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Presenting an Integrated Curriculum Model for Revitalizing Primary Schools

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Purpose: School revitalization plays an important role in students' academic performance. Therefore, the purpose of the present research was to present an integrated curriculum model in order to revitalize elementary schools.

Methodology: The present study was applied in terms of purpose and descriptive survey in terms of methodology. The research population included the professors, experts of the Education Department of Tehran province, and the sample size was determined 289 people using the Cochran formula. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling method according to their job position. The data collection tool included a researcher-made questionnaire of an integrated curriculum aimed at revitalizing elementary schools, whose content validity was confirmed by the opinion of experts and its reliability was obtained 0.83using Cronbach's alpha method. Data analysis was carried out using exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling methods in SPSS and AMOS software.

Findings: The results showed that the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools consisted of 68 design items, i.e. goal (8 items) content (9 items), content organization (5 items), characteristics of learning activities (5 items), learning activity strategy (5 items), and evaluation (8 items), of which only the factor loading of 40 items was higher than 0.40. Also, the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools had a good fit and the integrated curriculum for revitalizing elementary schools had a significant effect on all six components of goal, content, content organization, characteristics of learning activities, strategies of learning activities and evaluation ($P<0.05$).

Conclusion: According to the results of this research, an effective step can be taken to revitalize elementary schools through the items of each of the six components of the integrated curriculum, including the goal, content, content organization, characteristics of learning activities, strategies of learning activities and evaluation.

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1. Introduction

The educational system is one of the important social institutions, which on the one hand, helps the flourishing of the individual's talents, abilities, and capabilities, and on the other hand, serves the social system to make socialization possible through the transfer or sometimes even through the change of social values and norms (Doosti & Kaviani, 2019). The importance and role of education in the growth and development of individual and social life has caused parents and society to expect that the school is a growing, dynamic, fresh environment and a foundation for the development of people's potential talents (Sezer & Can, 2020). Creating happy schools is one of the problems of the educational system, and although it is an old problem, it has not been taken seriously until now. Therefore, many students are not interested in schools, and some of them have an inner sense of truancy, which means that they run away from school or are not absent, but attend classes with a sense of indifference and are thus reluctant to make efforts to promote their academic performance. Also, students may be very interested in attending schools in some cases, but in some other schools, students are forced to attend school (Chorro, Fernandez & Gilar, 2017). If we want students to experience the flow of learning in school and if we want them to perceive school and learning as joyful, we must reconsider the teaching materials and teaching methods. Schools should no longer seek to create jobs and take exams, but should seek to nurture students because we can make learning successful by helping students to enjoy learning. For this purpose, paying attention to mental health and creating vitality in schools will make students attend school more willingly, which in turn will not only ensure more academic success, but also respect the school values and intimate and respectful relationships in school and society are strengthened at the same time (Jafari & Talebzadeh, 2011). Vitality has always been one of the integral aspects of life and one of the most important needs of students and teachers in educational systems, including schools, and due to its major adverse effects on the formation of human personality, it has always occupied the human mind (Van Hal, Bruggeman, Aertsen & Bruggeman, 2017). Happiness and vitality induce physical activity, increases participation, cooperation and social activity, motivation and hope, and promotes health and well-being (Sezer & Can, 2019). Today, the vitality of the educational environment plays a prominent role in the educational quality and curriculum planning so that psychological state of educational systems is closely related with the passion for learning, the activation of curiosity and the increase in creativity of students are closely related to the (Marquez & Main, 2021). Revitalization of the educational system is one of the main and serious concerns of policy makers and planners of the educational system because the vitality of the educational system is considered a basic need for students, and if the facilities, detailed and suitable educational programs can stimulate the curiosity of students and attract them to themselves, the educational environment will be joyful and uplifting for them (Al-Bataineh, Mahasneh & Al-Zoubi, 2021).

In addition to creating a satisfactory environment for the student, the use of uplifting strategies in curriculum and educational planning can deal with many other problems such as absenteeism, tardiness, boredom and boredom in class and academic failure, and ensure an effective and efficient learning environment (Mawdsley & Willis, 2019). One of the methods to revitalize schools is to use an integrated curriculum, and one of the necessities of such curriculum includes the ever-increasing growth of human knowledge and the multiplicity of teaching materials presented separately in different classes. In fact, the integrated curriculum means to connect and mix the content of the curriculum to achieve the goal of integrating learning experiences (Alizadeh, Ranjdoust & Qahramani, 2022). Nowadays, everyone acknowledges that the primary education period is considered to be one of the most sensitive stages of education where teaching and learning have a special importance, and education focuses on general and basic concepts in each of the scientific fields more frequently. Learners also need to understand concepts in an integrated manner and are not able to make connections between separate concepts (Tahmasebzadeh Sheikhlar, Fathiazar & Saniee, 2019). Integration is one of the important topics in curriculum planning, and an integrated curriculum means a set of planned learning experiences that not only provide the learner with a comprehensive view of a set of common information and knowledge in a systematic and structured manner, and increases their ability to receive and discover new connections (Kahveci & Atalay, 2015). The goal of the integrated curriculum is to communicate

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meaningfully and combine concepts, themes, and skills to create fundamental changes and transformations in the curriculum (Swanson, Brock, Van Sickle, Gutshall, Russell & Anderson, 2020). Integrated curriculum organization provides necessary grounds for achieving unity and integrity in learning experiences and leads to meaningful learning (Brooks & Nelson, 2018). Integratated curriculum approaches seek to provide opportunities for learners to familiarize themselves with diverse principles, foundations, methods and topics in multiple domains by providing a specific organization of education. In other words, curriculum integration includes mixing of curriculum content, processes and skills to achieve the coherence between students' knowledge and learning experiences (Junevicius, Juneviciene, Cepeliauskaite & Daugeliene, 2021). The integrated curriculum allows teachers to integrate the subject matter with everyday life issues so that students do not consider studying subjects as useless, but they learn to use them in a practical and real life in a desirable way (Lee, Wu, Lee, Fleming, Ruben, Turner & et al, 2020).

Although there have been some researches on the revitalization of schools, there has not been any research on providing an integrated curriculum model for it, and the results of the most important researches on revitalization are reported below.

Dinari & Andishmand (2020) in a research titled "students' perception and lived experience of the factors affecting optimism towards the educational system", concluded that from their point of view, the factors affecting optimism towards the educational system include four categories: school parents' moral characteristics, teachers' educational abilities, the educational activities in the school and the environmental characteristics and facilities of the school and various school programs.

Sezer & Can (2020) in a research titled "school vitality: a grounded theory" concluded that twelve main factors of school vitality include physical equipment, school environment, educational environment, communication and cooperation, educational policy, social activities, school management, teachers' competence, distinctive schools, student-centeredness, learning activities and student competencies.

Mertoglu (2020) conducted a research on the factors affecting the revitalization of primary school children and concluded that the factors affecting their vitality included enjoy going to school, spending time with peers and having fun with them, higher self-esteem and feeling safe in the school environment.

Doosti & Kaviani (2019) conducted a research on the technological factors affecting the revitalization of schools and concluded that seven educational factors (with the components of creating a sense of exploration, use of virtual reality technology, greater participation of teachers in design, development of appropriate educational content, using teaching aids, using online evaluation system, extensive use of educational technology to support learning by teacher and educators, use of active teaching methods, creating and presenting courseware and creating a sense of cooperation), educational (components of making magazines and publications available), the correct arrangement of tables and chairs, having educational facilities and space, appropriate coloring of tables and chairs, creating language laboratories, showing movies and theater puppet shows, painting the external and internal environment, using a virtual library, using video projectors and computers, and playing light music during the break time), hardware and software factors (components of using PowerPoint slides, computers, the Internet, online education and web conferencing and using cloud computing programs), technological delegation (components of providing informal environment for activities, participation of teachers in the technology-based decision-making process, interaction with external organizations, development of programs centered on happiness, participation of parents in decision-making and participation of students in the teaching process), organizational factors (components of providing a calm and stress-free environment, use of contingency style and dealing with teachers' and students' problems by principals), behavioral goals (components of preparing the lesson plan, specifying the behavioral goals and specifying the teachers' wishes) and the interaction of technology with the educational content (components of using modern technologies, using video games, setting the music break time and combining artistic, literary and academic subjects with music) were identified.

Jun & Jo (2016) conducted a research on the factors affecting students' vitality and concluded that the desire to support and express gratitude from close people play an effective role in students' vitality.

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Shafizadeh & Akbari (2015) conducted a research on the current state of happiness in primary schools from the perspective of teachers and principals and concluded that all components of happiness in primary schools including physical, educational, individual, emotional and social components were at the desired level from their point of view.

In a research titled "Reviewing the factors contributing to revitalizing schools on the academic progress of students" Arzani, Darvish & Zareiean (2015) concluded that physical, educational and managerial factors play an important role in revitalizing schools, and according to students and parents, physical factors were more effective on school revitalization.

In a research on the factors affecting the happiness of high-school students, Wu (2014) concluded that family, health, personality, ideal life, learning, friends, education and free time are the factors affecting the vitality of students.

In a research on the presentation of a model for vitality and happiness in elementary schools, Jafari & Talebzadeh (2011) concluded that the above model consisted of four main parts: philosophy and goals of the model, theoretical foundations, conceptual framework and implementation steps, and according to teachers and principals, physical, social-emotional, individual and educational factors were the most effective factors in the vitality of primary schools, respectively.

For many years, certain problems have occurred in the Iran's educational system, which include conveying to students, improper use of educational facilities and resources, lack of educational resources and equipment, unmotivated and inexperienced teachers, crowded classrooms, lack of motivation to learn, academic failure, having a spirit of competition instead of participation and cooperation, and low enthusiasm, vigor and cheerfulness, all of which are among the shortcomings, problems and issues that the educational system has been facing continuously (Doosti & Kaviani, 2019). Educational system expert and planners have now paid special attention to the integrated curriculum approach as they experienced designing integrated curriculum in the primary school and even before that, and it has now been extended to secondary and higher education curricula. Therefore, the importance of integrated curriculum in elementary school is highlighted and a research necessity is felt in this field (Tahmasebzadeh Sheikhlar et al., 2019). Revitalizing schools is important and, integrated curriculum plays an important role in improving academic performance, and since there has been no research on the integrated curriculum model in order to revitalize schools, and such a model can play an effective role in improving academic performance and help expert and planners in designing suitable school curricula, therefore, the purpose of the present research was to present an integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools.

2. Methodology

This was an applied study in terms of purpose and descriptive survey in terms of procedure. The research population included the professors and experts of the Education Department of Tehran province, and the sample size was determined 289 people by the Cochran formula who were selected by stratified random sampling method according to their job position. After preparing the list of the population by separating the job positions in this sampling method, their proportion was obtained and according to the desired sample size (n=289 people), sampling was carried out in the same proportion from the study population. It should be noted that the inclusion criteria included the consent to participate in the research, no covid-19 infection in the participants or their family member, signing the consent form to participate in the research, and the absence of stressful events such as divorce and death of relatives in the last three months, no addiction and use of psychiatric drugs and no psychological services in the last three months. Exclusion criteria also included refusing to complete the data collection tools and not responding to more than a percentage of the data collection tools.

Prior to the research, the proposal was approved and literature review was carried out with the help of professors and advisors. Then questions were designed for the researcher-made questionnaire of an integrated curriculum in order to revitalize elementary schools. After designing the final form of the questionnaire, the

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necessary coordination was made with the Department of Education and after expressing the importance and necessity of the research and observing the ethical considerations, they were asked to answer the researcher-made questionnaire. The completed questionnaire was reviewed, and the participants were appreciated if they fully completed it.

The data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire of an integrated curriculum for revitalizing elementary schools. It consisted of with 68 items and six components: including goal (16 items), content (13 items), content organization (8 items), characteristics of learning activities (8 items), strategies of learning activities (11 items), and evaluation (12 items). The items were scored using a seven-point Likert scale, so that the lowest and the highest score for each item was 1 (Strongly disagree) and 7 (Strongly agree). The total score is also calculated through the sum of the total scores of the items, and accordingly, the score of each component is calculated through the sum of the total scores of its constituent components. In the present study, the content validity of the researcher-made questionnaire was confirmed by the opinion of experts and its reliability was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method (α= 0.83).

Finally, the data analysis was carried out using exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling in SPSS and AMOS software.

3. Findings

There was no drop-out in the present study. Prior to exploratory factor analysis, its assumptions were checked and the KMO index (0.87) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (1308.25) were statistically significant (P<0.001), which indicated the sample adequacy and correlation. The results of the exploratory factor analysis of the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools were reported in Table 1.

Table 1. The results of the exploratory factor analysis of the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools

Components	Factor loading	Number of items	AVE	Cronbach's reliability	Composite reliability
Goal	0.68	8	0.62	0.88	0.91
Content	0.73	9	0.57	0.95	0.98
Content organization	0.60	5	0.51	0.84	0.82
Characteristics of learning activities	0.57	5	0.67	0.94	0.98
Strategies of learning activities	0.72	5	0.60	0.90	0.94
Evaluation	0.74	8	0.55	0.87	0.93

As can be observed in Table 1, 40 items with a factor loading >0.40 were identified and 28 items were removed and the factor loading of all six components was higher than 0.50. Also, the average extracted variance of all six components was higher than 0.50 and the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability was higher than 0.80. The results of non-standard and standard regression estimates of the items of each of the six components of the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools were reported in Table 2.

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Table 2. The results of non-standard and standard regression estimates of the components of the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools

Components	Items	Non-standard coefficients	Standard error	Critical ratio	Standard coefficients	P-value
Goal	Combining and linking knowledge, methods, skills, tools and perspectives	1.10	0.13	8.06	0.62	0.001
	Reducing the number of subjects	0.98	0.12	7.90	0.60	0.001
	Implementation of the upstream documents of education in the field of curriculum integration	1.05	0.14	7.53	0.56	0.001
	Attention to the interests, needs, personality and abilities of learners	0.95	0.14	6.54	0.50	0.001
	Involving school teachers and principals in revitalizing schools	1.08	0.14	7.23	0.53	0.001
	Designing the curriculum in an emotional and stress-free environment	1.17	0.16	7.11	0.51	0.001
	Designing the curriculum in an easy, fun and attractive way	1.09	0.15	7.17	0.52	0.001
	Curriculum design for the flourishing of students' creativity and talent	1.01	0.14	6.32	0.56	0.001

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	Coherence and integrity of content	1.01	0.13	3.33	0.60	0.001
	Verbal, motor, mental and emotional tasks	1.07	0.13	8.19	0.56	0.001
	Creating interdisciplinary understanding	1.20	0.13	8.84	0.61	0.001
	Connection between lessons, educational content and revitalizing designs	0.99	0.11	8.55	0.59	0.001
Content	Matching the content with the cognitive, emotional and personality characteristics of the students	1.08	0.14	7.49	0.50	0.001
	Balanced content and avoiding going to extremes	1.02	0.12	8.13	0.55	0.001
	Attractive and childish content	0.92	0.11	8.28	0.56	0.001
	New and innovative content tailored to the needs of children	0.88	0.11	7.45	0.50	0.001
	Useful content	1.17	0.14	8.17	0.56	0.001
	Parallel disciplines	1.011	0.14	6.29	0.58	0.001
	Multi-disciplines	1.11	0.12	8.67	0.69	0.001
Content organization	Broad disciplines	1.15	0.13	8.87	0.71	0.001
	Interdisciplines	0.83	0.10	7.68	0.57	0.001
	Organize content from easy to difficult issues	1.01	0.13	7.53	0.56	0.001
	Humanist	1.01	0.14	7.12	0.61	0.001
	Pragmatic	0.80	0.10	7.60	0.51	0.001

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Characteristics of learning activities	Metacognition	0.85	0.12	7.14	0.50	0.001
	Compensating the deficiencies of textbooks with integrated curriculum	0.99	0.11	8.70	0.60	0.001
	non-time-consuming learning activities	0.79	0.10	7.42	0.50	0.001
Strategies of learning activities	Problem-solving method	1.02	0.13	6.84	0.57	0.001
	Brainstorming method	1.03	0.12	7.99	0.58	0.001
	Meaningful learning	0.93	0.11	8.33	0.64	0.001
	Learning through games, music, drawing and practical work	0.97	0.11	8.57	0.59	0.001
	Learning through camps and group visits	0.93	0.11	8.05	0.66	0.001
Evaluation	Report writing	1.23	0.17	6.98	0.66	0.001
	Process-oriented evaluation instead of result-oriented	1.01	0.16	6.34	0.54	0.001
	Attention to behaviors, activities, skills, attitudes and performances	0.94	0.14	6.72	0.61	0.001
	Asking parents for their opinions in the evaluation phase	0.89	0.14	6.34	0.54	0.001
	Emphasis on quality instead of quantity	0.81	0.13	6.06	0.50	0.001
	Evaluation during practice and learning	0.85	0.14	5.76	0.50	0.001

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Implicit and indirect evaluation	0.81	0.13	6.03	0.50	0.001
Practical and applied evaluation	1.01	0.14	6.27	0.50	0.001
Items	Non-standard coefficients	Standard error	Critical ratio	Standard coefficients	P-value

As can be observed in Table 2, the standardized coefficients for all items were equal to or greater than 0.50, which were statistically significant (P<0.001). The results of the structural equation modeling fit indices for the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools were reported in Table 3.

Table 3. The results of the structural equation modeling fit indices of the integrated curriculum model in for revitalizing elementary schools

Fit indices	Value	Criterion	Interpretation
CMIN/DF	2.58	Less than 3	Acceptable
RMR	0.04	Less than 0.05	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.07	Less than 0.08	Acceptable
PNFI	0.59	More than 0.50	Acceptable
CFI	0.91	More than 0.90	Acceptable

As it can be observed in Table 3, the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools had an acceptable fit. The results of modeling the structural equations of the integrated curriculum model of revitalizing elementary schools when using standard coefficients were reported in Figure 1.

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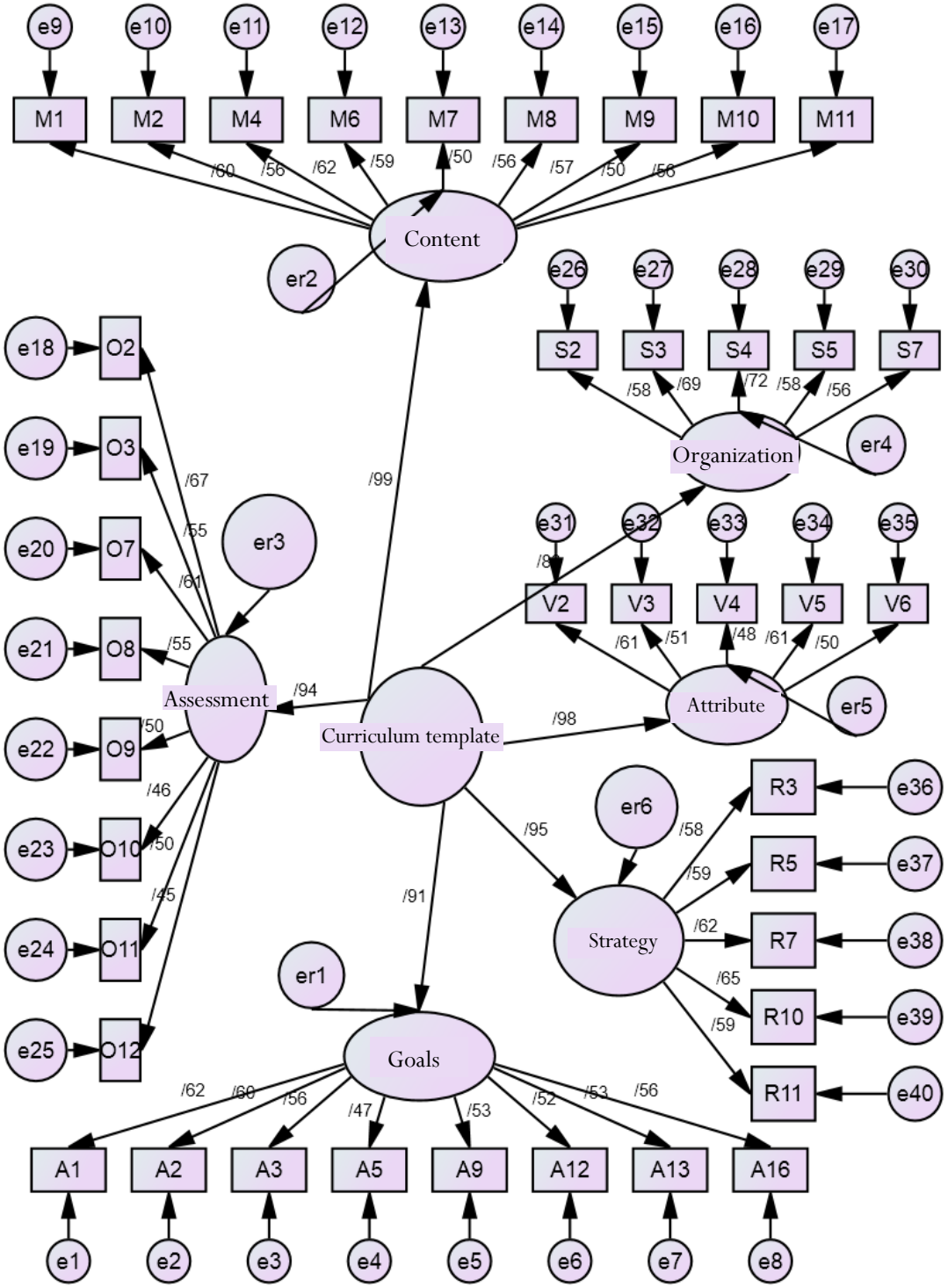

Figure 1. The results of structural equation modeling of the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools

As can be observed in Figure 1, the integrated curriculum model of revitalizing elementary schools had a significant effect on all six components of goal, content, content organization, characteristics of learning activities, strategies of learning activities, and evaluation ($P<0.05$).

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4. Conclusion

As one of the deep positive feelings and one of the most essential natural desires and psychological needs of humans, vitality play a decisive role in ensuring the health of the individual and society, and since vitality is always related to happiness, optimism, hope and trust, it can play an accelerating role in the growth and development of the society. Revitalizing schools, especially in primary schools, plays an important role in attracting students to academic activities, and considering the importance of integrated curriculum in revitalizing school, the present research was conducted with the aim of providing a model of integrated curriculum for revitalizing elementary schools.

The results showed that the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools consisted of 40 items and six components, namely, goal, content, content organization, characteristics of learning activities, strategies of learning activities and evaluation. Also, the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools had a good fit, and the integrated curriculum for revitalizing elementary schools had a significant effect on all above six components. Although there has been no research on the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools, there were studies on the factors affecting the revitalization of schools, (2020), including Mertoglu (2020), Doosti & Kaviani (2019), Jun & Jo (2016), Shafizadeh & Akbari (2015), Arzani et al (2015), Wu (2014) and Jafari & Talebzadeh (2011), which are somehow consistent with the present study

To interpret the results of the present research, it can be stated that poor attention to revitalization and vitality, as well as the expectations and demands of students and ignoring an appropriate context for self-expression and emotional release, leads to false happiness and sometimes social harm and a sense of meaninglessness in life. The issue of freshness in schools and the training happy people has been given special attention to the extent that it is regarded one of the important goals of the educational system in the Fundamental Reform Document of Education. In order to achieve success in this important mission, i.e. revitalizing schools, proper and efficient planning is needed, and for this purpose, it is necessary to pay attention to all the human components in different spiritual, physical, moral, social, etc. dimensions. dimensions. One of the ways to revitalize schools is to use an integrated curriculum. That is, a curriculum that link different concepts and skills to give them coherence and integrity. Integrated curriculum is a developing need that has been introduced mainly due to the shortcomings and absences of common curricula such as discipline-oriented and topic-oriented. Besides, the knowledge and information technology, the fragmentation of different parts of discipline-oriented and topic-oriented curricula and their mismatch with the realities of the personal and social lives of learners and the unfortunate results and consequences of existing curricula have increased the attention of educational system experts to the category of integrated curriculum. It was found in the present research that the goals as one of components of the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools, should be designed in such a way that they focus on the combination and connection of knowledge, methods, skills, tools and perspectives, reducing the number of subjects and course materials, and implementing the upstream documents of education in integrating the curriculum, paying attention to the interests, needs, personality and abilities of the learners, involving school teachers and principals to revitalize the schools and design the curriculum in an emotional, emotional, stress-free, easy, fun and attractive way to flourish the creativity and talent of the students. In the aforementioned curriculum model, the content should match the goals and have coherence and integrity, verbal, motor, mental and emotional tasks, creating interdisciplinary understanding, connection between course contents, educational content and revitalizing designs, matching the content with cognitive, emotional and personality characteristics of students, balanced content and avoid going to extremes, attractive, childish, new and innovative content that is appropriate to the needs of children and useful content. Another important point is to organize contents based on the goals. For this purpose, it is necessary to pay attention to several points, including the ways of organizing parallel disciplines, multi-disciplines, broad disciplines, interdisciplines and from easy to difficult design. Also, learning activities in the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools should be based on specific approaches and have characteristics such as humanism,

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pragmatism, metacognition, compensating for the deficiencies of textbooks with integrated curriculum and non-time-consuming learning activities. Besides, the learning strategies in the aforementioned model should be based on problem-solving and brainstorming methods so that meaningful learning takes place, and for this purpose it is necessary to use games, music, painting, practical work, and group camps and visits. The last component in the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools is evaluation, which for its proper and desirable realization, different evaluation methods should be used, including report writing, process-oriented evaluation instead of result-oriented one, paying attention to behaviors, activities, skills, attitudes, and performances, and asking parents for opinions, emphasis on quality instead of quantity, evaluation during learning, implicit and indirect evaluation, and practical and applied evaluation were used.
One of the important limitations of the present research was the Covid-19 outbreak, which sometimes caused the absence of professors, experts of the Department of Education, which in turn slightly prolonged the collect data duration. Another limitation was the descriptive and cross-sectional nature of this study that was conducted on professors, and experts of the Department of Education of Tehran province, and if longitudinal studies were used, or it was carried out on professors, experts of the Department of Education of other provinces, or even on other groups, different results may be achieved. Therefore, it is suggested to conduct further researches on the integrated curriculum for revitalizing elementary schools and design programs for its implementation. Another suggestion is to present an integrated curriculum model for revitalizing elementary schools from the perspective of parents or even students, or to design a model for it in other academic courses, including the junior or second secondary school or university. Another suggestion is to develop various tools to investigate the integrated curriculum for revitalizing schools and the extent of its realization. According to the results of this research about the six components of the goal, content, organization of content, characteristics of learning activities, strategies of learning activities and evaluation, and the items or indicators of each of them in the integrated curriculum model for revitalizing schools, steps can be taken to improve school revitalization. Therefore, the results of this research and similar researches can be used by officials, planners and experts of the educational system and even the higher education system, and they make an effort to improve the solutions based on the six components in order to improve revitalization of the educational system. According to the results of this research, there is a need to revise the curriculum of the primary school so that an effective step can be taken for revitalizing primary schools by designing an integrated curriculum.

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