

The Significance of Parental Involvement and Its Components In The Curriculum of Primary Education

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Abstract

Purpose: Nowadays, participation and involvement have attracted serious consideration in all aspects of life, schools of thought, and religions. This issue is more intensely emphasized in education and parental involvement in school curriculum due to their knowledge of the interests and needs of their kids. **Methods:** the comments and ideas of curriculum experts were collected and analyzed through Delphi technique in order to conduct the present study and determine the significance of parental involvement and its components in the design and implementation of curriculum. Sampling was done using snowball technique and its volume was determined through saturation law. **Findings:** The main findings and components of this research include the necessity of parental involvement as an essential source of information. **Conclusion:** parental involvement as an essential requirement of today's education, recognizing strong and weak points of the plan, providing necessary context for the participation of involved individuals and components, empowering curricula, realizing Islamic teachings and social customs, involvement as a social necessity, more precise and effective recognition of social norms, recognizing natural situations and necessary equipment, creating optima conditions for training an enlightened generation, removing the defects of involvement-free education, and establishing more cooperation among administrators and recovers of educational services.

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1. Introduction

Cooperation is a natural human requirement and human beings need to belong to and connect with other people; social temperament lies in the very basic creation of human beings. According to the comments of scholars, human beings are social animals who live and work with other members of the society voluntarily based on their instinct and nature. Basic human needs, which dominate life and are fulfilled through cooperation, provide response to common desires and activities (Jahanian, 2009).

Activating the whole potential capacities and available facilities is of paramount importance for training a new generation that can meet country's development goals in the current era. The issue of proper involvement in education roots in ancient histories of nations; however, the significance of this topic has so intensely increased that the majority of sociologists consider such participation the fundamental axis of development and important factor in the enhancement of qualitative and quantitative issues (Azimi & Hashemi, 2010). Implementing an educational system, in which the role of people finds its great dignity, is an unfulfilled wish with which our society faces. Although the involvement of people in educational goals has just begun, countless steps are required to complete this journey. The idea of closeness of parents with school authorities emerged from the first decades of the formation of modern education in our country; however, various factors prevented the realization of this important requirement. (Teymoori, 2008).

Social and political life of human society depend on the cooperation and participation of its members. This is strengthened through the cooperation of people and education, as the most important requirement of social system, necessitates the involvement and participation of all components (Lewies, 2008). This system cannot fulfill educational process unless people and related staff cooperate in scientific, cultural, economic, and emotional spheres.

2. Research Background

Developing curricula components for training centers and general education system is one of the main challenges facing those working in the field of curriculum studies. Consequently, there have been many studies and researches conducted worldwide to demarcate such components in order to put curriculum to practice effectively. Cooperation in ordinary and daily affairs is a much-emphasized phenomenon, the importance of which in enhancing the effective function of education is doubtless considering the team nature of planning activity (O, Donoghue and Dimmok, 1998).

Based on the results and findings of various studies, although participation in designing, developing, and implementing curriculum is a common method in many countries, this issue is not fully realized in our country due to several causes, such as focused educational system and insufficient involvement of parents in designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating curricula, and weak governmental stimulation. The present research attempts to analyze the significance of parental involvement in the efficacy of the curriculum of primary education based on the ideas of experts (Parvand, 2002).

Partnership and cooperation have been much emphasized in Islamic teachings; Holy Quran advises Muslims to cooperate with each other. "Cooperate with each other in goodness and virtue not in vice and evil deeds; avoid disagreeing with God, for his fury is hard to take". (Al-Ma'aida, 2008). Participation is a process of sharing work, an activity which has several various manifestations. Different studies have shown that parental involvement in school affairs creates positive perceptions in them towards themselves, school, and the role of school authorities in the growth of their children (Alborzi, 2003). If parents cooperate on different levels of decision making, volunteer work, dealing with children, and etc., children will present considerable progress in their activities.

The extensive process of training and education requires the participation and support of numerous factors to pave the way for the development and continuous enhancement of the identity of all people. To fulfill such an objective, various organizations and institutions have direct and indirect role. In other words, the continuous process of training is realized through purposeful performance of various social components, the involvement and cooperation of whom provide considerable contribution to the enhancement of presented services (Yousefi, 2008).

Factors contributing to educational trend can be categorized in two groups of contributing and effective components based on the extent of the intervention and influence. Some of these components, such as school, university, and seminary, which are founded to establish and continue educational activities at different levels, have primarily focused on training as the sole organizational mission and function. Some other components involved in training trend are social institutions with various functions, such as family, media, mosque, and other cultural entities, which can play major role in proportion to their potentials and facilities. Thus, applying the term 'training trend agent' to such social institutions is constrained by the dignity of their role in the process. (Mardan, 2013).

Considering the role of family in the training trend and the emphasis of national document on the formation of these components in various dimensions of education puts considerable light on the significance of parental involvement in the enhancement of curricula. According to the findings of different researches, parents who participate in school programs show more positive feelings and feedbacks towards school, education system, and their children in comparison to parents who do not take part in such programs. (Husseini, 2005).

Jahanian (2009) believed that Family, as a social institution in which parents and children are influential members, plays crucial role in personal, social, moral, and emotional development of the child. Parents, as the initial mentors, share the duty of providing necessary education for children, because they prepare children for qualifying for later education stages, the basic block of which is laid by educations and instructions propagated in the family by parents who know personal and social characteristics, needs, interests, likes, and dislikes of their children.

Man is a social being who does not feel secure unless supported by social customs and traditions and belonged to social groups; thus, if the structure of education system advertises the sense of belonging and integrity, parents and students are given the opportunity of learning how to live, cooperate, and get along with other people. Proper understanding of the relationship between school and family results in enhanced cooperation, trust, and commitment in both parents and school authorities which, consequently, accelerates educational and cognitive growth of students. (Dempsey, 1997).

According to what was stated above, status quo of educational, and low level of parental involvement, the present study is quite essential. Putting the findings of the present research into practice foregrounds the crucial role of parents as formal participants in education system; it helps them recognize their central role, cooperate in decision making, and involve in designing, implementing, and evaluating in-use curricula.

3. Methodology

Delphi, technique, which is an important technique, in future studies, was used to define and determine the concept of parental involvement and its components in the curriculum of primary education; this method includes three stems whereby a certain topic is discussed and agreed with experts in the field. As a significant technique in future studies, this method has presented solution to several future concerns and dilemma. From the perspective of Delphi approach, human judgments provide legitimate and useful inputs to generate predictions and forecasts. (Ahmadi 2009)

The statistical population included highly experienced experts and specialists in the field of primary education curriculum. These individuals have qualified based on following properties and features: necessary knowledge and experience, inclination towards cooperation, allocation enough time, and having communication skills (Ahmadi, 2009). The analysis of the content of unstructured questionnaire was done to provide initial recognition of the main themes; then, a structured questionnaire was designed and later stages were performed. First, keywords were extracted from the content of unstructured questionnaire; then, the structured questionnaire was used to sum up and extract agreed upon components. In order to analyze the results, according to Delphi technique, quantitative method, ranking technique, and rating technique were used to determine the third quartile as the necessary minimum to accept the comments of experts.

4. Findings

The main issue in the design and implementation of curriculum is that it must determine the forces which are to cooperate in order to realize the optimal efficiency of learning opportunities or, to be more precise, what is the optimal combination of decision makers in student-centered curriculum. Since decisions individuals make give shape to their lives, they must play central role in what they are about to put in their plans. Thus, parents, students, and administrators are required to cooperate deeply and extensively. However, our educational system experiences strict hierarchy of education experts which destroys the spirit of students and involvement spirit of parents; however, it is a sort of decentralization (Iran Curriculum National Document, 2012).

Since various decision-maker agents, such as teachers, administrators, planners, parents, and students, play vital role, and give ideas in, decentralized and semi-centralized curricula, it can be said that such cooperation directs curricula towards decentralized or semi-centralized institutions. It seems that considering negative aspects of centralization if the main focus to apply required reformations in the majority of countries around the world. (Sal Sebili 2007: 58)

Decentralization took place in 1990s in America by direct financing of resources by schools, promoting the rights of parents to choose schools, and funding schools with the help of parents (Sal Sebili 2007: 55). According to the analysis conducted by Whitty, Power, and Haplyn, the regulations of American Charter schools support the view that policy and decision-makers of Ministry of Education

are prepared to bestow great power and volition on schools and parents on a local level; however, they were not inclined to lose the control of curriculum design on higher levels of education.

Donoghue and Dimmok (1998) stated that the structure of American education system focused on four approaches in 1980s and 1990s; these approaches included school-based administration, parental involvement and choice in decision making, empowering teachers, and teaching to enhance perception.

Parents who have managed to send their children to private schools have always played role in the administration of the curriculum of the school. The number and variety of such programs and curricula increased with the expansion of substitute schools in late 1960s. Such schools included institutions and educational centers formed by parents and other community groups for different, sometimes all, age levels. (Silver et al 2008)

The educational system of England changed drastically by moving away from regional and district authority and decision making towards individual school financial and managerial control on national level; schools moved towards semi-business corporations in terms of management and financial support within larger educational system. (Whitty et al, 1998). The designed national curriculum was an attempt towards decentralization in England and Wales; however, central government kept necessary control and supervision over central and main content and objectives of education. Current English and Welsh schools have more control over their findings and they are legally allowed to declare independence from local authorities if the majority of parents vote for it. Teachers and school principals are already elected within the authority of the school and this has given more control and significance to schools. New Zealand experienced such drastic changes towards decentralization, as well; higher power of the board of trustees in the appointment of dismissal of teachers and school principals is among such changes. What New Zealand did was an attempt to replace centralization policies by the expansion of democratic equality policies in education. (Sal Sebili, 2007).

Iran has, also, fortunately been experiencing a movement towards decentralization, particularly in financial policies and implementation of educational programs, through certain policies, such as the establishment of education offices in different areas and giving more power to local authorities. It is hoped that teachers, school principals, and students get more involved in the design and implementation of curricula and educational programs; they are supposed to have a saying in school affairs, local needs, facilities, and the quality and quantity of current potentials. This is the only way to give a certain provincial, local, and social color to national curricula designed by central government. (Parvand, 2002).

The involvement of parents in educational trend is of tremendous significance for the enhancement of the quality of education and positive changes in school curriculum. Such changes presuppose certain political, economic, and social conditions which need to be dealt with in order to pave the way for positive function of such changes (Matta 2012). Changes in curriculum, like other social phenomena, occur within a certain cultural and economic context which will inevitably affect the quality and outcome of such changes. Thus, education experts must pay thorough attention to the hidden complications of such relationships. The realization of the objectives of changes applied in curriculum depend on several factors, such as school and teacher, earner, social and contextual conditions, and school subjects; among these factors, family and parents occupy a central role as social-contextual components. Parents cooperate with and involve in school affairs on different levels and, considering their knowledge of their children's interests and needs, recognize positive and negative experiences of their children much

better. Thus, they are inevitably involved in the design of the curriculum and other school issues. (Mardan 2013).

Parents are more involved in educational activities and programs nowadays; this change roots in both their feelings of responsibility towards the future of their children and the role education system has put on their shoulders (Abbas Zade 2007). According to what was mentioned above, recognizing parental experiences in regard with their involvement in the design and the implementation of curriculum is of paramount significance.

5. Discussion

Delphi technique was used to extract main themes of the definition, components, and significance of parental involvement; only components which qualified for a minimum of the third quartile are accepted as agreed upon commonly by experts in the field of curriculum studies; these components are the followings:

The underlying requirements of a consensus definition of involvement according to the ideas of experts

1. Involving parents in different curriculum processes
2. Performing role play on the part of various parties, such as teachers, students, parents, and experts, involved in curriculum
3. Collaborating and presenting solutions to improve program quality
4. Benefiting from valuable feedbacks of beneficiaries
5. Having a say in the distribution of power in society
6. Contributing the growth and development of education in society
7. Involving the stockholders in curriculum processes in order to train optimal citizens
8. Collaboration in order to enhance the quality of education in society
9. Providing emotional, social, and financial support for different curricula

Table. 1. Extracted criteria

Agreement level	Extracted criteria
85%>Q3	The necessity of parental involvement as an essential source of information
85%>Q3	Parental involvement as an essential requirement of today's education
92%>Q3	Recognizing strong and weak points of the plan
92%>Q3	Providing necessary context for the participation of involved individuals and components
76%>Q3	Empowering curricula
85%>Q3	Realizing Islamic teachings and social customs
92%>Q3	Involvement as a social necessity
76%>Q3	More precise and effective recognition of social norms
76%>Q3	Recognizing natural situations and necessary equipment
76%>Q3	Creating optima conditions for training an enlightened generation
76%>Q3	Removing the defects of involvement-free education
85%>Q3	Establishing more cooperation among administrators and recovers of educational services

According to the table, since all mentioned components qualify for the third quartile and have obtained a score above 75%, they are all commonly introduced by experts in the field as significant components in the cooperation of parents with school authorities in the design and implementation of curriculum.

Kendall coefficient is used in inferential technique in order to determine the extent of the harmony and consistency of ideas of Delphi technique panel.

Table 2. Kendall Coefficient

Significance level	Degree of freedom	Kendall Coefficient	number
sig	D.f	(w)	
0.001	11	0.78	34

According to the above table and a value of $w = 0.73$, with degree of freedom of 11 and $\text{sig} = 0.001$, it can be said that the extent of the consistency of panel members in determining components of parental involvement in primary school curriculum is significant; in other words, there is high agreement among experts in determining the components of parental involvement in primary school curriculum.

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