

Article

# Study on College Curriculum Evaluation from the Perspective of Phenomenology

Wenrui Zhu <sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tianfu College of Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, Chengdu, 610052, China

\* Correspondence: Wenrui Zhu, Tianfu College of Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, Chengdu, 610052, China

**Abstract:** This study examines college curriculum evaluation from a phenomenological perspective, which puts the understanding of reality through educational experiences. Instead of just being a tool for accountability, it argues that evaluation should be a crucial, developmental part of education. The study found that, based on an analysis of instructors' experiences during curriculum review, teachers hold positive views of evaluation when it provides constructive feedback and encourages collaborative relationships with evaluators. The results suggest a major shift in assessment paradigms: the focus of the curriculum assessment system should shift away from results and toward process and formative evaluation. This approach, which values practical experience and reflection, is crucial for supporting teacher development, improving curricula, and ultimately helping education return to its essential purpose.

**Keywords:** curriculum evaluation; phenomenology; formative evaluation

---

## 1. Introduction

Evaluation is a systematic process of interpreting and assigning meaning to the anticipated or actual effects of a proposal or outcome. It involves examining the initial objectives, comparing them with predicted or achieved results, and understanding the methods by which these outcomes were realized. Evaluation may be formative, occurring during the development of a concept, proposal, project, or organization to enhance its value or effectiveness. It may also be summative, conducted after completion to derive insights and lessons from the performance of a project or organization under particular circumstances [1]. Curriculum evaluation encompasses a range of activities aimed at gathering information regarding the functioning and effects of educational policies, programs, curricula, courses, software, and other instructional resources [2].

Curriculum evaluation is necessary for the development, implementation, and maintenance of curricula. As an important part of curriculum construction and development, curriculum evaluation is not only the focus of current curriculum operation, but also the beginning point of new curriculum as an integral aspect of curriculum building and development. The curriculum evaluation, as a critical component of the curriculum research, needs to be considered carefully. Curriculum evaluation aids in understanding the appropriateness and effectiveness of the educational process, is conducive to the adjustment and improvement of educational works, and has significant practical significance for the effective implementation of the curriculum. According to the evolution of curriculum evaluation in China, it is based on integrating advanced international experience. A rising number of curriculum evaluation studies are being conducted, depending on the importance of curriculum review. Many people's perceptions of curriculum evaluation, however, are still in some ways skewed. Even the relationship between the evaluator and the instructors is on the opposite, which is not favorable to the execution of the

Published: 30 September 2025



**Copyright:** © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

assessment function, and a significant portion of managers or teachers still equate evaluation with examinations and tests.

This study tries to include phenomenological research. In contrast with other ways of understanding reality, phenomenology is a philosophical movement that aims to comprehend reality by analyzing human experience as it is lived. Its origins may be traced back to Edmund Husserl's endeavor to investigate consciousness through introspection. It aims to "return to the thing itself". Educational phenomenology emphasizes the importance of returning to the essence of education, paying attention to the actual life experience of individuals, focusing on the practical orientation, and emphasizing the importance of educational research that grasps the essence of phenomena through intuition based on life experience. Studying the college curriculum evaluation system from the perspective of phenomenology can assist education in returning to the true nature of education and improve itself through observation, interview, evaluation, and reflection, which has certain theoretical and practical significance for promoting the developmental evaluation of curriculum construction. Phenomenology is a way of thinking about things that focuses on how they are experienced rather than what they are in and of themselves. It has been used to a variety of subjects, including education, philosophy, and psychology [3]. By studying what constitutes appropriate teaching methods and why some people learn more quickly than others, this research will be able to assist educators in developing better curricula for their institutions.

The aims of evaluation are to keep track of the educational and instructional process, check that activities are carried out in accordance with legislation, and direct it toward its objectives. The notion of 'curriculum' is used by the author as a starting point for debate and analysis. It claims that curriculum evaluation is more than just a tool in the hands of teachers, but rather it is an integral part of education, which has its own logic and organization.

The purpose of this essay is to analyze the college curriculum through the lens of phenomenology and make recommendations for how it may be improved. The study's purpose is to reveal the instructors' lived experiences throughout the curriculum review in order to attain this goal. A phenomenological perspective was used to explore the perspectives of chosen teachers from various disciplines.

## **2. Methods**

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach. Qualitative research seeks to understand how individuals interpret and assign meaning to their life experiences. Phenomenology, as a branch of qualitative inquiry, explores the personal meanings people derive from their lived experiences [4]. It centers on how individuals perceive, describe, and interpret a given phenomenon [5]. Phenomenological research can be categorized into two forms: descriptive and interpretive. Descriptive phenomenology aims to portray individuals' perceptions and experiences as they are, whereas interpretive phenomenology seeks to understand and explain the meanings behind those perceptions [6]. As curriculum evaluation constitutes an integral component of curriculum development, this study adopts interpretive phenomenology to examine participants' experiences and perspectives in the evaluation process.

Teachers from TF College in China are among the participants in this research. The participants were selected through a criterion sampling technique. The study's requirements were described as having a graduate diploma, at least seven years of teaching experience, and at least two years of supervision and working experience. To this end, the participants were selected for this purpose. The 28 participants come from different disciplines, and we use online interviewing to gather their firsthand experience with curriculum evaluation, as well as the challenges they faced during the process and their post-evaluation, in order to identify the current problems with the curriculum evaluation. A total of 28 supervisors participated in the study, including 24 females and 4 males. All

participants voluntarily agreed to share their experiences and perspectives on curriculum evaluation. They were also informed that the information and views they provided would remain confidential and would not be used for any purpose or platform beyond this research (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Demographics of the participants.

Participant	Sex	Teaching experience( year)
T1	F	10
T2	F	7
T3	F	14
T4	F	11
T5	F	14
T6	F	13
T7	F	11
T8	F	9
T9	F	10
T10	F	10
T11	F	14
T12	F	14
T13	F	17
T14	M	17
T15	F	15
T16	F	18
T17	F	12
T18	F	14
T19	F	13
T20	F	10
T21	F	12
T22	F	12
T23	M	16
T24	M	13
T25	M	15
T26	F	13
T27	F	15
T28	F	13

Data for this study were collected through online interviews with supervisors during the 2021-2022 academic year. Interviews are a fundamental data collection method in phenomenological research. A semi-structured interview guide, divided into two sections, was used. The first section gathered information on participants' gender and professional experience, while the second section contained semi-structured questions designed to explore their experiences and perceptions of curriculum evaluation. Participants' responses during the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

The following questions were asked during the interview:

- What exactly is a curriculum? How does it have to do with education?
- Could you kindly describe how the curriculum affects you?
- How would you characterize the curriculum in education? Give a detailed explanation.
- In your opinion, what is the appropriate way to evaluate a curriculum? Give a detailed explanation.
- Are the teaching expectations in line with the curriculum's objectives?

- Has the curriculum evaluation practice made you realize that you have erroneous thoughts that you previously believed to be true? Give a detailed explanation.

The collected data were analyzed using a **content analysis** approach, which aims to uncover implicit aspects of social realities by examining explicit content features. The analysis process included coding the data, identifying themes, organizing codes into thematic groups, and interpreting the results. During coding, interview notes were transcribed into a written document, with responses listed sequentially. Similar responses were combined inductively to generate codes, and related codes were merged to form overarching themes. The codes and themes were systematically organized, and the findings were interpreted using tables and graphics to enhance clarity [7].

To ensure the study's validity and reliability, the criteria of credibility, transferability, coherence, and confirmability were applied. Expert consultation was sought, all research procedures were thoroughly documented, and participants verified and confirmed the findings [8].

### 3. Results and Discussions

The results of the interviews were influenced by the curriculum evaluation process they had gone through. These topics are addressed through a discussion of the nature and method of learning, both of which are essential components of any educational system. Four primary themes emerged from their responses to the research [9]. The findings are discussed in this section using the four themes listed below (Table 2). The responses of 28 people are examined and summarized in tables.

**Table 2.** Four primary themes emerged from participants' responses.

No.	Themes
1	The contribution of evaluation practice to curriculum development
2	The contribution of evaluation practice to teachers' motivation
3	Effectiveness of evaluation practices
4	Objectivity of evaluation practices

After sorting out and analyzing the interview data, it was discovered that most evaluators' understanding of course evaluation is mostly restricted to verifying the effect of the course through course evaluation, and some course-building teachers have an insufficient understanding of the importance of course construction [10]. As a result, the goal of this study is to find out what instructors think about curriculum evaluation [11].

The first research question explores the role of evaluation in curriculum development. Findings from this study suggest that when evaluators collaborate and share their experiences with teachers, it fosters a more organized teaching environment, helps teachers address their weaknesses, and enhances their professional growth [12]. The participants emphasized that evaluators should maintain open communication with teachers, as mutual cooperation and supervision not only assist in resolving challenges and shortcomings but also promote systematic work habits-ultimately contributing to teachers' professional development [13].

The second research question focuses on the influence of evaluators' practices on teachers' motivation. The results indicate that evaluation activities can positively affect motivation levels. According to the participants, teachers feel more motivated when evaluators provide guidance, deliver constructive feedback, recognize achievements, and ensure transparent communication [14].

According to evaluators' perspectives, the third research question attempts to demonstrate the efficacy of supervisory evaluation procedures [15,16]. Supervisory expertise, supervisory position, and assuring continuity have all been cited as important variables in supervision effectiveness [17]. It reveals that the participating teachers believe that

the supervision practices are more effective when they successfully carry out their supervisor roles, improve their supervision knowledge and competencies, and employ continuity of supervision [18-20].

The fourth research question seeks to examine the objectivity of evaluation practices conducted by supervisors. The findings indicate that objectivity can be maintained when supervisors demonstrate impartiality, treat teachers equitably, and conduct the evaluation process conscientiously with a clear sense of responsibility and awareness of its importance. Participants suggested that evaluators can ensure fairness in supervision by upholding neutrality, equality, dedication, and careful attention throughout the evaluation process [21].

Despite the fact that curriculum evaluation has multiple values in curriculum implementation, teachers should be reflective practitioners of teaching, and curriculum construction should be continuously strengthened. While improving the teaching ability, we should adhere to the combination of theory and practice to improve our teaching abilities, and we should start with the demands of social growth. Develop abilities that will suit society's demands [22]. This also coincides with the theory of phenomenology, which emphasizes the importance of practice, reflection, experience, and process orientation. In contrast to typical quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, phenomenology emphasizes the exploration of educational experience, as well as paying attention to and caring about the real experiences of people. This also provides a new perspective on how to build a student-centered curriculum evaluation system. In order to encourage the change of curriculum evaluation from a solely impact test to a comprehensive service to the curriculum, the following components are proposed to be incorporated in the course evaluation system:

- 1) Whether the course content enhances practical instruction. Teachers should observe and communicate with students in their classroom, so that curriculum teaching may return to education itself, and theoretical knowledge can be transformed into educational activities with real-world applications.
- 2) Is the curriculum designed with students' reflection in mind during the learning process? Assist pupils in becoming critical thinkers by encouraging them to reflect.
- 3) Is there a connection between theory and practice in the curriculum design? Teachers should be skilled at incorporating life experience into the classroom, using students' life experiences as a starting point and destination, connecting education and life, and boosting students' capacity to learn independently.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Evaluation system, as an important stakeholder of the education system, provides recommendations for teachers and assists them in improving themselves. We should pay greater attention to practical, reflective, and procedural education principles throughout the entire curriculum system to reconstruct the evaluation system of curriculum construction from the perspective of phenomenology. The practical and scientific aspects of talent training should be emphasized in curriculum design, as well as students' learning process, practice experience, and reflection. The focus of the curriculum assessment system should shift away from results and toward process and formative evaluation.

Traditional assessment methods might be utilized in conjunction with progressive curriculum evaluation, according to the instructors. Teachers learn through doing and experiencing things, according to another finding of this study. Permanent learning was assured via the use of various teaching approaches and procedures. The lecturers' informative function was acknowledged by the professors, who stated that they could now tie daily life events to the course.

All in all, this research indicates that teachers have a favorable attitude towards curriculum evaluation. Teachers' professional growth may be aided by establishing a cooperative connection with evaluators. Constructive criticism, solution proposals, collaboration with instructors, and contact from evaluators may raise teachers' drive to improve the curriculum.

## References

1. A. J. Sundler, E. Lindberg, C. Nilsson, and L. Palmér, "Qualitative thematic analysis based on descriptive phenomenology," *Nursing open*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 733-739, 2019. doi: 10.1002/nop2.275.
2. Y. Fineman, "Electronic theses and dissertations," *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 219-227, 2003. doi: 10.1353/pla.2003.0032.
3. M. Pakzad, A. A. Khosravi Babadi, K. Pooshne, A. Assareh, and H. Rezazadh, "Phenomenology of evaluating learning outcomes," *Theory and Practice in the Curriculum*, vol. 9, no. 17, pp. 39-90, 2021.
4. A. F. Brown, "A phenomenological study of undergraduate instructors using the inverted or flipped classroom model," *Pepardine University*, 2012.
5. H. EINSELE, and P. STORDEUR, "NICOLE NEUBAUER," *Rapid Cycle Real-Time PCR-Methods and Applications: Quantification*, vol. 44, 2012.
6. M. C. Stafford, "Curriculum Evaluation and Transformation: Policies, Perspectives and Challenges," *Asia Pacific Journal on Curriculum Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 19-27, 2019. doi: 10.53420/apjcs.2019.3.
7. L. Sechrest, and A. J. Figueredo, "Program evaluation," *Annual review of psychology*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 645-674, 1993. doi: 10.1146/annurev.ps.44.020193.003241.
8. F. I. Indriani, and H. Holisah, "Evaluation of the implementation of the Teaching Campus program in elementary school: A phenomenological approach," *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Evaluasi Pendidikan*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 137-159, 2022. doi: 10.21831/pep.v26i2.46834.
9. C. M. Wallace, "A Transformational Phenomenology Study of Assumptions, Perceptions, and Experiences of Higher Education Leaders Regarding Instructional Curriculum (Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University Chicago)," 2024.
10. K. Kartini, and M. Muhsyanur, "The Importance of Knowing Curriculum for Teacher: A Phenomenological Study in Indonesia," *International Proceeding of Innovative Science and Transdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 127-137, 2025.
11. C. Osborne, S. Merchant, K. Knight, J. Sim, and C. Wright, "A phenomenological study investigating experiences of student learning using an online radiation therapy planning curriculum," *Technical Innovations & Patient Support in Radiation Oncology*, vol. 24, pp. 6-12, 2022. doi: 10.1016/j.tipsro.2022.08.009.
12. T. P. Young, "Curriculum as a Tool to Enhance Self-Efficacy and Instructional Practices: A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences of Elementary Math Teachers," 2025.
13. A. J. Bharvad, "Curriculum evaluation," *International Research Journal*, vol. 1, no. 12, pp. 72-74, 2010.
14. F. M. Pouya, A. R. Keramat, and A. S. Khabaz, "Phenomenology of the Ethical Dimensions of Electronic Educational Evaluation," *Int J Ethics Soc*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 35-47, 2025.
15. B. Sigdel, "ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AND EXPERIENCES IN INTEGRATED CURRICULUM: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSI (Doctoral dissertation)," 2023.
16. R. M. Pedigo, and S. Smith, "A Phenomenological Study of Teachers' First-Year Experiences of Curriculum Development in Christian International Schools," *Journal of Research in International Education*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 167-182, 2022. doi: 10.1177/14752409221115857.
17. M. Taylor, J. Hung, T. E. Che, D. Akinbosede, K. J. Petherick, and M. Z. I. Pranjol, "Laying the groundwork to investigate diversity of life sciences reading lists in higher education and its link to awarding gaps," *Education Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 7, p. 359, 2021. doi: 10.3390/educsci11070359.
18. B. Tate, M. Chapman, C. Zawaduk, and D. Callaghan, "Valuing Curriculum Evaluation as Scholarship: A Process of Developing a Community of Scholars," *Quality Advancement in Nursing Education- Avancées en formation infirmière*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2018.
19. V. B. Mansilla, "Assessing student work at disciplinary crossroads," *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 14-21, 2005. doi: 10.3200/chng.37.1.14-21.
20. Y. M. Yasin, A. Al-Hamad, I. Safi, and A. Salman, "Nurse educators' experience in implementing concept-based curriculum: a phenomenology study," *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, vol. 22, no. 1, p. 20240074, 2025. doi: 10.1515/ijnes-2024-0074.
21. D. Jean, "Teachers' Experiences in Implementing Technology-Rich Curriculum for Student Achievement: A Phenomenological Study," 2022.
22. K. B. Kirkness, P. J. Bazira, G. M. Finn, and I. E. Nizza, "Preparing them for the profession": An interpretative phenomenological analysis of anatomy educators coping with complexity in the United Kingdom curriculum," *Anatomical sciences education*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 237-251, 2023. doi: 10.1002/ase.2225.

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of the publisher and/or the editor(s). The publisher and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.