Research Paper

Factors and Requirements Affecting the Development of Citizenship Education in High Schools in Tehran

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to identify the factors affecting the development of citizenship education in high schools in Tehran. This applied qualitative study used content analysis to examine the data were extracted from semi-structured interviews with 20 "citizenship education specialists", "senior education managers" and "principals and teachers of high schools in Tehran" who were selected by theoretical and purposive sampling. These data were encoded in open, axial and selective stages. Repeatability and reliability of the results were confirmed by two coders. The study results were categorized into 40 subcategories, 12 main categories and three themes under intra-institutional, trans-institutional and inter-institutional factors.

Keywords: Education, Citizenship Development, Effective Requirements and Factors, Tehran High Schools

Introduction

Citizenship is affected by social, political and cultural developments of the post-structuralistic era, and has found its place in research in this field as a sensitive education issue. The main reason for considering this issue is the role that a citizen has in the comprehensive development of the country.

Unfortunately, the education system in Iran lacks a theoretical model for education and development of citizenship competencies throughout its long history (Aghazadeh, 2006). The negative effects of these conditions have not helped educators and those involved in education in Iran to accurately define the educational ideals. The results of studies conducted on the education system suggest that the existing program is the outcome of an agreement between the planning group members and academic experts rather than consideration of the students' and society's needs (Mehrmohammadi, 2013; Hazeri & Khalili, 2014). Article 26 of the Dakar Framework for Action urges governments to respect and protect schools as sanctuaries and peace zones. As such, educational programs should be so designed to promote the full development of human character and profound respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (UNESCO, 2017). Like other social institutions, schools derive their purpose, mode of action, responsibility, and method from their ruling society and culture, and the society's quality is determined by the type of education received (Shariatmadari, 2016). Such understanding turns schools to a place to practice life and experience different fields. Therefore, what can explain the main mission and philosophy of the formation and development of schools in the current era is education of citizenship, in other words, schools should function as a "school of life" (Gootheg, 2016). If education is accepted as a pillar of generating civic awareness, the question will arise; "what factors and requirements affect the development of citizenship education?".

Methodology

This applied qualitative study used content analysis to explore the factors affecting the development of citizenship education in high schools in Tehran. The potential participants include experts in the subject matter, policy makers and senior education managers, school principals and teachers in Tehran. A theoretical and purposive sampling approach was used, and to ensure the diversity in the samples, 20 individuals were asked to take part. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews; each lasting 60 minutes on average. The researcher conducted interviews to obtain the participants' views according to the principle of theoretical sensitivity, the balance of objectivity and sensitivity, taking analytical notes, and observing professional and ethical principles. In qualitative studies, data are analyzed as they are collected. Data were analyzed and categorized in open, axial and selective coding stages. To assess the data obtained, the researcher used member-check, self-check, and agreement between two coders. The reliability between two coders was 81.5%. Thus, the results are confirmed in terms of repeatability and reliability between two coders.

Results

The study results were categorized into 40 subcategories, 12 main categories and three themes under intra-institutional, trans-institutional and inter-institutional factors.

Table 1: Themes and theme clusters of factors affecting the development of citizenship education (intra-institutional factors)

Row	First level categories identified	Second level categories	Category clusters
1	Conceptual agreement in words		
2	Realism and avoiding sloganeering		
3	Active planning	Strategic insight	
4	Translation of macro strategies into actions		
5	Curriculum-compatible approach		
6	Interdisciplinary curriculum	Citizenship-compatible curriculum	
7	Development of extracurricular activities		
8	Teachers' professional competency	Expert and committed teachers	
9	Teachers' role-model		
10	Teaching ability		
11	Open and democratic atmosphere		
12	The way students are perceived		Intra-institutional factors
13	Variability (accepting differences)		
14	Avoiding double standards	Cultural and social atmosphere	
15	The culture of tolerating people with different ideas		
16	Avoiding horse bridle policy		
17	Delegation of role and responsibility to students		
18	Consistency and comprehensiveness of evaluation indicators	Establishing evaluation and feedback system	
19	Modeling and benchmarking programs		
20	Contents of the report and feedback		
21	Using consultants and experts	Sharing knowledge and experience	
22	Using the retired staff		
23	Joint targeting		
24	Teachers' professional development	Development and retaining teachers	
25	Job satisfaction and motivation		
26	Balance in policy-making and ideological supervision	Governance	
27	Avoid partisan and political bias		Trans-institutional factors
28	Decentralization		
29	Reason against sloganeering		
30	Ethics	Public culture	
31	Social capital development		

Row	First level categories identified	Second level categories	Category clusters
32	Desilencing		
33	Forecasting financial resources	Resources and facilities	
34	Development of facilities and space		
35	Sharing inter-institutional responsibilities	Inter-institutional partnership and networking	
36	Intellectual interactions of education with academic and research institutions		Inter-institutional factors
37	Media coordination with education		
38	Common targeting		
39	Development of intellectual, professional and executive cooperation	Family and school harmony	
40	Financial involvement		

Discussion and conclusion

According to the results, citizenship education is affected by 12 main factors in the following three general categories: intra-institutional, trans-institutional and inter-institutional, which were identified as factors and requirements for the development of citizenship education from the perspective of participants. As a complex and specialized matter, and as the ultimate goal of the education system, citizenship education has created a special task for this system whose mission is to develop moral values and behavioral skills.

Given the technological, social, political, cultural and economic developments, citizenship teachings should be considered a dynamic phenomenon and compatible with global conditions, and special attention should be paid to the cultural and social reproduction of this element. Considering the need for strategic insight, participation, and networking in the implementation of citizenship education, it is recommended that policy-making institutions prepare citizenship education regulations for schools and a platform for inter-institutional areas. To share the lived experiences of teachers, it is recommended that plans be made for the establishment of knowledge management system and the formation of knowledge nuclei in schools and districts. Improving the quality of school program services requires the use of all citizenship-related educational methods, especially, service-oriented learning methods, dramatic methods and cognitive methods. Given the need to strengthen students' social skills to form citizenship competencies in the real life, it is recommended that the conditions conducive to reviving past behavioral traditions in favor of the student's integrated personality, including summer jobs and master-apprentice system be provided in addition to policy-making, planning and feasibility studies. Considering the need for realism and avoiding sloganeering, all those involved in education are recommended to choose and educate a limited

number of assessable competencies instead of setting exaggerated goals and implementing superficial plans and programs. In other words, emphasis should be placed on depth instead of extent.

Like other studies, the present study had limitations. The proposed categories were from the researcher's understanding of the participants' viewpoints. The participants were selected from experts in citizenship education, senior education managers, and principals and teachers. As participants, parents or students can also further enrich the study data. Since purposive sampling was used in the present study, it is recommended that future studies use a larger and more diverse sample size to ensure reliability and generalizability of the results. Furthermore, future studies should use factor analysis or structural equations models to assess factors identified in the present study.

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