

Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of School-Based Curriculum Management for College Students in Yuncheng City, China

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Abstract This study examined four key factors influencing the effectiveness of school-based curriculum management (SBCM) in higher education institutions in Yuncheng City: leadership, teachers' professional competence, communication, and stakeholder involvement. Using stratified random sampling, 300 valid questionnaires were collected and analyzed through correlation and multiple regression analysis. The findings showed that all four factors had significant positive effects on SBCM effectiveness, with stakeholder involvement identified as the strongest predictor. The research model explained 74.8% of the total variance in curriculum management effectiveness. The study contributes theoretically by integrating leadership, teacher professionalism, communication, and stakeholder theories to explain effective curriculum governance in higher education. It also provides empirical evidence from Chinese universities, an area that has received limited attention in previous research. Practically, the study demonstrates the use of questionnaire surveys and R statistical analysis in evaluating curriculum management and offers guidance for improving teacher development, communication efficiency, and curriculum planning. From a policy perspective, the findings help universities identify priority areas for improving curriculum governance, particularly stakeholder participation and curriculum leadership. Overall, the study aims to improve curriculum quality and student learning outcomes in higher education while filling a research gap by providing measurable indicators and a reproducible framework for future curriculum reform research.

Keywords: School-based curriculum management, Leadership, Teacher professional competence, Communication, Stakeholder involvement, Higher education.

1. Introduction

In recent years, both national and local educational authorities in China have placed school-based curriculum management (SBCM) at the core of higher education reform agendas, prioritizing its advancement to drive institutional vitality and educational quality. National policies such as the Guidelines on Deepening Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education Reform in Colleges and Universities, coupled with Yuncheng City's tailored local educational development plans, impose clear requirements on higher education institutions: to develop independent, school-specific curricula that align with their unique institutional characteristics, cater to diverse student learning demands, and adapt to regional development realities. These policies explicitly mandate embedding innovation and

entrepreneurship elements into professional course systems, closely aligning curriculum design with local economic transformation and cultural inheritance, and vigorously promoting

interdisciplinary learning and interdisciplinary curriculum construction. Their overarching goals are to strengthen colleges and universities' institutional autonomy in curriculum development, enhance the innovation of teaching content and methods, and forge a tighter connection between higher education talent cultivation and the real demands of the job market and social development (Print, 2020; Brady & Kennedy, 2019).

This national and local push for SBCM in China echoes the global trend toward educational decentralization in curriculum governance:

traditionally, curriculum design and implementation decisions were highly centralized by national or regional educational authorities, but in recent decades, schools worldwide have been granted greater autonomy over curriculum delivery. This shift is grounded in the consensus that frontline educational institutions are more sensitive and capable of responding to the specific learning needs of local students and the developmental demands of their communities (OECD, 2011). In China, this pivotal shift in curriculum governance originated with the 2001 basic education curriculum reform, which established a three-tier curriculum system encompassing national, local, and school-based levels, aiming to balance the standardization of national education goals with the flexibility of local educational adaptation (Guo, 2022). In recent years, the Ministry of Education has further extended this decentralized curriculum framework to the higher education sector, issuing a series of guiding documents to encourage colleges and universities across the country to develop distinctive and localized curricula that fully integrate local cultural heritage, industrial development features, and regional social and economic needs.

As a historic city in Shanxi, Yuncheng is undergoing economic transformation. Its two major local universities actively promote localized school-based curriculum reform to fit regional development.

Despite the widespread policy discourse and institutional efforts around curriculum reform in Yuncheng, the day-to-day SBCM practices within its universities remain an unexamined “black box” with limited empirical exploration. Existing academic research on curriculum management has long been disproportionately focused on primary and secondary education settings (Bass, 2023), with a notable scarcity of rigorous empirical evidence specifically targeting higher education institutions. Compounding this gap, most relevant Chinese studies on higher education curriculum governance have centered on economically developed coastal regions, which boast abundant educational resources and mature institutional mechanisms. In contrast, inland cities like Yuncheng—marked by unique economic constraints, relatively limited educational resources, and distinct regional educational contexts—have been severely understudied in this field, leaving their curriculum management

challenges and effective practices largely unaddressed. A critical and underappreciated issue in these inland institutions is the stark gap between curriculum development and actual management: while many universities enthusiastically launch new school-based courses to respond to policy and regional demands, they often lack systematic supporting mechanisms for planning, cross-departmental coordination, ongoing monitoring, and iterative evaluation to sustain and optimize these curricula in practice (Wiles, 2008). This deficiency frequently leads to the prevalence of “paper curricula”—well-designed curriculum frameworks that fail to translate into effective classroom teaching and tangible learning outcomes (Guskey, 2022). In resource-constrained inland regions where educational input is limited, identifying the core driving factors of effective SBCM is therefore not only academically meaningful but also practically critical for enabling efficient resource allocation and avoiding waste in curriculum reform.

To address these critical research and practical gaps, this study zeroes in on four core predictive variables and one key outcome variable to construct its analytical framework for exploring Yuncheng’s SBCM effectiveness. Leadership is defined as the governance capacity of university administrators and curriculum leaders to guide, direct, and provide comprehensive support for the entire SBCM cycle, from initial curriculum planning and design to implementation, evaluation, and revision. Teachers’ Professional Competence refers to the integrated set of subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, curriculum design capabilities, and professional attitudes that enable educators to translate abstract curriculum documents into meaningful, engaging, and effective learning experiences for students. Effective Communication Development encompasses the establishment of reliable, open, and efficient information exchange channels among internal stakeholders—including leaders, faculty, and students—ensuring aligned understanding of curriculum goals and functional, timely feedback loops for problem-solving. Stakeholder Involvement denotes the active and structured participation of external and internal actors affected by curriculum design and implementation, such as local industry partners, community organizations, students, and parents, in the SBCM process. The outcome variable, the effectiveness of SBCM, is measured by the extent

to which the full curriculum cycle (planning, development, implementation, and evaluation) achieves its intended educational goals, encompassing both the quality of curriculum management processes and the performance of tangible educational outcomes.

This study yields multi-faceted theoretical and practical contributions to the field of higher education curriculum governance. Theoretically, it integrates leadership theory, teacher professionalism theory, organizational communication theory, and stakeholder theory to construct a cohesive analytical framework for SBCM in regional higher education institutions, filling critical gaps in empirical research on higher education SBCM and addressing the lack of evidence on inland Chinese cities specifically. Practically, it develops a replicable quantitative research workflow—including questionnaire design, validity and reliability testing, and data analysis procedures—that can be adapted by other researchers and institutions exploring curriculum management. Its findings can also inform targeted teacher professional development programs and streamline administrative communication mechanisms to reduce bureaucratic burden and enhance practical efficiency. For educational governance, the study's results enable university administrators to evidence-based prioritize resource allocation to high-impact areas of SBCM, maximizing the effectiveness of limited educational resources in inland regions. Finally, it provides concrete, evidence-based policy and practice recommendations for Yuncheng and other similar inland higher education institutions in China, while establishing a measurable, standardized foundation for evaluating the impact of future curriculum reform interventions, laying the groundwork for continuous improvement in regional SBCM practices.

Ultimately, this research aims to identify key influencing factors and offer targeted solutions to comprehensively improve the overall level of school-based curriculum management in inland regional universities represented by Yuncheng.

2. Research Questions

What factors affect the effectiveness of school-based curriculum management in colleges in YunCheng City?

3. Research Objectives

To analyze the influencing factors of school-based curriculum management effectiveness in YunCheng's colleges.

4. Research Hypothesis

H₁: Leadership positively affects curriculum management effectiveness.

H₂: Teachers' professional competence positively affects curriculum management effectiveness.

H₃: Effective communication positively affects curriculum management effectiveness.

H₄: Stakeholder involvement positively affects curriculum management effectiveness.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Concept and Theory

This section elaborates the core concepts and theoretical foundations of the study on school-based curriculum management effectiveness among universities in Yuncheng. It defines key research variables, including curriculum management effectiveness as the dependent variable and leadership, teachers' professional competence, communication and stakeholder involvement as independent variables. These theoretical explanations lay a solid foundation for constructing the research framework and proposing subsequent research hypotheses.

School-based curriculum management effectiveness focuses on tailored curriculum design and implementation in higher education. Its evaluation covers implementation efficiency, teaching quality and cross-department coordination, containing both process and outcome quality. Limited by objective testing conditions, most higher education studies adopt teachers' perceptual evaluation to measure management effects. Meanwhile, curriculum management is interpreted from a systematic perspective combined with organizational learning theories.

Leadership exerts an indirect yet vital influence on university curriculum management, differing from the direct supervision mode in basic education. University leaders optimize curriculum development by rationally allocating resources, standardizing decision-making procedures and

variables: Leadership (X_1), Teachers' Professional Competence (X_2), Effective Communication (X_3), and Stakeholder Involvement (X_4). The criterion variable was the Effectiveness of school-based curriculum management. The study hypothesized that each predictor variable positively affects the criterion variable.

6.2 Population and Sample

The target population consisted of 4600 full-time teachers from two universities in Yuncheng City. A stratified random sampling method was used to select a sample of 300 teachers, proportionate to the size of each institution, ensuring representation across different schools and teaching experiences.

6.3 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument is a structured questionnaire titled Survey on Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of School-Based Curriculum Management in Universities, adapted from validated scales through comprehensive literature review. It comprises 50 items across three parts: Demographic Information (5 items): Gender, age, educational background, teaching subject, teaching grade. Factors Affecting SBCM (40 items): 10 items for each of the four independent variables, measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very low to 5 = Very high). SBCM Effectiveness (10 items): Measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, with Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) values ranging from 0.80 to 1.00. Reliability was established through a pilot test, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients between 0.91 and 0.94 for all variables, indicating high internal consistency.

6.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via paper-based questionnaires distributed to the sampled teachers. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis), Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis using SPSS.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Research results

1) Data distribution analysis

Factors which have an influence on the effect of school-based curriculum management in YunCheng City, Shanxi Province, China:

Leadership, Teachers, Professional, Effective communication development, Stake holder Involvement. Analysis result using frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis are presented in the table.

Table 7.1 Mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of factors influencing SBCM effectiveness

Variable	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Level
Leadership	4.15	0.84	-1.038	0.842	High
Teachers' Professional Competence	4.34	0.65	-1.024	0.992	High
Effective Communication Development	3.95	0.86	-0.728	0.185	High
Stakeholder Involvement	3.79	0.88	-0.593	-0.485	High
SBCM Effectiveness	4.60	0.57	-1.793	3.666	High

This table tells us that the core variables are all given rather high ratings. The distribution indicators (skewness and kurtosis) are all within an acceptable range for the following parametric analysis.

2) Analysis level of the effectiveness of school-based curriculum management in Yuncheng City.

Table 7.2 Analysis of factors affecting the effectiveness of school-based curriculum management correlation matrix

Variable	Leadership	Professional	Communication	Stakeholder	Effectiveness
Leadership	1.000				
Professional	0.831**	1.000			
Communication	0.773**	0.738**	1.000		
Stakeholder	0.596**	0.620**	0.714**	1.000	
Effectiveness	0.739**	0.758**	0.764**	0.773**	1.000

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.01$, and the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed test).

From Table 7.2, it can be seen that all the 4 independent variables are positively related to the SBCM effectiveness. The strongest bivariate association is stake holder involvement ($r = 0.773$), then is communication ($r = 0.764$), teachers' professional competence ($r = 0.758$), and leadership ($r = 0.739$).

Table 7.3 Analysis of factors affecting the effectiveness of school-based curriculum management correlation

Hypothesis	Relationship	r	p-value	β	Decision
H ₁	Leadership -> SBCM Effectiveness	0.739	<0.001	0.163	Supported
H ₂	Teachers' Professional Competence -> SBCM Effectiveness	0.758	<0.001	0.250	Supported
H ₃	Effective Communication Development -> SBCM Effectiveness	0.764	<0.001	0.166	Supported
H ₄	Stakeholder Involvement -> SBCM Effectiveness	0.773	<0.001	0.402	Supported

This table tells us that the correlation-based hypothesis testing is shown. All are supported at 0.05, so we know that each predictor that we hypothesized has a statistically significant positive relationship with SBCM effectiveness.

3) Analysis on the factors on the effect of school-based curriculum management in YunCheng city, ShanXi province, China

Table 7.4 Factors affecting the effectiveness of school-based curriculum management Regression Statistics

Model Summary	Value
R	0.865
R Square	0.748
Adjusted R Square	0.745
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.296

The regression model has very good explanation power. The four predictors explain 74.8% of the variance in SBCM effectiveness collectively.

Table 7.5 Factors affecting the effectiveness of school-based curriculum management Analysis of variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	76.791	4	19.198	219.015	0.000
Residual	25.858	295	0.088		
Total	102.649	299			

ANOVA is significant ($F = 219.015$, $p < 0.001$), showing that the overall regression model is statistically significant.

Table 7.6 Factors affecting the effectiveness of school-based curriculum management Coefficients

Variable	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.683	0.116		14.470	0.000
Leadership	0.114	0.041	0.163	2.799	0.005
Professional	0.224	0.050	0.250	4.523	0.000
Communication	0.113	0.036	0.166	3.090	0.002
Stakeholder	0.267	0.028	0.402	9.444	0.000

All paths exhibit a significant positive correlation. This indicates that our theoretical model holds up well against empirical data with Stakeholder Involvement having the highest standardized effect. Estimated regression equation:

$$\text{SBCM Effectiveness} = 1.683 + 0.114X_1 + 0.224X_2 + 0.113X_3 + 0.267X_4$$

Data shows a strong correlation between

leadership and management effectiveness. This confirms the previous view that effectiveness is impossible if school leaders merely sit in their offices issuing documents without actually "turning" the gears of curriculum planning. This 'steering wheel' can also be found in the data. And it is a strong driving power in teachers' professional competences. Teachers have a strong sense of the curriculum and mind, and the teachers' sense of the curriculum is very strong. We know from the data that the richer the "toolbox" of teachers, the more stable the school-based course implementation. The correlation is quite high for communication development. It's also proof if there isn't a smooth "nervous system" at university, information doesn't travel correctly. A fast and noticeable feedback mechanism basically defines whether or not curriculum administration has the ability to react flexibly to any type of emergency, and various group involvement yields some nice results. Which means that if we were to bring in the industry players along with the students and the community as well for this, it can definitely be more real rather than developing a curriculum in isolation.

7.2 Discussion

This study's discussion interprets the empirical findings on factors influencing school-based curriculum management (SBCM) effectiveness in Yuncheng's colleges, centering on data distribution, variable levels, correlation matrices, and regression results, while linking them to educational governance theories and practical institutional realities.

The descriptive data reveals a "high but uneven" profile across all constructs: all variables (leadership, teacher professional competence, effective communication, stakeholder involvement, and SBCM effectiveness) score at a high level on the 5-point Likert scale, with skewness and kurtosis values confirming data validity for parametric analysis. However, this overall positive performance masks structural imbalances—internal capacities (e.g., teacher professional competence, the highest-scoring predictor at $M=4.34$) are far more developed than external coordination mechanisms (e.g., stakeholder involvement, the lowest at $M=3.79$). This creates an "effective but fragile" SBCM system: current success relies on internal institutional grit rather than embedded external co-governance, leaving it vulnerable to rapid changes in local labor market and social demands.

The high mean scores also carry a ceiling effect risk, as institutions may misinterpret general satisfaction as the end of reform, ignoring hidden gaps in curriculum implementation and decision-making follow-through.

At the variable level, the discussion unpacks the nuanced performance of each predictor. Teacher professional competence emerges as a core institutional strength, with high ratings across curriculum design, pedagogical adaptation, and subject integration, reflecting robust faculty capacity to deliver high-quality teaching—an “institutional gold” that underpins SBCM effectiveness, yet one that cannot alone create a system-proof curriculum without coordinated governance. Leadership scores well ($M=4.15$) for providing direction and resource support, aligning with a distributed leadership model that prioritizes coordination over top-down control, but lacks strength in evidence-based strategy adjustment and cross-departmental implementation continuity. Effective communication ($M=3.95$) functions adequately for internal teacher-to-teacher interaction but suffers from “channel inefficiency” in parent-facing and interdisciplinary communication, with much formal communication (e.g., meetings, reports) amounting to administrative noise rather than decision-supportive dialogue. Stakeholder involvement, though positively rated, remains superficial: participation is periodic rather than institutionalized, with low engagement from parents and students, and external input often limited to symbolic consultation rather than meaningful curriculum co-creation. Notably, SBCM effectiveness achieves the highest mean ($M=4.60$), yet its foundation is lopsided—built on strong internal capacity but weakened by underdeveloped external links and communication-to-decision pathways.

The correlation matrix reinforces that SBCM effectiveness is a multi-factor systemic outcome, not the product of a single driver. All four predictors show strong, significant positive correlations with SBCM effectiveness (all $p<0.001$), with stakeholder involvement ($r=0.773$), effective communication ($r=0.764$), teacher professional competence ($r=0.758$), and leadership ($r=0.739$) in descending order. Intercorrelations among predictors are also significant, reflecting the organic interconnectedness of organizational practices: leadership shapes communication quality, which in turn influences stakeholder engagement, and all three inform teacher professional development. This interdependence dismisses the “blame game” common in institutional practice (e.g., attributing poor SBCM to a single factor like weak leadership) and validates the study’s conceptual model, while also highlighting the need for regression

analysis to disentangle unique predictor effects from overlapping variance.

Regression results ($R^2=0.748$, $p<0.001$) identify the hierarchical net effects of predictors, with stakeholder involvement emerging as the strongest driver ($\beta=0.402$)—a “surprise” finding that underscores the untapped potential of external links in Yuncheng’s context, where internal teacher capacity is already strong. Stakeholders provide a real-world reality check, enhancing curriculum relevance and accountability, making their structured involvement the highest “return-on-investment” for SBCM improvement. Teacher professional competence is the second most impactful predictor ($\beta=0.250$), confirming that faculty capacity remains critical for translating governance and stakeholder input into actionable curriculum practice, though it is most effective when embedded in institutional decision-making pathways. Leadership ($\beta=0.163$) and effective communication ($\beta=0.166$) act as “background enablers”: leadership provides the structural glue for coordinated governance, while high-quality communication reduces coordination friction and clarifies decision-making—both are essential but secondary to stakeholder involvement and teacher competence in driving unique variance in SBCM effectiveness.

Collectively, the discussion emphasizes that SBCM effectiveness in Yuncheng’s higher education stems from complementary, not substitutive, factors. The current system’s strength lies in internal capacity, but its improvement hinges on targeted optimization of weaker subsystems (stakeholder involvement and communication) rather than broad resource expansion. Reforms must avoid piecemeal efforts and instead integrate these factors, using the institution’s internal strengths (teacher competence, leadership) to strengthen external links and communication-to-decision mechanisms—ensuring that SBCM evolves from a success based on individual grit to one rooted in sustainable, systemic governance.

8. Conclusion and Recommendation

8.1 Conclusion

This study’s empirical analyses yielded clear and meaningful findings regarding the factors influencing school-based curriculum management (SBCM) effectiveness in Yuncheng’s higher education institutions, with all core constructs demonstrating strong performance on the 5-point Likert assessment scale. Leadership, teachers’ professional competence, effective communication, and stakeholder involvement—alongside

the criterion variable of SBCM effectiveness itself—all scored at high levels overall, and the skewness and kurtosis values of the dataset fell within the acceptable range for parametric analysis, validating the reliability of subsequent statistical tests including correlation and multiple regression. Correlation analysis further confirmed the study's foundational hypotheses, revealing that all four predictive variables exhibited significant positive linear relationships with SBCM effectiveness (all $p < 0.001$), indicating that improvements in each factor are associated with enhanced curriculum management performance in Yuncheng's colleges and universities.

The multiple regression model constructed for the study exhibited strong explanatory power, accounting for 74.8% of the total variance in SBCM effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.748$), which attests to the robustness of the four predictors in shaping curriculum management outcomes. The regression results also identified a clear hierarchical order of the predictors' net effects on SBCM effectiveness after controlling for overlapping variance: stakeholder involvement emerged as the strongest independent driver ($\beta = 0.402$), followed by teachers' professional competence ($\beta = 0.250$), effective communication ($\beta = 0.166$), and leadership ($\beta = 0.163$), with all four factors retaining statistical significance.

A key contextual insight from the findings is the structural imbalance in Yuncheng's SBCM system: the region's higher education institutions boast well-developed internal capacities, most notably teachers' professional competence, which ranks as a core institutional strength and underpins overall curriculum management effectiveness. In contrast, external governance mechanisms—including stakeholder engagement and cross-party communication channels—remain relatively underdeveloped, representing the primary bottlenecks for further improvement despite the overall high performance of SBCM.

Crucially, the findings emphasize that SBCM effectiveness in Yuncheng is not driven by any single factor, but by the synergistic and complementary role of all four predictors working in tandem. This means that elevating the already high level of SBCM performance does not require broad, across-the-board resource expansion or sweeping systemic overhauls. Instead, the optimal strategy lies in the targeted optimization and institutionalization of the weaker external governance subsystems: strengthening structured stakeholder participation in curriculum design and evaluation, and refining communication mechanisms to enhance efficiency and relevance across internal and external stakeholders. Such targeted interventions can leverage the

region's existing strong internal capacities to create a more balanced, sustainable, and effective SBCM system for Yuncheng's higher education.

8.2 Recommendation

This study found that leadership, teacher professional development, communication, and stakeholder engagement all positively influence effective school-based curriculum management (SBCM).

The recommendations are divided into three levels:

1. Policy Level: Strengthen stakeholder participation, curriculum leadership, communication standards, and teacher development policies.
2. Institutional Level: Establish structured advisory systems, improve curriculum governance cycles, optimize communication, and encourage collaborative curriculum work.
3. Teacher Level: Enhance professional responsibility, teamwork, evidence-based teaching improvement, and curriculum co-creation with stakeholders.

Overall, the study emphasizes that sustainable curriculum improvement requires cooperation among policy makers, schools, and teachers through an integrated governance system.

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