



Research Paper

The status of the Implemented Curriculum of Social Studies in the sixth grade of Elementary school in terms of Citizenship Education

Zohreh Yousefinejad Langroudi¹, Parvin Ahmadi^{2*}, Parvin Samadi³

1. M.A. student in Curriculum Planning, Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran
2. Corresponding Author: Associate Professor of Curriculum Planning, Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran. ✉
3. Associate Professor of Curriculum Planning, Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

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Abstract

Aim: The present study sought to explain the status of the implemented curriculum of social studies in the sixth grade of elementary school in terms of citizenship education. This mixed-method study used a follow-up explanations model and was conducted in elementary schools in one of the educational districts of Tehran, Iran. The sampling method was one-stage and two-stage cluster random sampling in the quantitative phase, and purposive criterion sampling in the qualitative phase. Findings showed that citizenship education in the implemented curriculum of social studies in the sixth grade of elementary school suffers additional challenges, which can be categorized as structural factors, motivational factors, attitudinal factors, skill-related factors, curriculum-partner factors, and resource-related and facility-related factors. Therefore, it is necessary to make macro-level decisions to reduce the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum.

Keywords: *Intended Curriculum, Implemented Curriculum, Social Studies, Citizenship Education, Elementary School*

Introduction

“In today’s society, Education Department is responsible for an important part of educating people to accept different roles as well as civic education (Safi, 2011). Curriculum is one of the most basic resources in education departments for teaching students and most activities are implemented within their framework across the globe (Qaltash, 2012). Three types of curricula exist in this process: intended, implemented, and attained curricula (Fathi Vajargah, 2014). Since citizenship education is one of the most fundamental missions of education departments in different countries (Farmahini Farahani, 2011) with a special place in the curricula, it is a wonder why our society is still struggling with many issues in this regard. Citizenship education is not achieved only by educating individuals, and all sections of the society must participate. However, Mehr Mohammadi (2012) considers the large gap and inconsistency among the intended, implemented, and attained curricula as a major weakness in any curriculum and believes that those involved in the curriculum planning process should seek to minimize them. Local literature has mostly identified the components of citizenship education in the book of social studies or surveyed teachers and students about the compatibility of the intended and implemented citizenship education curriculum; and the international literature is focused on recognizing teachers’ perception of citizenship, its implementation approaches, and methods of coping with these challenges in the classroom. Therefore, given the existing knowledge gap, the present study sought to investigate the compatibility between the intended and implemented curriculum of social studies in terms of citizenship education in four dimensions of objectives, content, teaching-learning activities, and assessment, and to address the challenges of and barriers to curriculum implementation through an in-depth analysis of teachers’ perspectives.

Methodology

This was an applied study in terms of purpose with a mixed method follow-up explanations model. The statistical population of this study consisted of all teachers (n=103) working in the sixth grade of public schools in one of the educational districts of Tehran, Iran in the academic year 2018-2019. The sampling method in the quantitative phase was one-stage cluster sampling and the sample size was determined as 85 people using the Morgan table. Also, the two-stage cluster sampling method was used to observe the social studies classroom. A purposive criterion sampling method was used in the qualitative phase. To increase the reliability and validity of the research and using the “triangulation of data collection” method, 36 informants were

interviewed in the qualitative phase. The tools used were a researcher-made questionnaire, a behavior observation checklist, and semi-structured interviews. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha method. The pretest method was used to increase the validity and reliability of the observation tool. Throughout the data collection process, the qualitative data were validated using dependability criterion with member check and credibility using triangulation of data collection. Also, the member validation test was used to increase validity and reach a common understanding with the interviewees. Data analysis of the quantitative part of the research (questionnaire) was performed using SPSS software and t-test and analysis of observational data were used using mean and standard deviation. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine normality of data distribution. Since the obtained values regarding the components of the curriculum (objectives (0.30), content (0.145), teaching-learning methods (0.192), and evaluation methods (0.20)) were above 0.05, the univariate t-parametric test was used to examine the research questions. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively.

Results

Quantitative data analysis (the questionnaire) revealed that teachers considered attention to these elements in the implemented curriculum as above average, while the findings of classroom observation showed teachers attended to these elements less than the average. The results of this explanation, in the form of qualitative research, indicated various factors contributing to this problem, which is classified into 6 categories and 47 subcategories. These factors are as follows:

1. Structural factors with 14 subcategories can be attributed to the structure of the educational system and the intended curriculum of existing social studies.
2. Motivational factors with 10 subcategories pertain to teachers' intrinsic motivation and their willingness and interest in accepting assigned responsibilities.
3. Skill factors with 9 subcategories pertain to teachers' up-to-date and professional knowledge in the field of education and teaching.
4. Attitudinal factors with 2 subcategories pertain to teachers' and society's attitude toward and approach to education.
5. Factors related to curriculum partners with 8 subcategories refer to some of these stakeholders and partners, including family and mass media.

6. Factors related to resources and facilities with 4 subcategories are one of the important elements of the curriculum that facilitate the teaching process and the teaching-learning process.

Discussion and conclusion

Our findings indicated that the implemented social studies curriculum faces many challenges in terms of citizenship education. Despite the importance and undeniable interaction of these challenges with one another, the attitude and beliefs of teachers are a key factor in the implementation of the citizenship education curriculum such that nothing will be achieved in the classroom if teachers do not believe in their role in citizenship education. Therefore, it is necessary to make macro-level decisions to reduce the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum. These include reviewing policies related to recruiting teachers; paying serious attention to their livelihood, efficiency, knowledge and professional competencies; facilitating teachers' participation in the development of elementary school curricula, and taking fundamental measures to create appropriate educational conditions and facilities in schools. The limitation of this study is that it only investigated one district in Tehran.

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