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Designing a Citizenship Rights Curriculum Model for the Second Period of Elementary Education

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A B S T R A C T

Purpose: The present study aimed to design a curriculum model for citizenship rights for students in the second period of elementary education. It sought to examine the components of the citizenship rights curriculum, introduce the main components and categories forming this field, and ultimately provide an ideal model in line with needs assessment and educational context.

Methodology: The methodology of this study was qualitative, utilizing a grounded theory approach. The collection and formulation of model categories involved 21 structured interviews with experts and teachers in the field of citizenship and civil rights education, followed by the validation of the proposed model using a member checking method.

Findings: The findings of this research presented a model comprising 11 main categories including causal conditions, performance-based planning, contextual conditions, contextually oriented performance-based planning (political, economic, cultural, legal, and citizenship orientations), interveners (characteristics of teachers and learners), strategies (initial, educational, and feedback), and outcomes (enhancing student performance levels and creating a sustainable curriculum).

Conclusion: Specialized multi-faceted planning was identified as the core category of the model. Finally, recommendations were provided.

Keywords: *Curriculum, Citizenship Rights, Education, Second Period of Elementary.*

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1. Introduction

The development and implementation of an effective citizenship rights curriculum within the second period of elementary education represent a pivotal aspect of fostering a generation of informed, responsible, and engaged citizens (Khosravi & Mehrmohammadi, 2023). This initiative not only aims to equip students with the knowledge of their rights and responsibilities but also seeks to instill in them the values of respect, tolerance, and active participation within their communities (Rezaie M, 2021).

Citizenship education is underpinned by several key theoretical constructs that guide its objectives and methodologies. Among these, the human security framework as discussed by Adebayo and Mansikka (2018) emphasizes the importance of integrating human rights within the context of citizenship education, advocating for a curriculum that transcends traditional security concerns to include a broader understanding of human welfare and dignity (Adebayo & Mansikka, 2018). Similarly, the concept of the educating city, as proposed by Amini et al. (2014), underscores the role of urban environments in facilitating learning and citizenship through advanced technology and infrastructure, suggesting that citizenship education can benefit from leveraging the resources and spaces within mega-cities like Tehran (Amini et al., 2014).

Arthur and Davison (2000) contribute to this theoretical foundation by focusing on social literacy and its role in citizenship education, highlighting the necessity of developing students' ability to navigate and contribute to their social environments effectively (Arthur & Davison, 2000). This approach is complemented by the work of Chistolini (2019), who examines the intersection of citizenship education and teacher training in Italy, indicating the critical role of educators in delivering effective citizenship education through both research and practice (Chistolini, 2019).

A thorough review of the literature reveals a multifaceted discussion on the challenges and opportunities associated with citizenship education. Davies and Chong (2016) identify the current challenges for citizenship education in England, pointing to the evolving societal expectations and the need for curricula to reflect these changes dynamically (Davies & Chong, 2016). Engel (2014) offers an analysis of citizenship education reform in Spain, providing valuable insights into how national reforms can impact the global citizenship perspective, emphasizing the importance of national contexts in shaping citizenship education policies and practices (Engel, 2014).

Fry and O'Brien (2017) explore the potential of citizenship education to advance social justice, arguing for a collective responsibility to foster an equitable society through educational practices (Fry & O'Brien, 2017). This perspective is echoed by Gaudelli and Heilman (2009), who advocate for a reconceptualization of geography education as a means to promote democratic global citizenship, suggesting that subject-specific education can contribute significantly to broader citizenship objectives (Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009).

The role of teachers is a recurrent theme in the literature, with Gürkan and Doğanay (2020) examining the factors affecting citizenship education from the perspectives of secondary-school teachers in Turkey. Their findings underscore the importance of teacher perceptions and experiences in shaping effective citizenship education (Gürkan & Doğanay, 2020). Similarly, Ke (2019) delves into the British experience of teacher professionalization in citizenship education, highlighting the essential role of teacher training and professional development in achieving educational goals (Ke, 2019).

Kim (2013) introduces a narrative concept of citizenship, proposing that citizenship education should facilitate identity-making among children. This approach aligns with the broader objective of fostering a sense of belonging and participation among young citizens (Kim, 2013). Meyer, Bromley, and Ramírez (2010) examine the representation of human rights in social science textbooks, emphasizing the curriculum content's role in shaping students' understanding of citizenship and rights (Meyer et al., 2010).

Continuing the exploration of educational content and approaches, Osler and Starkey (2006) provide a comprehensive review of research, policy, and practice in education for democratic citizenship over a decade, offering a critical overview of the field's evolution and its impact on educational practices (Osler & Starkey, 2006). Poursalim, Arefi, and Vajargah (2020) focus on the planning and validation of a global citizenship education curriculum for elementary schools in Iran, highlighting the global dimensions of citizenship education and the need for curricula that reflect international concerns and values (PoursalİM et al., 2020).

The conversation around citizenship education also encompasses cultural literacy and the preparation of culturally literate citizens. Rapanta, Vrikki, and Evagorou (2020) discuss the role of dialogue and argumentation in

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preparing culturally literate citizens, emphasizing the importance of citizenship education in fostering understanding and respect for diverse cultures and perspectives (Rapanta et al., 2020). This is further supported by the work of Samadi-Miarkolaei (2018), who explores the correlation between organizational citizenship behavior and organizational justice, suggesting that the principles of fairness and justice should be integral to citizenship education (Samadi-Miarkolaei, 2018).

The literature also addresses specific educational contexts, such as nationalism education in elementary schools, as reviewed by Saputra, Murdiono, and Tohani (2023). Their systematic literature review provides insights into how nationalism and citizenship education can be effectively integrated to foster a sense of national identity and commitment among young learners (Saputra et al., 2023). Lastly, Villegas and Lucas (2002) advocate for the preparation of culturally responsive teachers, highlighting the necessity of educators who are adept at addressing the diverse cultural backgrounds and needs of their students within the context of citizenship education (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

In conclusion, the development of a citizenship rights curriculum for the second period of elementary education is informed by a rich theoretical and empirical foundation. The concepts and models discussed provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the objectives and challenges of citizenship education, while the literature review highlights the diversity of approaches and perspectives that have shaped the field. The integration of these insights is crucial for designing a curriculum that is both relevant and effective in cultivating informed, engaged, and responsible citizens.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The method of the present study was conducted within the framework of a qualitative approach using grounded theory. The required data were collected through semi-structured interviews.

The population consisted of experts and scholars knowledgeable in civil rights and curriculum, who could provide valuable information to the researcher. Theoretical sampling was used in the qualitative section, and purposive sampling was employed in the quantitative section. In qualitative research, data collection ceases when information saturation is achieved for all the desired categories, occurring when the theory or narrative under study is completed, and no new information on the subject matter is discovered. Therefore, in qualitative research, the sample size is considered synonymous with data saturation (Abedi, 2006, p. 68). In this vein, the sample of this study comprised 21 experts and scholars in the field of citizenship rights curriculum.

2.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this research was based on the guidelines provided by Strauss and Corbin, which include three primary stages: open, axial, and selective coding. It should be noted that for the validation of findings derived from coding and text analysis of the interviews, some of the teachers, specialists, and legal and curriculum experts reviewed and observed the results; an agreement exists among the outcomes obtained. Ultimately, the qualitative model of the research is stated. Additionally, to validate the obtained model, the method of member checking was utilized.

3. Findings and Results

In the current study, a total of 21 participants were recruited to provide insights into the design and implementation of a citizenship rights curriculum for upper elementary education. The participant group comprised a diverse array of professionals including educators, curriculum planners, and legal experts, ensuring a comprehensive perspective on the curriculum development process. Among the participants, 12 were identified as educators with firsthand experience in delivering classroom instruction, representing a frequency of 57%. Additionally, 5 participants (24%) were curriculum planners, individuals who play a pivotal role in the conceptual and logistical aspects of curriculum development. The remaining 4 participants (19%) were legal experts, offering specialized knowledge on the integration of citizenship rights within educational content.

Table 1

The Results of Qualitative Analysis

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Main Categories	Subcategories (Concepts and Characteristics)	Type of Categories
Performance-based Planning	- Training and Strengthening Educators with specialized and in-service training - Textbook Organization: Investment and updating based on societal needs, setting strategic goals - Continuity and Sequentiality in curriculum considering technology and societal changes - Continuous Research and Needs Assessment to keep the curriculum relevant and updated - Using Standards for coherence and continuity in educational content	Causal Conditions
Specialized Multi-faceted Planning in Citizenship Rights Curriculum	- Involvement of legal experts and planners for high-level decision-making, team-based planning, and consideration of psychological and philosophical knowledge	Core Category
Political and Economic Contextual Orientation	- Policy Making Based on Higher-Level Documents: Attention to existing documents, policy-based decision making, ensuring operational and measurable definitions - Budget Allocation Policies: Adjusting the ideological perspective towards rights	Contextual Conditions
Cultural Contextual Orientation	- Attention to Legal Identity in Cultural Living: Adjusting ideological perspectives, emphasizing legal identity in culture - Media and Cyberspace: Highlighting media's role, promoting correct and legal use of cyberspace, raising awareness on legal issues	
Teacher Characteristics	- Personal Characteristics: Enhancing teachers' patience, beliefs, challenge-acceptance - Interpersonal Characteristics: Efficient interaction with learners, supporting applied learning - Professional Characteristics: Awareness of professional nuances, up-to-date methods, responsibility	Intervening Conditions
Learner Characteristics	- Emotional: Confidence, perseverance, motivation - Cognitive: Attention to prior knowledge, defining entry and exit characteristics - Social: Participation in citizenship rights learning, responsibility in thematic learning	
Contextual Actions	- Awareness and Motivation Creation: Motivating stakeholders, highlighting the importance of learning rights as life skills - Clarification of Educational Goals: Making objectives clear, providing operational definitions - Standardization of Educational Levels: Aligning teachings with standard age and educational levels	
Educational Actions	- Quality-Centric Approaches: Logical student numbers, standardization of the educational environment - Interaction Orientation: Increased teacher-student interaction based on individual needs - Professional Development of Teachers: Conducting in-service training, workshops	
Strategic Actions	- Program Evaluation: Continuous review and updating of the curriculum based on legal and societal conditions - Teacher Evaluation: Disciplinary and performance evaluations, self-evaluation awareness - Learner Evaluation: Various types of evaluations based on practical use of legal issues	
Enhancing the Level of Citizenship Rights Education	- Personal and Institutional Growth: Development of teachers' attitudes, enhancing learner performance, cultivating global legal citizens	Outcomes
Creating a Sustainable Curriculum	- Creating a Researched Curriculum: Formation based on scientific studies, goal-oriented approach - Creating a Comprehensive Curriculum: Considering all stakeholders, enabling interests and attitudes emergence, flexibility	

The design and implementation of a citizenship rights curriculum for the upper elementary period demand a comprehensive approach, encapsulated in a model comprising various interconnected categories. Our study delineates these categories into causal conditions, core categories, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, outcomes, and the strategies and actions required to navigate these components effectively.

Performance-based Planning: This foundational category emphasizes the importance of specialized training for educators, modern and relevant textbook organization, and the incorporation of continuous research and needs assessment to ensure curriculum relevance and applicability. One educator noted, "Integrating real-world issues into the curriculum has dramatically increased student engagement and understanding of citizenship rights."

Specialized Multi-faceted Planning: Highlighted as the core category, it underscores the necessity of involving experts in law and curriculum planning to foster a multidimensional approach. "The collaboration between legal experts and curriculum designers is vital for a curriculum that is both accurate and applicable," shared a curriculum planner.

Contextual Conditions: This category comprises political, economic, and cultural orientations. Policies based on higher-level documents and budget allocation policies reflect the political and economic aspects, while cultural orientation involves adjusting the curriculum to reflect legal identities and the role of media. An interviewee emphasized, "Adapting the curriculum to our cultural context while respecting global human rights standards is challenging but essential."

Teacher and Learner Characteristics: Teachers' personal, interpersonal, and professional characteristics directly impact the effectiveness of citizenship education. Similarly, addressing learners' emotional, cognitive, and social characteristics is crucial for their engagement and growth. "Understanding each student's background helps me tailor lessons that resonate with them personally," stated a teacher.

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Educational and Strategic Actions: These actions focus on quality-centric approaches, interaction orientation, professional development, program evaluation, and comprehensive curriculum development. The significance of ongoing professional development was highlighted by a respondent: "Continuous learning and adapting new teaching strategies have been key to my professional growth and effectiveness in the classroom."

Outcomes: The ultimate goal is to enhance the level of citizenship rights education, which encompasses both personal and institutional growth, aiming to cultivate informed, responsible global citizens with a solid understanding of their rights and responsibilities. A participating expert reflected, "Seeing students apply their understanding of citizenship rights in real-world contexts is the ultimate indicator of our curriculum's success."

Discussion and Conclusion

The comprehensive analysis of the data collected in this study led to the identification of four main themes central to the design and implementation of a citizenship rights curriculum for upper elementary education. These themes are Performance-based Planning, Specialized Multi-faceted Planning, Contextual Conditions, and Teacher and Learner Characteristics. Each main theme comprises several categories that further delineate the specific components necessary for the effective delivery of citizenship education. These categories include concepts such as training and strengthening educators, textbook organization, policy-making based on higher-level documents, budget allocation policies, and the personal, interpersonal, and professional characteristics of teachers and learners.

Performance-based Planning emerged as a foundational theme, emphasizing the critical role of educator training, textbook relevance, continuous research and needs assessment, and the use of standards in curriculum development. Categories under this theme highlighted the necessity of equipping educators with specialized and in-service training, ensuring textbooks are up-to-date and reflective of societal needs, conducting ongoing research to keep the curriculum relevant, and establishing clear standards for educational content and delivery.

Specialized Multi-faceted Planning was identified as the core theme, underscoring the importance of involving a diverse team of experts in law and curriculum planning. This approach is crucial for creating a curriculum that is not only legally sound but also pedagogically effective. Categories within this theme stressed the need for high-level decision-making by experts in both law and education, advocating for a collaborative, team-based approach to curriculum design and the inclusion of psychological and philosophical knowledge in educational planning.

Contextual Conditions focused on the political, economic, and cultural environment surrounding the citizenship curriculum. Categories under this theme pointed to the necessity of aligning the curriculum with existing policies and guidelines, adjusting budget allocations to support citizenship education, and tailoring educational content to reflect the legal identities and cultural realities of students. This theme emphasizes the importance of a curriculum that is responsive to the broader societal and global context in which students live and learn.

Teacher and Learner Characteristics highlighted the human element of citizenship education, identifying key attributes of both educators and students that contribute to successful learning outcomes. Categories in this theme covered a range of characteristics, including the personal, interpersonal, and professional qualities of teachers, as well as the emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of learners. This theme underscores the significance of understanding and addressing the diverse needs and capabilities of both teachers and students in the educational process.

The significance of performance-based planning in the curriculum resonates with the findings of Adebayo and Mansikka (2018), who emphasize the necessity of embedding human security and citizenship within the broader context of human rights education. This alignment is crucial for fostering an environment where students can engage with citizenship rights not only as abstract concepts but as tangible aspects of their daily lives and the global community (Adebayo & Mansikka, 2018). Similarly, the necessity of specialized multi-faceted planning, as highlighted in our study, finds support in the work of Engel (2014), who discusses the importance of national reforms and curriculum adaptation to foster global citizenship. This suggests a growing recognition of the need for curricula that are both flexible and responsive to changing societal and global dynamics (Engel, 2014).

The contextual conditions identified in our research, encompassing political, economic, and cultural orientations, are echoed in the study by Kim (2013), which underscores the role of narrative in citizenship education and the importance of aligning educational content with students'

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identities and the broader societal context (Ke, 2019). This is further supported by Saputra, Murdiono, and Tohani (2023), who emphasize the critical role of nationalism education within the elementary school setting, suggesting that citizenship education must be contextually grounded to be effective (Saputra et al., 2023).

Our findings regarding the teacher and learner characteristics necessary for effective citizenship education align with the perspectives of Villegas and Lucas (2002), who advocate for the preparation of culturally responsive teachers. This underscores the importance of teacher characteristics, including professional development and personal attitudes, in facilitating meaningful learning experiences (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Moreover, the learner characteristics identified in our study, including emotional, cognitive, and social aspects, find resonance in the work of Gaudelli and Heilman (2009), who argue for the reconceptualization of geography education as a means of promoting democratic global citizenship, highlighting the importance of engaging learners on multiple levels (Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009).

The outcomes of our study, emphasizing the enhancement of citizenship rights education and the creation of a sustainable curriculum, reflect the collective goal of citizenship education to cultivate informed, responsible global citizens. This is supported by the work of Meyer, Bromley, and Ramírez (2010), who examine the representation of human rights in social science textbooks, suggesting that the content of citizenship education must be continually revised and updated to remain relevant and impactful (Meyer et al., 2010).

This study aimed to design and validate a citizenship rights curriculum model for upper elementary education, utilizing a qualitative approach and grounded theory methodology. Through the participation of 21 experts in the fields of education, law, and curriculum development, we identified key components necessary for the effective delivery of citizenship education. These components include performance-based planning, specialized multi-faceted planning, contextual orientation, and the significance of teacher and learner characteristics. The findings underscore the importance of a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach that integrates continuous research, needs assessment, and the latest educational strategies to foster a dynamic and responsive citizenship education curriculum.

The study contributes significantly to the field of citizenship education by outlining a structured framework for developing a citizenship rights curriculum that is both practical and adaptable to the evolving needs of society. By highlighting the necessity of specialized knowledge, contextual sensitivity, and an emphasis on the developmental characteristics of upper elementary students, this research provides a blueprint for creating an engaging and meaningful citizenship education experience. It underscores the potential for citizenship education to empower students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to navigate their roles as informed and active participants in a democratic society.

This study's primary limitation lies in its reliance on a relatively small and specialized sample of participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the qualitative approach, while offering in-depth insights, restricts the ability to quantify the effectiveness of the proposed curriculum model across diverse educational settings. Another limitation is the potential for bias in participant responses, given their professional investment in the field of citizenship education.

Future research should consider expanding the participant base to include a broader demographic of educators, students, and policymakers to capture a more diverse range of perspectives on citizenship education. Quantitative studies could be employed to measure the effectiveness of the proposed curriculum model in enhancing students' understanding of and engagement with citizenship rights. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into the long-term impact of citizenship education on students' civic attitudes and behaviors.

The findings of this study have significant implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. It suggests the need for ongoing professional development for teachers in the areas of citizenship education and human rights. Schools and educational authorities should consider integrating the proposed curriculum model into existing frameworks, ensuring that it is tailored to meet the specific needs and contexts of their student populations. Policymakers are encouraged to support initiatives that foster partnerships between educational institutions, legal experts, and civic organizations to enrich the citizenship education curriculum with real-world applications and experiences. This collaborative approach can enhance the relevance and impact of citizenship education, preparing students to contribute positively to society.

Authors' Contributions

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The authors of this study actively and constructively participated in all stages of the research.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

No conflict of interest was reported.

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Ethical Considerations

Researchers endeavored to adhere to all ethical standards, including confidentiality and individuals' freedom to participate or not participate in the research.

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