



WCES-2011

The study of civic values in Persian literature textbooks of mentally retarded primary school students and their correspondence with current priorities

Sedigheh Kazemi ^a*, Behrooz Mahram ^b

^a Curriculum Ph.D. student of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. P.O Box: 9177948991-1518

^b Faculty member of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. P.O Box: 9177948991-1518

Abstract

The objective of this study was to investigate the presence and rate of civic values and the components forming each of these values embedded in the content of Persian literature textbooks provided for mentally-retarded primary school students. In this content analysis study, the content of all seven Persian literature textbooks for mentally-retarded students were studied. Word, illustration and content were used as recording units. Codification was made deductively based on four civic values, named individual identify, national-cultural identify, religious identify and norms. All of these values included 23 forming components. © 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Keywords: Civic values; content analysis; mentally retarded students; Persian literature textbooks; primary school

1. Introduction

From ancient times up to now, civic training has been considered as a main goal of education systems. Work related to Aristotle and Plato points out this fact (Konutselini, 2008). Nowadays, civic training as a research agenda is increasingly emphasized in the curricula of most schools and colleges throughout the world (Derricott, 1998; Torney-Purta, Schwill & Amadeo, cf: Pinson, 2007: 351). Some identify civic training as a developing movement (Tooth, 2008: 20). School curricula are of main means of civic training (Print & Smith, 2000; Osborne, 1998).

As civic training and civic values can be taught by family, school, public media and social institutions, Lotfabadi (2006) emphasizes the vital responsibility of education systems in this training. Afkhami (2008:3) considers two needs to be fulfilled in students each growth stage: individual needs which are related to the quality of an individual's growth and necessary for civic training. Curriculum content should balance these two needs.

Mentally-retarded children cannot learn social values and patterns by observation or copying with (Westwood, 2003). Besides, individuals' multi-dimensional formation and development appears in their primary school ages (Callahan, Clark, and Kellough, 1992) and then, the importance of civic training in all primary school students, including the mentally-retarded ones as members of citizenship groups is of great importance (Kittay, 2001). One way to direct transformation of civic values is the content of education resources and various textbooks. Textbooks are considered as main resources of learning in Iran's education system, especially for school age children.

* Sedigheh Kazemi. Tel.: Tel. +98 511 8783008; fax: +98 511 8783012.

E-mail address: Sahar.Kazemi@Stu-mail.um.ac.ir.

The content of public education textbooks in Iran is different from that of mentally-retarded students. Most internal studies considered the content of public education textbooks and few studies regarded the content of textbooks for mentally-retarded students.

In a content analysis study, Salehi-Omran, Rezaie, Niaz-Azari and Kamali-karsalari (2008) investigated the presence of national identity components (including ancient values, religious values and Western-culture values) in 30 textbooks provided for guide-school students. They concluded that attention to these components was unfair in the studied textbooks. Mansouri and Fereidouni (2009) studied the rate of attention to the national identity in the Persian literature textbooks designed for primary school students. They reported that the rate of attention to the national identity in these textbooks was totally 7% of all contents which was in their wording, less than what to be expected. Ashtiani, Fathi-Vajarghah, YamaniDuziSorkhabi's (2006) study aimed at finding the appropriate civic values to be included in the textbooks of normal primary school students and found seven civic valued: personal identity, national-cultural identity, norms, religious identity, global identity, democracy and participation. The latte study comprised the base of our study.

Regarding the content of textbooks designed for the mentally- retarded students, Nejati (2009) studied the civic values in their primary school textbooks. He found that these values were regarded at the highest level in Persian literature and Science textbooks and at the least level in Quran and Social science textbooks.

Some research in other countries regarded the civic training in the contents of normal school students' textbooks. In his PH.D dissertation, Tooth (2008) studied the reflection on citizenship and civic training in the content of social science textbooks in Manitoba State, Canada between 1917-2007. Kaemmer (2003) compared three components named bio-environmental-cultural heritage and social relations and personalities in the textbooks of China and Taiwan's schools.

Considering the literature review, two main questions guided this study:

1) What is the extent to which civic values (including Personal identity, national-cultural identity, norms and religious identity) are considered in the content of Persian literature textbook designed for mentally-retarded students in their primary school period?

2) What is the extent to which each component comprising civic values are considered in the content of Persian literature textbook designed for primary school mentally-retarded students by their grades (including 5 grades)?

2. Research Method

As content analysis is an effective method for studying various textbooks (Arey, Yakubz and Rezaviyah, 1996:

458), this study used content analysis method. Research population included all Persian literature textbooks designed for primary school mentally-retarded students which were being used during 2009–2010 school year for teaching these student in Iran's special education system. These included seven books. This population was described in table 1.

Table 1. Discription of the textbooks population

Grades	Textbook	lessons	Pages	Pictures
Grade1	Persian literature(Vol.1)	17	92	210
	Persian literature(Vol.2)	17	76	227
	Persian literature(Vol.3)	17	67	169
Grade2	Persian literature	17	76	174
Grade3	Persian literature	18	96	165
Grade4	Persian literature	16	87	220
Grade5	Persian literature	15	80	104
Total	7	66	574	1459

The context unit of the content analysis was a page and that of recording unit was picture, word or theme. Codification process was performed deductively (Saroukhani, 2006) according to civic value components proposed by Ashtiani, Fathi-Vajarghah and Yamani-douzi Sorkhabi (2006) that regarded civic values to be include in primary school textbooks. Four components and related subcomponents appropriate to mentally-retarded students'

characteristics and growth attributes were codified to study the content of their Persian literature textbooks (Table 2).

Table 2. Components and subcomponents civic values designated for study the content of Persian literature textbooks

components	subcomponents
Personal identity	work ethics, self-cognition, volition, kindness, independence
national-cultural identity	national ceremonies ,national symbols, national myths, Regulations ,traditions and customs
religious identity	religious ceremonies, obeying religious, religious symbols
norms	Mutual respect, commitment to social order, truthfulness, safekeeping, reciprocal reliance ,Environmental Protection ,keeping promise, emotion control, accepting others, ability to criticize others

Recording table was used for recording and collecting data in order to do codification process. Test-retest approach was applied for stability (Saroukhani, 2006: 289). The observed agreement rate was 0.81.

3. Findings

Regarding the first study question, the findings showed that all four components of civic values were considered in the studied textbooks. Personal identity values and national-cultural identity values were at the highest and lowest frequencies, respectively (Table 3).

Table 3. Components of civic values in the studied textbooks

textbooks	Personal identity		national-cultural identity		religious identity		norms	
	F	P	f	P	f	P	f	P
Persian literature textbooks for 1-grade	106	20/42	28	12/12	29	9/11	40	9/38
Persian literature textbooks for 2-grad	80	15/41	43	18/61	43	13/52	88	20/65
Persian literature textbooks for 3-grad	104	20/03	47	20/34	38	11/94	71	16/66
Persian literature textbooks for 4-grad	157	30/25	71	30/73	86	27/04	157	36/85
Persian literature textbooks for 5-grade	72	13/87	42	18/18	122	38/36	70	16/43
Total	519	100%	231	100%	318	100%	426	100%

In response to question 2, as shown in table 4, it was found that in Persian literature textbooks for 1-grade students, the subcomponents of independence, volition, kindness and work ethics, respectively with the frequencies of 34, 27, 23, and 22 had the highest frequencies, respectively , and the subcomponents of self-cognition, national myths, traditions and customs, truthfulness, keeping promise, accepting others, ability to criticize others, religious celebrations and obeying religious commandments were not considered in these textbooks at all. The frequencies of traditions and customs, commitment to social order, safekeeping and reciprocal reliance were Lower than 10.

Table 4. Distribution of components of civic values in the studied textbooks as recording unit (illustration, word and theme)

Studied Textbooks	Persian literature textbooks for 1-grade			Persian literature textbooks for 2-grade			Persian literature textbooks for 3-grade			Persian literature textbooks for 4-grade			Persian literature textbooks for 5-grade			Total			
	word	Picture	theme	word	Picture	theme	word	Picture	theme	word	Picture	theme	word	Picture	theme	word	Picture	theme	
Personal identity	work ethics	--	11	11	--	12	9	--	9	10	--	20	15	--	4	5	--	56	50
	self-cognition	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	volition	--	10	17	--	4	2	3	--	7	--	12	11	4	1	5	7	27	42
	kindness	2	13	8	6	10	14	21	10	14	22	14	16	23	6	11	74	53	63
	independence	--	17	17	--	13	10	--	16	14	--	23	14	1	7	5	1	86	60

national-cultural identity	Total	2	51	53	6	29	35	24	35	45	22	79	56	28	18	26	82	222	215
	national ceremonies	3	1	6	--	--	--	12	2	4	3	1	3	--	--	--	18	4	13
	national symbols	4	7	4	--	17	--	3	3	--	12	4	9	2	4	4	21	35	17
	national myths	--	--	--	4	--	5	--	--	--	5	2	6	19	2	9	28	4	20
	Regulations	--	--	--	8	2	7	4	3	5	4	2	4	--	--	--	16	7	16
	traditions and customs	--	--	3	--	--	--	--	9	2	6	5	5	--	1	1	6	15	11
norms	Total	7	8	13	12	19	12	19	17	11	30	14	27	21	7	14	89	65	77
	Mutual respect	--	8	7	--	6	5	--	4	4	3	14	7	2	6	11	5	38	24
	commitment to social order	--	3	4	12	8	7	15	10	19	30	26	19	9	15	12	66	62	61
	truthfulness	--	--	--	--	--	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2
	safekeeping	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	reciprocal reliance	--	3	4	--	3	2	--	--	3	--	--	2	--	--	3	--	6	14
	Environmental Protection	--	5	6	--	16	24	--	5	6	--	11	19	--	--	6	--	27	61
	keeping promise	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2	--	1	2	--	1
	emotion control	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	--	6	8	--	--	3	--	6	14
	accepting others	--	--	--	--	1	2	--	--	2	--	4	7	--	--	--	--	5	11
	ability to criticize others	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	1
religious identity	Total	--	19	21	12	34	42	15	19	37	33	61	63	13	21	36	73	154	199
	religious ceremonies	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	6	1	4	6	1	4
	obeying religious	2	5	5	5	5	10	12	--	7	13	6	12	20	14	15	54	25	49
	religious symbols	11	2	4	21	2	--	10	4	5	45	4	6	45	6	11	13	20	26
	Total	13	7	9	26	7	10	22	4	12	58	10	18	71	21	30	19	49	79
Total	22	85	96	56	99	99	80	75	105	143	164	164	133	67	106	43	487	569	

In 2-grade students' Persian literature textbook, Life environment subcomponent was at the highest rank with the observed frequency of 40. The subcomponents of self-cognition, national ceremonies, traditions and customs, safekeeping, keeping promise, emotion control, ability to criticize others, and religious celebration were not regarded in the textbook at all.

In 3-grade students' Persian literature textbook, the subcomponents of kindness and commitment to social order with the observed frequencies of 45 and 44 had the highest ranks, respectively. The subcomponents of self-cognition, national myths, truthfulness, safekeeping, keeping promise, ability to criticize others and religious ceremonies were disregarded in the content of this textbook and the subcomponents such as accepting others (with the frequency of 2), emotion control and reciprocal reliance (each with the frequency of 3) and national symbols (with the frequency of 6) were regarded less than expected.

In 4-grade students' Persian literature textbook, the subcomponent of commitment to social order was at the highest rank with the observed frequency of 75 and those of religious symbols, kindness and independence with the frequencies of 55, 52 and 47 were of the highly considered ones, respectively. Five subcomponents including self-cognition, truthfulness, safekeeping, keeping promise and religious celebrations were not regarded in the textbook at all. The frequencies of subcomponents including ability to criticize others, reciprocal reliance and national celebrations were less than expected.

In the Persian literature textbook for 5-grade students, the subcomponents of national symbols and obeying religious commandments had the highest frequencies. However, norms subcomponent had the least frequency. The subcomponents of self-cognition, national celebrities, traditions and customs, truthfulness, safekeeping and ability to criticize others were not considered in the textbook at all.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Mentally-retarded adults will be good citizens if only they learn civic values very well during their childhood and adolescence. This is a main and vital reality to be taken into account by responsible individuals and institutions dealing with the mentally-retarded. Including civic values in the content of students' textbooks accompanying with other curriculum elements can be effective and contextual factor in developing civic values and skills in mentally-retarded students. The content of Persian literature textbooks designed for mentally-retarded students in primary school analyzed in this study. The findings showed that personal identity values with 34.73% and norms with 25.51% were in the higher ranks of civic values considered in these textbooks, respectively. National-cultural identity with 15.46% was in the least rank. William Reid (2000) argues that curricula are similar to artifacts such as traditions and customs of a society and should reflect national-cultural identity of this society for which they are designed and in which they are practiced. Persian language, as the formal language in Iran and "the most important means for communication, thought exchange and culture transmission" (Yousef-zadeh and Fallahi, 2003: 562) can be an appropriate context for teaching civic values for Iranian Muslims.

Findings related to question 2 showed that the content of the studied textbooks disregarded the balance consideration of various components of civic values. For example, self-cognition subcomponent in personal identity component was ignored despite its importance in personality development. In religious identity and national-cultural identity components, the subcomponents related to religious/national-symbols were heavily considered, but national-cultural traditions were relatively disregarded in spite of their importance in maintaining and developing religious and/or national identity values and in the mode of students' interaction and relation with their families and the society, as a whole. The subcomponent of religious celebration subcomponent was hardly considered in these textbooks despite its importance and value in pleasure and instructing religious values to students. Besides, the subcomponents such as safekeeping, keeping promise, ability to criticize others and truthfulness included in norms component were ignored in spite of their importance in socialization of school students, especially mentally-retarded ones.

References

- Ashtiani, M, Fathi-Vajargah, K. & YamaniDuziSorkhabi, M. (2006). Including values of citizenship into the elementary schools curriculum. *Quarterly Journal of Educational Innovations*, 17, 67-92.
- Afkhami, H. (2008). Images of Water in School Textbooks: A Content Analysis. *University of Tehran Electronic Journal*, 6, <http://gmj.ut.ac.ir/maghale.aspx?id=52>
- Ary, D.; Jacobs, L. & Razavieh, A. (1996). Introduction to research in education. (Fifth Ed.). Florida: Rinehart & Winston.
- Callahan, J.F.; Clark, L.H.; and Kellough, R.D. (1992). *Teaching in the Middle and Secondary Schools*, 4th ed. New York: Macmillan.
- Kaemmer, C. (2003). Continuity and change of values – An analysis of literary textbooks of Taiwanese junior high schools. Research Project. Tubingen University.
- Kittay, E. F. (2001). When Caring Is Just and Justice Is Caring: Justice and Mental Retardation. *Public Culture*. Vol. 13, No.3.pp. 557–579.
- Koutselini, M. (2008). Citizenship education in context: student teacher perceptions of citizenship in Cyprus. *Intercultural Education*. Vol. 19, No. 2, pp163-175.
- Lotfabadi, H.(2006). Teaching national and global citizenship along with stabilizing the students' identity and value system. *Quarterly Journal of Educational Innovations*, No. 17, pp.11-44.
- Mansori, A. & Fereidouni, A.(2009). National identity reflected in the content of textbooks of Persian books. *Quarterly Journal of National studies*,38,27-36.
- Nejati, V.(2009). Content analysis of textbooks of mentally retarded children as citizenship education. Doctoral Dissertation, Islamic Azad Birjand University.
- Osborne, K. (1991). *Teaching for democratic citizenship*. Toronto: Our schools.
- Pinson, H. (2007). *Inclusive Curriculum? Challenges to the role of civic education in a Jewish and Democratic State*. USA: Blackwell.
- Print, M. & Smith, A. (2000). Teaching civic education for a civil, democratic society in the Asian region. *Asia Pacific Education Review*. 1(1). 101-109.
- Reid, A. W. (2000). Curriculum as an Expression of National Identity. *The University of Texas at Austin*. Vol.15, No.2, pp113-122.
- Salehi-Omran, E., Rezaie, A., Niaz-Azari, Q. and Kamali-karsalari, N. (2008). Examination of Components of national identity Secondary school Textbooks. *Quarterly Journal of National studies*,9,3-25.
- Saroukhani, B.(2006). *Research methods in social sciences*. Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Social Studies.

Tooth, J. (2008). Reflections of citizenship and citizenship education in Manitoba civics textbooks, 1911-2007. (Doctoral Dissertation, Manitoba University) .Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertation.

Westwood, P.(2003). Common sense methods for children with special need (Third Edition). London. Routledge.