



From Practice to Paradigm: Reconstructing 3C-Pedagogy Pedagogy Through Classroom-Based Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies on 3C-Pedagogy in English education have primarily been theoretical, with few sustained classroom trials and systematic refinements. This study integrates long-term, authentic practice with current curricular reforms, iteratively advancing the 3C-Pedagogy theory. It directly addresses issues such as declining motivation, monotonous teaching methods, limited individualization, and underdeveloped teacher capacity. Consequently, it provides evidence-based guidance for creating 3C-Pedagogy-guided English literacy classrooms. It employs action research as the core methodology, involving a cohort of students from selected secondary schools as participants. The research purposes include exploring the practical application paths of 3C-Pedagogy, developing innovative lesson-flow designs and corresponding teaching resources, and validating the effectiveness of these interventions. These interventions aim to enhance student's learning motivation, optimize teaching methods, promote individualized instruction, and improve teacher's professional capacity. Through multiple cycles of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, this study constructs an exemplary lesson case that embodies the 3C-Pedagogy concept and develops a set of validated teaching tools and resources. Furthermore, it investigates innovative classroom formats under the 3C-Pedagogy framework to provide a comprehensive and operable model for English literacy teaching. The empirical findings of this research will not only enrich the theoretical system of 3C-Pedagogy, but also offer valuable pedagogical implications for frontline English teachers, contributing to the deepening of curricular reforms and the improvement of English education quality.

Keywords: 3C-Pedagogy pedagogy, long-term implementation, English literacy classroom reform, junior high school English teaching, new curriculum reform

Introduction

The 3C-Pedagogy instructional model is an emerging, exploratory teaching paradigm whose name derives from three core components: Creative, Comprehensive, and Classmate. It stresses equal dialogue to foster students' language development, collaborative inquiry to cultivate teamwork and innovative classroom formats to stimulate learners' creativity and potential. The New Curriculum Standards foreground student-centered learning, holistic growth, and diversified educational experiences. And the 3C-Pedagogy approach meets these reform imperatives while simultaneously enhancing teaching quality. By adapting 3C-Pedagogy pedagogy to junior-high English literacy classrooms, this project seeks to elevate the effectiveness of English enrichment lessons, spark students' interest and enthusiasm for English learning, nurture their cross-cultural awareness and global perspective, and ultimately help them establish sound values.

Compared with traditional English classrooms, literacy-oriented classrooms are student-oriented, addressing individual differences and developmental needs while stimulating interest and agency. They promote inquiry-based and cooperative learning to cultivate creative thinking and practical competence. Pedagogically, they replace didactic instruction with problem-based scenarios, project-based learning and gamified tasks, enhancing both understanding and transferable skills. Ultimately, they foster lifelong learning capacity which includes self-direction, self-management and continuous adaptation, preparing fully developed learners for a rapidly changing world.

State of the 3C-Pedagogy's Researches into Junior-High English Teaching

Theoretical Framework and Strategies of 3C-Pedagogy Under the New Curriculum Reform

The 3C-Pedagogy framework comprises three orientations: Creative foregrounds originality in language output, cognitive transfer, and expressive innovation; Comprehensive integrates linguistic knowledge, cultural understanding, thinking skills, and affective attitudes to achieve holistic development; Centers of Classmate on peer-to-peer interaction to build collaborative communities grounded in social-constructivist "language in action."

Theoretical foundations include Constructivism and Multiple Intelligences. First of all, in the context of educational theory, Constructivism posits that knowledge is not passively received but is jointly constructed in social contexts. This means that students actively build their understanding of the world through interactions with their peers and the environment. When it comes to implementing Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development within the classroom, teachers play a crucial role. They need to identify the range of tasks that students can perform with guidance and gradually help them move towards independent mastery. For example, in a language learning class, students might initially struggle to form complex sentences. With the teacher's scaffolding and peer interactions, they can gradually develop the skills to express more intricate ideas, thus putting the concept of constructivism into practice. Secondly, recognizing that every student has unique strengths and learning styles, the theory of Multiple Intelligences advocates for grouping students heterogeneously. By doing so, classrooms can accommodate individual differences. In a group project, for instance, students with different types of intelligences, such as linguistic, logical-mathematical, and interpersonal, can contribute in their own ways. A student with strong linguistic intelligence might be in charge of writing the report, while a student with high interpersonal intelligence can manage the group's communication and collaboration. This kind of grouping not only allows students to learn from each other but also provides opportunities for them to develop skills in areas where they may be less proficient.

Alignment with core competencies outlined in China's 2022 Compulsory English Standards (language competence, cultural awareness, thinking quality, learning ability). (Ministry of Education of the P. R. China, 2022). These core competencies form the backbone of English education in junior -high schools in China. Language competence is not just about grammar and vocabulary but also about the ability to use language effectively in real - life situations. Cultural awareness helps students understand different cultures and develop cross-cultural communication skills. Thinking quality involves critical thinking, creative thinking, and logical reasoning, which are essential for students to analyze and solve problems. Learning ability refers to students' capacity to learn independently, set goals, and adjust their learning strategies. Aligning English teaching with these standards ensures that students receive a well - rounded education.

The integration pathway in junior - high literacy classrooms follow these creative approaches: Firstly, authentic tasks such as creative writing, speeches, and adapted dialogues are powerful tools for fostering language transfer. In creative writing, students are encouraged to use their imagination and express their thoughts freely. This process not only helps them improve their

writing skills but also allows them to transfer the language knowledge they have learned into practical use. Speeches require students to organize their ideas clearly and present them in a coherent manner, which enhances their oral communication skills. Adapted dialogues, on the other hand, give students the opportunity to practice real - life conversations, making the learning of language more relevant and engaging. Secondly, comprehensive methods like cross - cultural comparisons (focusing on festivals, etiquette) deepen cultural awareness. When students compare different festivals around the world, they can understand the cultural connotations behind them. For example, comparing the Chinese Spring Festival with Christmas in Western countries can reveal the different values and traditions of the two cultures. Analyzing etiquette differences, such as table manners in different cultures, also helps students become more sensitive to cultural nuances, thus deepening their cultural awareness. Thirdly, collaborative inquiry (including debates and situational reasoning) cultivates critical thinking and logical expression. In a debate, students need to research the topic, form their own opinions, and defend them against opposing views. This process forces them to think critically, evaluate evidence, and express their ideas logically. Situational reasoning tasks present students with real - life scenarios and ask them to come up with solutions, which further enhances their problem - solving and logical thinking abilities. Shared planning, resource gathering, and peer feedback develop autonomous learning and metacognitive strategies. When students plan a project together, they learn to set goals, allocate tasks, and manage time. Gathering resources independently helps them develop information - seeking skills. Peer feedback provides an external perspective, allowing students to reflect on their own learning processes and make adjustments, thus promoting autonomous learning and metacognitive development.

Supporting strategies encompass task-driven problem-solving, immersive technology-enhanced contexts, and locally sourced cultural materials. Task-driven problem-solving encourages students to take an active role in learning. By presenting them with real-world problems, they are motivated to find solutions, which not only improves their problem-solving skills but also deepens their understanding of the subject matter. Immersive technology-enhanced contexts, such as virtual reality and online language learning platforms, can create a more engaging and interactive learning environment. Students can practice language skills in simulated real-life situations, which enhances their language proficiency. Locally sourced cultural materials, such as local folk tales and traditional art forms, can make the learning more relevant and interesting. By incorporating these materials into the English curriculum, students can better understand the relationship between language and culture in their own community.

Current Research of 3C-Pedagogy at Home and Abroad

Current 3C-Pedagogy research is systematically mapped along three axes-conceptual evolution, focal issues, and regional disparities-thereby delineating its prospective trajectory.

Locally, the term “3C-Pedagogy” first surfaced around 2008 as an indigenous response to educational reform. Initially applied in vocational college English classrooms, it foregrounded the three dimensions of Creative, Comprehensive, and Classmate collaboration (Cheng et al., 2014). With the promulgation of the 2022 Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards, 3C-Pedagogy has filtered down to junior-high settings, now serving as a key vehicle for cultivating the

four mandated core competencies: language competence, thinking quality, cultural awareness, and learning ability. So, domestic studies cluster around three themes:

1. The architecture of 3C-Pedagogy instructional models;
2. Illustrative classroom cases; and
3. Teacher-support infrastructures.

And about the international Landscape, the discourse has shifted from the broader “4C” framework (Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Communication) to a more streamlined “3C-Pedagogy” paradigm. Empirical findings concentrate on:

1. Developing domain-specific creativity measures for L2 writing (e.g. adapted Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking);
2. The role of collaborative scripts within the “Classmate” dimension in fostering
3. second-language acquisition; (Pardede, 2020)
4. The implementation of 3C-Pedagogy Project-Based Learning in lower-secondary English classrooms, shown to boost learners’ pragmatic confidence and intercultural sensitivity;
5. Comparative studies revealing that 3C-Pedagogy cohorts outperform traditional groups in language transfer and long-term retention of grammar.

So, we sum up this convergent insight: across contexts, a consensus is emerging that 3C-Pedagogy heightens English-learning motivation, enhances integrated language use, and nurtures socio-emotional skills. Under China’s “Double Reduction” policy, 3C-Pedagogy’s emphasis on integrated tasks, cooperative learning, and project outputs effectively curtails mechanical drill work while improving instructional efficiency.

All in all, across all current 3C-Pedagogy researches, the research gaps in 3C-Pedagogy pertain to both theory and practice such as limited alignment with new-curriculum objectives, scant systematic empirical evidence, and insufficient theoretical generalizability and transferability and so on.

Existing Problems of 3C-Pedagogy Researches

Despite its promise, 3C-Pedagogy pedagogy still exhibits notable research gaps that simultaneously point to future directions. First, current studies are disproportionately concentrated on secondary vocational or tertiary vocational contexts; systematic, empirical investigations at the junior-high level remain scarce, leaving ample room for exploring age-appropriate adaptations. Second, there is an absence of systematic training frameworks that equip teachers with the integrated skill set required for 3C-Pedagogy instruction—namely, instructional design competence, assessment literacy, and technological integration capacity—rendering teacher-support systems a “grey zone” in the 3C-Pedagogy landscape. Third, the infusion of cutting-edge technologies into 3C-Pedagogy classrooms—such as smart classrooms, AI-driven speaking assessment, and learning analytics platforms—has yet to be thoroughly examined; how to construct robust “3C-Pedagogy+Technology” fusion models remain an open and pressing research frontier.

So, our research aims to integrate 3C-Pedagogy into junior-high English literacy classrooms, iteratively refining practice to develop a universally applicable model and theory.

The Design of Our Research Under the Guidance of 3C-Pedagogy

Participants

The study recruited all students from one Grade-7 class at Jingzhou Experimental Middle School (Lingjun Campus). Using stratified random sampling based on previous exam scores, 50 students were divided into two equal groups: an experimental literacy-class group (N = 25) exposed to 3C-Pedagogy pedagogy and a control group(N=25) following regular instruction. A one-semester action research cycle was conducted with both cohorts (Li & Chen, 2023).

The sample school is a public K-9 (Kindergarten through 9th Grade) campus in the northern district of Jingzhou, south-central Hubei. Its facilities rank among the best in the compulsory sector; students' English proficiency sits slightly below top-tier urban schools yet above rural averages. Representing the "regional median" in location, staffing and academic baseline, the school typifies ordinary urban public institutions in mid-level prefectural cities of central China.

Research Purposes

The study aims to investigate how 3C-Pedagogy pedagogy influences junior-high students' core competencies-language proficiency, cultural awareness, learning ability, and thinking quality-as well as their learning motivation, and to build an effective literacy-classroom teaching model grounded in these findings.

Research Methods

Action Research:

An iterative cycle of plan → act → observe → reflect → replan continuously refines 3C-Pedagogy implementation in response to learner feedback and outcomes. Initially, students equated intercultural learning with imitation; cultivating genuine interest became a design priority. The teacher shifted from teacher-posed to student-generated questions: open prompts invite spontaneous ideas, subsequent scaffolding elicits further student queries, and documented Q&A inform post-lesson reflection and prompt instructional adjustment.

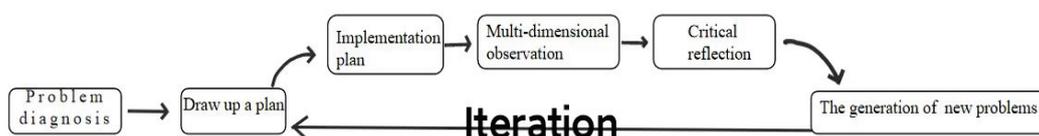


Figure 1. An iterative cycle

Classroom Observation Method

3.2.1 Theoretical Observation Model

Integrated Bales' Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) with the S.T.A.R. (literacy-behavior coding system).

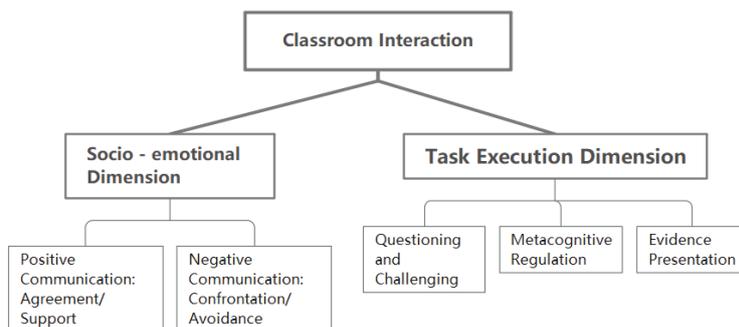


Figure 2. Theoretical Observation Model

3.2.2 Tool Development and Validation

We developed the 3C-Pedagogy Literacy Classroom Observation Scale to capture the frequency and quality of pivotal behaviors—teacher–student interaction, peer collaboration, and cognitive activity.

Table 1. C-Pedagogy Literacy Classroom Observation Scale

Student Utterances	Frequency	Critical Thinking (1 - 5 points, 5 being the strongest)	Collaboration Depth (1 - 5 points, 5 being the strongest)	Communication Quality (1 - 5 points, 5 being the strongest)
Active response	12-18 times	3-4 points	2-3 points	3-4 points
Passive response	15-20 times	2-3 points	2 points	2-3 points
Spontaneous question	5-8 times	1-2 points	3-4 points	4-5 points
Peer discussion	2-3 times (10-12 minutes each time)	3-4 points	4-5 points	3-4 points
Front-of-class presentation	2-3(10-15 minutes each time)	4-5 points	3-5 points	4-5 points

3.2.3 Triangulation Design

Multi-perspective capture of each instructional event:

Perspective 1 – fixed camera mapping whole-group interaction trajectories;

Perspective 2 – wearable recorders harvesting raw small-group audio;

Perspective 3 – learner artefacts tracing individual thinking over time.

Findings and Analysis of Our Research Under the Guidance of 3C-Pedagogy

Student Core Competency Analysis

This research adopts a qualitative approach to foreground process over product, aiming to explicate the emergent mechanisms, teacher–student interaction patterns, and situated obstacles of the 3C-Pedagogy in authentic classrooms; classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective journals are therefore prioritized over quantitative data.

Under the New Curriculum Reform, we analyze the sample through the four dimensions of “key competencies (Language Proficiency, Cultural Awareness, Thinking Quality and Learning Capacity),” anchored in concrete lesson episodes.

Firstly, Development of Language Proficiency:

The 2022 curriculum reframes English proficiency not around the four discrete skills but as integrated, context-bound language use. It proposes a developmental continuum—“Perceive → Construct → Express”—spanning compulsory education and mandating that junior-high learners produce coherent discourse on familiar topics with rudimentary reading strategies and writing skills. (Ministry of Education of the P. R. China, 2022). Proficiency is thus redefined from “exam-oriented” to future-oriented literacy, encapsulated in: “use language to understand the world, express oneself, and connect with others.” Through task-driven projects, students explored Jingchu culture–cuisine, literature, and more—rendering insights in bilingual posters, formal essays, or spontaneous free-talk presentations, exemplifying cross-culturally innovative expression.

Secondly, Fostering Cultural Awareness:

Under the new curriculum reform, cultural awareness constitutes the axiological core of English; the objective shifts from “knowing culture” to understanding, comparing, identifying with, and disseminating it. Anchored in “thematic significance,” a lesson on “Chinese Cates” proceeds in three phases: teacher-scaffolded input of lexical-cultural schemata for traditional cuisine; deep integration of language and culture; learner-generated English representations of those schemata. Guided by the Creative and Classmate orientations, the teacher’s role transforms from transmitter of linguistic facts to facilitator of cultural awareness and mediator of intercultural understanding.

Thirdly, Cultivating Thinking Quality:

The 2022 curriculum redefines English learning as cultivating “English-mediated intellectual character”: using the subject to foster sound values, essential virtues and key competencies, thereby fulfilling the fundamental task of moral education. Core socialist values—patriotism, social responsibility, rule-of-law awareness and a global outlook—are operationalized into comprehensible, expressible and actionable language tasks. In the task “Telling Touching Chinese Stories in English”, learners engage with the concept of a “community with a shared future for mankind”, collaborate in groups to interpret the contemporary significance of Chinese cultural symbols, and articulate them in English, thereby reinforcing cultural confidence within intercultural contexts.

Finally, Enhancing Learning Capacity:

3C-Pedagogy pedagogy moves learners from “having learned” to “knowing how to learn” by cultivating four integrated strategy clusters:

1. Collaborative communication—strategic use of body language, digital tools, and cross-disciplinary knowledge to enhance group efficiency;
2. Self-management—maintaining positive affect, self-regulating emotions, and sustaining a proactive learning mindset;
3. Metacognitive creation—setting clear goals, deploying mind maps, keyword summaries, and graphic organizers for comprehension and retention, then iteratively reflecting on and adjusting learning pace and methods.

Trends in Students’ Learning-Motivation Change

Early cycles reveal a three-stage motivational shift: from grade- and reward-driven surface motives to interest-driven deep motives, culminating in achievement motives anchored in self-improvement and healthy competition. 3C-Pedagogy-guided literacy classrooms concretize abstract content and institute timely, peer-centered feedback loops that boost self-efficacy and precisely counteract motivational decline, effectively reversing downward trajectories.

Classroom Design and Practice under 3C-Pedagogy Pedagogy

Setting Instructional Objectives

The 3C-Pedagogy-guided English literacy classroom is anchored in Creative, Comprehensive, and Classmate orientations while vigorously responding to current curricular reform. Objectives foreground joint innovation: teachers redesign lesson formats, and students exercise creative thinking, problem-solving, and individualized expression. Classmate restores centrality to the learner community, fostering collaborative groups, peer assistance, and eventual cross-cultural communicative competence. Comprehensive deliberately targets integrated literacy—enhancing holistic language use, autonomous learning, and positive learning attitudes.

Innovative Lesson-Flow Design

Four core activities operationalize 3C-Pedagogy pedagogy:

1. Open-ended questioning elicits divergent thinking, energizes the classroom, and lays the groundwork for subsequent learning and long-term value formation.
2. Thematic creative writing tasks stimulate originality while consolidating writing skills.
3. Role-play and situational dialogues immerse learners in authentic contexts, enhancing oral fluency and cross-cultural competence.
4. Interdisciplinary project-based assignments—e.g., English research reports or poster design—develop holistic literacy and problem-solving capacity. Each lesson closes with a metacognitive debrief in which students articulate strategies employed, fostering autonomous learning and strategic awareness.

Exemplary Lesson Case

Culture-Comparison Lesson: In the unit “Great Inventions”, students read, model, and narrate China’s Four Great Inventions to fulfil the task “Tell a Chinese Story in English”. Employing a “compare and express” strategy, they juxtapose Chinese and foreign practices—birthday customs, table etiquette, festival symbols—thereby sharpening cultural reasoning and cultivating judgement. Culminating in cultural confidence, the lesson deliberately integrates outstanding traditional, revolutionary, and advanced socialist culture, equipping learners to disseminate Chinese culture through English.

Situational-Communication Case: Aligned with the task-based principle of “using English to do things”, the lesson “Various Festivals” centers on the authentic problem “How should we reply to Jean’s letter?” A real message from a foreign girl describing Thanksgiving and requesting Chinese festival information launches the sequence. Targeted listening sets direction, pooled student knowledge supplies rich content, and shared exemplars model discourse; the cycle culminates in students crafting original replies, thereby accumulating linguistic experience and innovating language use while solving a genuine communicative need.

Theme-Based Content-Integration Case: Framed as a “checkpoint challenge for learning outcomes”, the lesson interweaves listening, dictation, cloze, translation and writing modules while activating individual, small-group and whole-class configurations. Sequenced task chains systematically review and consolidate prior content, then extend and showcase every strand of accumulated knowledge.

Development of Teaching Resources

Mining Local Cultural Materials: Leveraging Chinese festivals—e.g., Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival—we craft English resources that immerse learners in home culture while honing cross-cultural competence. Using Jingzhou fish-cake as a case study, students explore its preparation, history, and symbolism in English, enhancing regional identity and cultural confidence.

1. Writing tasks: “Jingzhou Food in My Eyes,” “My Favorite Chinese Festival.”
2. Role-plays: “Spring-Family Reunion,” “Jingzhou Food Festival.”
3. Project-based inquiry: “Surveying Jingzhou Culture,” bilingual festival-poster design. These activities integrate language, creativity, autonomy and teamwork, turning local heritage into authentic English learning.

Innovative Classroom Formats: Resource development integrates multimedia, interdisciplinary and online modalities. Multimedia artefacts—documentaries on Jingzhou cuisine, Spring-Festival micro-dramas—enrich formats and heighten engagement. Cross-curricular assets—English captions for food-themed artwork, festival songs in English—foster holistic literacy. Online extensions—dedicated Jingzhou-culture websites and festival-learning apps—support autonomous study and broaden knowledge beyond the classroom.

Innovative Classroom Formats

Gamified Instruction:

1. Word-chain race: rules briefing → interactive play → debrief and feedback.

2. Role-play quests: role assignment → enactment → peer evaluation and reflection. Knowledge bowls: rules → contest → summary and incentives. Task-based Checkpoint System
3. Spelling sprints, dialogue creation, listen-and-retell gates, mini-essay boss levels.

Project-based Learning Small-group projects synthesize language, creativity and collaboration.

Major Conclusions and Implications from Our Research Under the Guidance of 3C-Pedagogy

Empirical Findings

As pedagogy evolved under Creative, Classmate, and Comprehensive orientations, the majority of participants exhibited marked gains in language proficiency, cultural awareness, learning capacity, and thinking quality, yielding favorable empirical outcomes.

From Passive Reception to Active Inquiry: Following the 3C-Pedagogy intervention, open-ended questions and creative-writing tasks stimulated curiosity and inquiry habits. Students initiated output, employing body language and cross-disciplinary knowledge to enhance communication, demonstrating stronger self-directed learning and problem-solving.

From Isolated Learning to Collaborative Learning: Initially, students worked alone with low group efficiency. Emphasizing Classmate, strategic grouping and task allocation fostered knowledge sharing and reciprocal support. Post-intervention data show heightened peer-assistance awareness, improved learning outcomes, and enhanced communication and teamwork.

From Rote Memorization to Comprehension and Application: Instead of mechanical drills, role-play, scenarios and projects situated language in authentic use. Learners flexibly applied knowledge for cross-cultural communication and creative writing, set explicit goals, employed mind maps and graphic organizers, reflected on outcomes, and adjusted strategies to build personalized learning systems.

From Short-Term Goals to Lifelong Learning: Motivation evolved from extrinsic rewards to intrinsic interest and finally to achievement-oriented, self-improvement motives. Students linked English learning to personal growth, acquired autonomous and self-management skills, and positioned themselves for continuous adaptation, laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning and future careers.

The 3C-Pedagogy-guided literacy classroom is both innovative and effective. Centering on student agency and integrated competencies, it aligns with contemporary educational ideals and reform mandates. Carefully sequenced content, diverse methods and AI-empowered, locally grounded resources sustain engagement and enhance outcomes. Its transferable design incorporates gamified instruction and project-based learning, offering a robust response to the rigidity of current English literacy classrooms

Limitations of the Study

Limitations include a single-class sample, exclusive reliance on qualitative methods, and absence of quantitative measures, constraining generalizability. The one-semester span precludes

assessment of long-term effects. Moreover, core competencies such as cultural awareness and thinking quality are inadequately captured by paper-and-pencil tests, risking misalignment between evaluation outcomes and instructional objectives.

Pedagogical Implications

Teachers should shift from lecturers to “thinking coaches”, adopting student-centered designs that use cognitively conflictive tasks to cultivate integrated competencies while accommodating individual differences. Schools must secure implementation through sustained professional development on cutting-edge pedagogies and technologies, and by instituting diversified assessment systems that weigh process, attitude and creativity alongside test scores to foster holistic development.

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