



Research Paper

Development of an Optimal Model for Ecological Citizen Curriculum of Junior High School

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Abstract

Aim: Societies are faced with newly emerging environmental and ecological crises. The current study aimed to design an optimal model for ecological citizen education curriculum for junior high school. In this mixed-methods research, the analytical-inferential and synthesis research methods were adopted to develop the optimal model based on Aaker's model. The model was then validated to ensure its efficiency. Expert sampling was performed in this stage. Based on the findings, the designed model provides specific guidelines about the elements of the curriculum and possesses important religious, social, psychological, and philosophical foundations. According to the experts, all dimensions of this model have adequate validity.

Keywords: Curriculum model, Ecological citizen, Junior high school

Introduction

It is currently impossible to develop citizenship regardless of the role of education as the two concepts are closely tied (Gaudelli, 2016). One way to institutionalize citizenship and its responsibilities in any society is by teaching it through public channels, including the education system (Crick, 2017). In line with the active citizen education approach, the concept of education for ecological citizenship has recently emerged with the growing

human dominance over nature. Environmental and, consequently, ecological citizenship is a domain of citizenship education that has oddly been neglected (Evans, 2011). According to Dobson, ecological citizenship means specific human responsibilities to protect the environment wherein people think beyond their limited benefits (Brown, 2016). This concept is mostly based on responsibilities rather than rights. Dobson, along with Smith, The UK Open University professor, regards ecological citizenship as the re-moralization of politics (Smith, 1998: 99). In recent years, apart from the special attention paid to sustainable development and urban sustainability, quality of life improvement has been a requirement of urban habitability (Oshnaviee Nooshabadi and Mohammad-Ebrahimi, 1400). Urban development, which is a multi-factorial and inevitable process, has caused numerous environmental and socioeconomic problems at different scales, especially in developing countries (Mahmoudzadeh et al., 1400). Cultural policy-makers, managers, and planners should develop environmental citizenship curricula to promote people's environmental awareness/literacy and formulate policies for environmental citizen education programs (Abedini & Aghapour, 1400).

Recently, the Iranian Education Department and curricula have better addressed environmental and ecological issues by establishing nature schools and green schools. Still, the findings reported by Larijani and Yadollahi (2018), Sarbaz et al. (2016), Azmi Aesh, Motiee Langeroudi (2011), etc. show a dearth of attention to this major domain in an independent curriculum. There are also serious research and theoretical gaps in ecological citizen education. The Education Department and its main element, i.e., the curricula, are in charge of preparing citizens for civil society. In Iran, textbooks are the symbol of the written content of the curriculum. It is, therefore, necessary to pay serious attention to textbooks and their modification. Textbooks are among the most important references and resources for learning in any educational system. Most educational activities are performed within the framework of textbooks, and most educational experiences of teachers and students are organized around them (Arizi, 2003). Accordingly, the current study aimed to develop an optimal model for ecological citizen education curriculum of the junior high school. The goal was to institutionalize ecological issues in students' minds within the official education system to resolve environmental and ecological problems.

Methodology

Research questions are: 1) What are the characteristics of an optimal model for an ecological citizen education curriculum of junior high school? 2) How

valid is the proposed model according to social sciences, environment, educational psychology, and curriculum planning experts?

This article was a mixed-methods study. In the first phase, the analytic-inferential method (synthesis research) was adopted for developing the model. In the second phase, the developed model was validated to ensure the model's efficiency. Expert sampling was performed in this stage, and 18 experts on curriculum, social sciences, and educational psychology examined the model.

Results

Due to the nature of the subject, this curriculum should not be limited to the classroom, and interactive approaches to teaching must be promoted. Interaction with the class environment, learning through experiencing, reflective discussion, biographical reports, non-competitive discussion, cooperative reading, and narrative inquiry into environmental problems in the classroom are central (Hwang et al., 2016).

Finally, the developed model was validated by 18 experts (social and environmental sciences, educational psychology, and curriculum planning) who confirmed its validity with a very high percentage. Therefore, this model can be adopted by educational experts, policy-makers, and curriculum planners.

Discussion and conclusion

The optimal model for ecological citizen education curriculum of junior high school was developed based on Aaker's model, with religious, social, philosophical, and psychological foundations. The validation results revealed that this model has adequate validity based on expert opinion and the elements have a high level of specificity for students.

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