoted to enhance students’ ability to use the language and interdisciplinary knowledge to solve problems. Students are guided to independently carry out project learning based on personal life experience and social life needs, focusing on specific themes, driven by real problems or tasks, and comprehensively applying the knowledge of other relevant courses. The idea of “activity-based English learning” is put forward as a new approach to Chinese English language teaching in order to achieve the goal of English curriculum in the new era, which is a new solution in line with China’s national conditions. English education in China has entered a stage of independent exploration with Chinese characteristics.

The orientation of foreign language education policy in China has changed from “introducing the western world” to “spreading Chinese culture out”. English has become not only a tool for people to learn, but also a medium for other countries to understand and learn about the nation and its traditional culture, highlighting the confidence and national pride of the Chinese people.

8. CONCLUSION

Foreign language education policy is an important part of national education policy. The formulation and implementation of foreign language education policies are not only related to the

education and language training of the young, but also related to a country's political, economic and technological development (Zhang, 2022).

The history of foreign language education in China reveals us that a scientific, rational and stable foreign language education policy is conducive to the development of foreign language education and the cultivation of talents. Since the founding of new China, under the influence of political factors, foreign language education policies have shifted a lot, gone through many detours, and even affected the training of generations (Lu & Li, 2021). The evolution of China's foreign language education policy has a history of more than 100 years with ups and downs (Shen, 2017). The development of foreign language education in China has gone through a process from passive to active, from casual to scientific planning.

In 2008, *the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council formulated the Outline of the National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development Thinking Plan*, which clarifies the guiding ideology and overall goals of China's education reform and development by 2020. As part of the country's overall education, foreign language education shoulders the heavy responsibility of cultivating innovative foreign language talents and other professionals with foreign language proficiency. A well organized and implemented foreign language policy will take great play in the development of the country.

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