A case study on the implementation of a school-based curriculum (SBC) in a Hong Kong secondary school’s English classrooms by teachers holding different beliefs.
Research Context

- TPSS is funded by the government under the direct subsidy scheme (DSS).

- Four classes in the Form 5 level Workplace Communication Curriculum implemented in the classrooms.
Participants
Miss Sussie (8 years): high school in HK, grad in the US, teaches highest ability group.

Miss Mitchell (8 years): high school in Singapore, grad in the US, teaches the second highest ability group

Miss Joey (6 years): high school in HK, grad in the UK, teaches lowest ability group.

Miss Tina (3 years): high school and uni education in HK, teaches the second lower ability group.
Methods

1. Semi-structured interviews
2. Life history (Chik, 2008): Learning and teaching experiences
3. The ways they learned and taught English
4. The ways they delivered the SBC materials
Findings
(aligned with ‘official norms’)

Miss Tina: A communicative coherent teaching; the development of an independent ‘learning-to-learn’ culture

Miss Mitchell: The provision of a language-rich environment
Teachers may not necessarily follow the ‘official norms’ in practice as ‘there seems to exist a wide variety of ideas among teachers how problems can be solved’ (Olson, 2005, p. 97)
Teaching is different from other disciplines

“Teachers learn to talk about what they do, about the techniques and materials they use, about how students are doing; they refer to information about teaching and learning as embedded in local circumstances and personal experience... On the whole, teachers do not talk about information in terms of principles of regularity or cannons of evidence, as other disciplinary communities do”.

(Freeman, 1998, p. 11)
Highlight (1) – Teachers use traditional methods

Miss Sussie and Miss Joey: use of first language (L1) in the classroom; formative assessment (repetitive and constant assessment)

I still believe that if you don’t ask students to recite or dictate, they won’t do it on their own. They wouldn’t think: “Well, these are good sentences, let me memorize them,” unless you set dictation tasks. I can see that they do much better in the writing exam. (Miss Sussie, interview data)
Ground of good practice:  

… for weaker students, if you ask them to read a book and they do not recognize nine words out of ten in one sentence, they will not have motivation to read the book. They are afraid of reading. So I select the words and ask them to remember those words first. ... After that, when I ask them to read the passage again, they would re-gain their confidence. As long as they are more self-confident, we can encourage them to read more. (Miss Sussie, Interview Data)
Miss Mitchell: “A project person”

I tried to implement it into the [weaker ability group]. But it’s very hard as the kids’ level of English is very low. So you have to basically give them more input.

At this particular school, I think this is my thinking. But I think my thinking would change with the type of students I teach. I mean, at the end of the day, we have to cater to the students’ needs. (Miss Mitchell, Interview Data)
Implications for SBC Development

3Ps: “personalization (addressing each child’s learning needs), precision (tailoring the instruction to the needs without getting prescriptive), and professional learning (where each and every teacher learns every day)” (Fullan, 2008, p. 121)
Conclusion

What is important in SBCD is, therefore, teachers’ “good decisions”. SBCD should be initiated and designed by teachers instead of being a government-controlled initiative. The government agency needs to trust that teachers have the ability to reflect and can improve the SBCD being carried out in their classrooms.