

*Evaluation of Environmental Considerations within Iranian
Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum***

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attention to environmental factors in Iranian elementary school social studies curriculum. In this study, a descriptive method was used to identify environmental components and a content analysis method was used to evaluate and analyze the curriculum of social studies in elementary school. The statistical population of the study was the content analysis of the social studies curriculum of the elementary school of Iran which from this population, the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary school social studies curriculum was selected by purposeful sampling. The data collection tool was the Objective Analysis List, Textbook Content Analysis List, and Teacher's Guidebook Content Analysis List, which was developed after studying the theoretical foundations and legal bases, and then its validity was determined by science-education experts. The unit of analysis of the sentences contained in the textbooks is the texts of the goals and the textbook of the teacher. In the content analysis section, the most important findings show that in the social studies curriculum of Iranian elementary schools in the cognitive aspect, skillful dimension and attitude dimension towards environmental components were 9.72%, 5.89%, and 4.01%, respectively which indicates the lack of attention to this important issue.

Key Words: Environment, Curriculum, Environmental Curriculum, Primary school.

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Introduction

On the eve of the new millennium, though unintended, people's activities and jobs affect the lives of those who live far beyond them. Today, even in most developed countries, millions of people suffer from hunger, vagabondage, and health problems. War, aggression, violence, and extremism threaten the lives of millions of people around the world. Global changes caused by global warming, the disposal of millions of tons of hazardous waste produced by industrial countries, and the use of pesticides that have caused deaths and damage to wildlife and aquatic life; they are like serious alarms that require global effort to eliminate them. It also includes issues such as the spread of international crimes, terrorism, AIDS, trafficking in drugs, soil destruction, and habitat destruction, the destruction of some animal, plant species, and forests. In today's world, everyone agrees that education is the most effective tool and way to meet future challenges, especially environmental protection. In fact, education is shaping the future of the world, and public awareness and understanding are driving sustainable change. In the meantime, curriculum and educational planners have more duty; because they have to work in the process of education to design educational programs based on the needs of the community (Saleh Omran, 2017).

Accordingly, education is one of the most important social institutions of any society that is

recognized by its credit and status as an important cultural base and it is only natural that the issue of education is taken seriously, because education needs to be adapted to the fundamental changes that are pervading today's society, it needs new educational models to prepare students to face life's challenges and problems. This is more pronounced than in the past in Iran with a young population and the overall growth.

Therefore, research into the structure, content, and methods of training for the educational movement to the desired extent based on world standards is the attainable goal. Accordingly, the researcher in this paper seeks to investigate the status of environmental components in the Iranian elementary school social studies curriculum.

The statement of the problem

One of the most important issues in the contemporary world, especially after the 1970s, is the environment and its issues that have received enormous interest. Today, environmental problems and challenges, such as global warming, the use of pesticides, have caused serious damage to nature. Soil degradation, habitat destruction, groundwater depletion and the extinction of some animal and plant species are serious issues that need to be investigated.

During the last two centuries, human activities have had irreparable consequences for the environment and natural resources. As human activities and their impacts increase, their risks have

also increased. As the magnitude and significance of threats to land resources, natural systems, and the world's population become more and more apparent, the need for the extensive and comprehensive education of individuals in response to their environmental responsibility has also become more acute. A serious and effective solution to stop the hasty movement of the destruction of the environment and nature destruction involves environmental education and raising public awareness, especially in developing countries. If all members of society are aware of the need to protect the environment, actions can be taken to promote sustainable development, because, in this regard, any planning without the participation of citizens cannot be successful (Sadat Nejad, 2018).

One thing that should not be overlooked is the issue of the environment and its challenges. This is not a ritual issue for humans, but rather an acute and largely dangerous issue that must be considered as a matter of death and life. Today, the problem with the environmental community is not science, it is action: an action that results from internal motivations and forces. Ethics and science must now come together and provide a complete model and guide for individual and collective human behavior. The desirable use of the environment in the country can guarantee sustainability and sustainable development, and lack of attention to it can cause issues that jeopardize the country's

economic, social, cultural and political development plans.

In the Iranian education system, textbooks are usually the most important source of learning provided to students, and they learn through the textbook content various ideas and scientific and practical methods for solving various problems and prepare for life in the community, a textbook then helps to meet the goals of environmental education by providing the necessary conditions for learning and protecting the environment using asking questions, homework, principles, and the materials used in its preparation. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the content of textbooks and educational materials and to identify and remove the deficiencies of their content in order to provide an appropriate context for the revision of textbooks.

Therefore, considering the importance and necessity of elementary education in the formation of the child's personality and the impact that this period has on human development (the cognitive, biological and social development of children), and it is the most important curriculum in all educational systems in the world, including Iran and since one of the most important tools in education is the textbook, and today the importance of the environment is quite evident, this is a fundamental question for the researcher: How much attention is given to environmental factors in Iran's elementary school social studies curriculum?

Significance of the study

One of the main goals of the curriculum, especially in pre-school and elementary schools, is to emphasize environmental protection (Kian, 2016). Therefore, the emphasis on environmental protection learning in childhood increases (Kian & Karimi, 2015). In the curriculum of the Iranian education system, there is insufficient attention to laws and educational programs to the applicable environmental education strategies.

Today, three issues of human, environment, and education are inextricably linked. The most important thing about humans and the environment is how to make the environment productive while still protecting the environment. One of the answers can be education (Kian, 2017).

The main issue is that the process of environmental degradation is progressing steadily and the participation of all members of society, especially children and adolescents, seems necessary. Their participation needs to be increased in their awareness and in order to design appropriate education; they must have sufficient information about their level of awareness and educational needs. We must spend our energy on children and make it possible for them to experience nature everywhere. This requires understanding the importance of this issue on the part of public education planners to include it in training and information resources programs (Saleh Omran, 2017).

Environmental education is an important tool for solving environmental quality problems. In the present age, the growth and development of the environmental crisis are very serious and its scope is very wide. The damaging effects of pollutants whose the main cause are the humans; if they continue with the current trend, will have a bad future for the planet (Kian & Karimi, 2017).

There are many important issues and challenges in the world such as hunger, homelessness, health issues, war, global warming, international crime outbreaks, terrorism, AIDS, ozone depletion, soil degradation, the extinction of some animal and plant species, water crisis, soil and forest degradation, acid rain, etc. These are among the parameters that are concentrated in countries such as Iran with a centralized education system; and it can be done to raise awareness and the scientific level of the current generation to deal with these issues. The tools for this work are textbooks for schools and teachers. On the other hand, elementary school is the most important educational course in different educational systems of the world countries in which the child's personality is formed in all dimensions; therefore, environmental considerations must be taken into account in the textbooks of this period. In addition, this research will be effective in the promotion of the level of science and awareness of the author and other teachers working in elementary school. It will also answer the question of

how many environmental considerations are included in the curriculum? From this point of view, the necessity of the research will also be clarified.

Therefore, the researcher, while studying and collecting data and information about the current status of paying attention to textbooks on environmental components, has provided a scientific basis for textbook authors to design and develop curricula that will lead to the development of people with environmental capabilities and skills through important tools such as textbooks. Therefore, the results of this research can be used by various cultural, educational institutions such as education, the office of planning and textbook writing, the National Curriculum Studies Association, schools, and teachers. Since childhood and elementary education are the starting point for environmental awareness, and because education is the most important source of education in any country, at this age, textbooks will have the most impact on learning and creating environmental behavior in children; because through the subjective criteria, formal education and textbook content, the child is regularly aware of and communicated with the social environment, environment, and environmental challenges, so attention to these issues is essential (Saleh Omran et al., 2017).

Research purposes

It is clear that the Education Authority is the only official

institution that cares for the education of children and adolescents along with the family. Textbooks are one of the tools that this institution uses for education. On the other hand, today's children and adolescents have certain needs that make it possible to be present in the international arena. Despite the many definitions of the environment and its challenges, they all share a common theme: conservation and environmental protection. In fact, environmental education seeks to educate citizens who are responsible for the environment around them; strive to protect the environment and not be indifferent to the environment and every behavior and action they take is in the interest of the environment. These can guarantee sustainable development for any society.

General Purpose:

Evaluation of Environmental Considerations in Social Studies Curriculum in Elementary School of Iran

Special Purpose

Evaluation of Cognitive Dimensions of Environmental Components in Iranian Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum

1. Evaluation of Skillful Dimension of Environmental Components in Iranian Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum
2. Evaluation of Attitude Dimension of Environmental Components in Iranian Elementary

School Social Studies
Curriculum

General Question

How much attention has been paid to environmental elements in the Iranian elementary school social studies curriculum?

Special Question

1. How much of the cognitive dimension of environmental factors have been incorporated into the social studies curriculum of Iranian elementary school?
2. How much of the skillful dimension of environmental factors have been incorporated into the social studies curriculum of Iranian elementary school?
3. How much of the attitude dimension of environmental factors have been incorporated into the social studies curriculum of Iranian elementary school?

Method

In this research, the study is descriptive research and is grouped into practical research. The method used in this study is qualitative and content analysis. Content analysis is one of the most accurate and comprehensive methods that leads to comprehensive information. Therefore, the researcher of this study based on the content analysis list and scientific documentation and theoretical foundations, analyzed the goals, content of fifth and sixth social studies textbooks and teacher's guide. In order to obtain comprehensive and

complete information on the importance of the environment in the textbooks and to answer the questions raised.

Statistical population

The statistical population of the study consists of two parts: part of which was the study of theoretical foundations of all available resources and concepts in the field of environment which was provided by referring to reputable sites and internal and external books and the other part consisted of the social studies textbooks of elementary school of Iran in the year of 2018-2019. Therefore, in this study, using purposive sampling, the curriculum of the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary school social studies textbooks of 2018-2019 was selected and analyzed. Since the main purpose of teaching social studies is to assist the student in learning social concepts and subjects and to become familiar with the various institutions of society appropriate to their intellectual development within the framework of socially accepted political vision of society and their social education and socialization will be at the national and transnational level. Therefore, social studies textbooks of fifth- and sixth-grades were purposefully selected and analyzed.

The Tool for Data Collection

The following data collection tools were used in this study:

- A. Content Analysis Checklist for the Goals Adopted in Elementary School and Fifth- and Sixth-grades

- B. Content Analysis Checklist for Fifth- and Sixth-grade Social Studies Textbooks
- C. Content Analysis Checklist for Guidebook of Social Studies Teacher at Fifth- and Sixth-grade of Elementary School

To design and develop the content analysis checklist by studying the theoretical foundations of each of the above, environmental characteristics and components were adjusted in three dimensions: cognitive, skill and attitude. Based on the designed checklists, the text of the textbooks and the content of the approved goals were reviewed. After review, the analysis of the content of the textbooks was presented in the Tables. Finally, a table for all components was compiled and presented for the purpose of better and more comfortable reader estimation after estimating the overall difference between the presented tables.

Validity and Reliability of Tools

The checklists developed by the study of the theoretical foundations were reviewed by professors and specialists in the field of education. After the review, they presented their guidance and corrective tips. After summarizing the professors' comments, the components and the final list were compiled into a final checklist.

To ensure the reliability of the content analysis, the checklist was provided by a master of curriculum planning who, simultaneously with the researcher, reviewed the curriculum and analyzed the

content. The coefficient of similarity between independent measurements of the two researchers was estimated to be about 0.87, which indicates the reliability of the used tool.

Data analysis method

In this study, sentences were the unit of analysis. At first, each page of the teacher's book, goals, and guidebook was reviewed, if any of the above components were included in the compiled checklist for the environment, the content would be highlighted and registered with page number, paragraph number, and desired code. Finally, after completing the content analysis, the statistical data were calculated as frequency, %frequency and mean investigated and analyzed.

Considering the main purpose of the study "Evaluation of Environmental Considerations within Iranian Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum" and in order to examine the existing status of the elementary curriculum, after preparing the content analysis checklists, considering the theoretical foundations and examining their formal and content validity from the standpoint of educational experts, the elementary social studies curriculum was reviewed. First, the approved goals of the elementary social studies are analyzed using the content analysis checklist, and then the content of the textbooks, as well as the content of the existing teacher's guidebooks, are analyzed using compiled checklists.

Content Analysis of Approved Goals in the Elementary Social Studies Curriculum

Evaluation of Cognitive Dimension of Environmental Components in Iranian Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum

One of the questions in this study was: how much of the cognitive dimension of environmental factors have been incorporated into the social studies

curriculum of Iranian elementary school?

To examine the above question, the purpose analysis checklists, textbook content analysis, and textbook content analysis of the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary school teacher guidebooks were analyzed, with the following results presented in the table below:

Table1: Distribution of Cognitive Dimension of Environmental Components in Iranian Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum

The percentage of the Attention	Frequency	Content
43.18	19	Content of approved goals of elementary fifth grade
36.95	34	Content of approved goals of elementary sixth grade
1.69	23	Textbook content of the elementary fifth grade
7.18	107	Textbook content of the elementary sixth grade
12.82	125	Teacher's Guidebook Content of the elementary fifth grade
13.90	256	Teacher's Guidebook Content of the elementary sixth grade
–	564	Sum of statements related to environmental components
–	5797	Sum of sentences of social studies curriculum
–	9.72	Percentage of sentences related to the environment

As can be seen in the table above, the cognitive dimension of environmental components in the approved goals of the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary schools are considered 43.18% and 36.95%, respectively.

Also, the cognitive dimension of environmental components in the textbook content of the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary schools are considered 1.69% and 7.18%, respectively.

In the teacher's guidebook content of the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary schools 12.82% and

13/90% of the cognitive dimension of environmental components were considered.

Overall, the goals, textbooks, and guidebooks of the elementary school social studies curriculum in Iran were as high as 9.72 percent, which is not good enough.

Evaluation of Skillful Dimension of Environmental Components in Iranian Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum

Another research question was: how much of the skillful dimension of environmental factors have been

incorporated into the social studies curriculum of Iranian elementary school?

To examine the above question, the purpose analysis checklists, textbook content analysis, and

textbook content analysis of the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary school teacher guidebooks were analyzed, with the following results presented in the table below:

Table2: Distribution of Skillful Dimension of Environmental Components in Iranian Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum

The percentage of the Attention	Frequency	Content
6.8	3	Content of approved goals of elementary fifth grade
7.60	7	Content of approved goals of elementary sixth grade
0.51	7	Textbook content of the elementary fifth grade
1.14	17	Textbook content of the elementary sixth grade
11.17	109	Teacher's Guidebook Content of the elementary fifth grade
10.80	199	Teacher's Guidebook Content of the elementary sixth grade
—	342	Sum of statements related to environmental components
—	5797	Sum of sentences of social studies curriculum
—	5.89	Percentage of sentences related to the environment

As can be seen in the table above, the skillful dimension of environmental components in the approved goals of the fifth and sixth grade elementary schools are 6.8% and 7.60%, respectively. Also, the skillful dimensions of environmental components in the textbook content of the fifth and sixth grade of elementary schools are 0.51% and 1.14%, respectively. In the teacher's guidebook content of the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary schools, the skillful dimensions of environmental components are 11.17% and 10.80%. Overall, the goals, textbooks, and guidebooks of primary school social studies

curriculum in Iran is 5.89%. This indicates that no attention was paid to this area.

Evaluation of Attitude Dimension of Environmental Components in Iranian Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum

The last research question was: how much of the attitude dimension of environmental factors have been incorporated into the social studies curriculum of Iranian elementary school?

To examine the above question, like other dimensions (cognitive and skillful) the purpose analysis checklists, textbook content analysis, and textbook content

analysis of the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary school teacher guidebooks were analyzed, and the

results are presented in the table below:

Table 3: Distribution of Attitude Dimension of Environmental Components in Iranian Elementary School Social Studies Curriculum

The percentage of the Attention	Frequency	Content
4.56	2	Content of approved goals of elementary fifth grade
8.69	8	Content of approved goals of elementary sixth grade
0.22	3	Textbook content of the elementary fifth grade
0.87	13	Textbook content of the elementary sixth grade
6.46	63	Teacher's Guidebook Content of the elementary fifth grade
7.82	144	Teacher's Guidebook Content of the elementary sixth grade
—	233	Sum of statements related to environmental components
—	5797	Sum of sentences of social studies curriculum
—	4.01	Percentage of sentences related to the environment

As can be seen in the table above, the attitude dimension of environmental components in the approved goals of the fifth and sixth grade elementary schools are 4.56% and 8.69%, respectively. Also, the attitude dimension of environmental components in the textbook content of the fifth- and sixth-grade elementary schools are considered 0.22% and 0.87%, respectively. In the teacher's guidebook content of the fifth and sixth-grade elementary schools, the attitude dimension of environmental components were 6.46% and 7.82%. Overall, the goals, textbooks, and guidebooks for elementary school social studies curriculum in Iran were 4.01%. This suggests that there

was no regular attention in this regard.

The results of many types of research (Randell Gallafreissman 2019, Jimming Zhang 2019, Christopher Johnson 2017, Ehrhabur & Don 2016, Karlauhodsosa 2012, etc.) indicate that many countries in the world emphasized the issue of the environment and the design and development of the appropriate curriculum. As at the international and global level, it is also necessary to pay attention to environmental education in Iran.

As researchers such as Saleh Omran, Parhizkar and Hatami Far 2018, Mohammadi Ostad Kalayeh, Zandi, Hatami, Shabiri 2018, Azad Khani, Sadat Nejad, Sharafkhani 2018, Parishani, Mirshah Jafari,

Sharifian, Farhadian 2018 and the results of the present study shows that education and environmental components are not deservedly appreciated, and they are not on the agenda of planners and curriculum experts. It should be noted that environmental education is not limited to space and time; in this way, all institutions, especially the family institution, play an important role. The best time and place for any education is within the family. The shortest way to achieve this goal is to start in pre-school and elementary education. At this point, the child takes the first steps of the complex process of socialization. The importance of environmental issues in playing with the child must be shown precisely. For children, the issue of environmental pollution was clarified. If along with the education of the child, the parents of the child also attend the training, the continuity of the training process has also been followed. In the process of raising children for environmental education, it should be noted that the fundamental principle is the development of the child's perspective and his or her attitude towards a healthy and sustainable life. An important step in protecting the environment is to educate the human being directly and indirectly about the environment from childhood and to be aware of the consequences of the destruction of human life. If the curriculum designed to teach the school environment relies on these, they can certainly be effective in enhancing personal experiences and growing awareness, attitudes

and activities of children and adolescents and future generations. The results obtained from this study indicate that environmental factors in Iran's elementary social studies curriculum are less considered. So there is a need to revisit the dimensions and elements of the existing curriculum over the past.

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