Designing and accrediting "School Based Curriculum Need-Assessment" (SBCNA) model

Fat-hi Vajargah, Koorosh (Ph. D.)[1];
Guya, Zahra (Ph. D.)[2];
Aghazadeh, Moharram (M. A.);
Abolghasemi, Mahmoud (Ph. D.)[3];
Kamkari, Kambiz (M. A.)

Abstract

School Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) is emerged as a response to shortcomings and problems which stem from Centralized Curriculum Development and the most important reason for its formation is adopting curricula with existing needs and issues at school and community levels.

In spite of increasing emphasis on dissemination of SBCD, the literature about curriculum has not properly addressed the status and role of needs assessment studies in SBCD and not only enough attention has not paid to this important issue, but also on independent study in this regard handly can be fined.

The present article which is taken from a two years research in this area, tries to introduce a special model for curriculum needs assessment at school level and include various states of needs

1 - Associate professor of curriculum planning in Shahid Beheshti University
2 - Associate professor of mathematic education in Shahid Beheshti University
3 - Associate professor of Shahid Beheshti University

assessment. This model (SBCNA) is representative of a new research area in curriculum development. At the end of this article, after studying the existing situation in Iran, ways to pay more attention to needs assessment in school curricula has been considered.

Key Words: Need-assessment, curriculum, accreditation, School Based Curriculum Development

Introduction

One of the most important and fundamental elements in pursuit of reaching the goals and national aspirations for the country's future generation education is the curriculums of the education system that should be identified according to the needs. On a final thought, the curriculum need-assessment consists of preparation of a set of essential strategies and decisions for curriculum adjustment and adjustment with the important needs that have priority (Faith, 1999). What this matter requires is analysis of all stages and elements that impact the curriculum and its coinciding with the curriculum when it takes place with attention given to education environment realities and in the school and the classroom framework. The most important reasons and witnesses to this matter is the existence of authentic and real information resources in school and local environment, with the help of which, the adjusting of curriculum with real needs can be done. The diversity of needs from one individual to the other and from a school class to another requires that the curriculum be compiled and regulated in the extent possible based on the schools and study classes structure, position, and social condition.

Despite the importance and the essentiality of curriculum need-assessment in the school level, the scientific and applied efforts and actions taken in this path are still not sufficient and its theoretical foundation has not undergone the necessary analysis and analyzing. This is such that in spite of the vast research efforts in the filed of curriculum, there is small amount of data with regards to "school-based" curriculum need-assessment. Therefore, the main point for this research has been to investigate and analyze the characteristics and dimensions of school-based curriculum need-assessment in a thorough manner and without considering the currently operational system in Iran. After reaching this model, we identify the status of

the Iranian curriculum system in the related model, and through this passageway will suggest the solutions to reach the desired condition in the country's curriculum need-assessment. For this reason, the current article revolves around the axis of the following main questions:

1- What are the underlying assumptions and principles of school-based curriculum need-assessment?

2- What are the approaches and various levels of school-based curriculum need-assessment and what characteristics do they have?

3- What need-assessment activities can take place in each of the approaches and stages in mind?

4- How is the participation in each of the approaches and stages in the issue of need-assessment?

5- What are the main need-assessment mechanisms in each of the approaches and stages?

6- Which of the school-based curriculum need-assessment conditions is more appropriate for the current Iranian curriculum-planning system?

A short history and brief past record of the research subject

School-based curriculum planning is an issue that generally took shape from the 1970s due to expanded defeats of the concentrated curriculum planning systems and as a movement in the path of resolving the issues and problems of concentrated curriculum-activities (Goodlad & Klein, 1970; Skilbeck, 1985, Sabar, 1987; McClure, 1991). The school-based curriculum planning has been facing a lot of hassle, doubt, unawareness, and many difficulties in its primary stages due to characteristics of being new, and its challenging identity (Abrams, 2000). Due to this, expanded efforts can be seen for the purpose of discussing and investigating the various dimensions and backgrounds on the literature of curriculum-planning (for example see: Elbaz, 1991; Marsh, 1991; Tyler & Dianna, 1994; Wildly, 1994; Colins et al, 1995; Connelly & Benpretes, 1997; Helmek, 1997; Wanat, 1997; Gough, 2000; Brener, 2001; Zieglea, 2001).

Research Methodology

The research was conducted in two sections of theoretical studies and field investigations since the main research goal was reaching a comprehensive model for "school based curriculum need-assessment". This work was within the framework of the following 3 main stages: 1- The stage of identifying and documentation the principal concepts; 2- Coordination; and 3- Reliability assessment. The questionnaire which was used to gather the data was a special one, which had its validity previously investigated by five experts. The questionnaire reliability was obtained by the use of Cronbach Alfa test ($\alpha = 0.75$)

Research Results

The research results are offered in two parts: In the first part, the SBCNA model has been introduced, which is the product of theoretical studies. In the second part, the model's validity is investigated from the point of view of the specialists and experts. In this part of the article, the curriculum need-assessment model has been thoroughly discussed in four sections. These sections include: school-based curriculum need-assessment approaches, school-based curriculum need-assessment stages, need-assessment activities, participants, and the various scenarios of school-based curriculum need-assessment. For example with regard to the main variables of need-assessment of school-based curriculum, three scenarios are explained, which include: first, the limited need-assessment model of school-based curriculum; Second, the moderate need-assessment model of school-based curriculum; Third, the liberal need-assessment model of school-based curriculum;

In continuation of the discussion, the conditions available in Iran have been investigated from the point of view of curriculum planning and applications of various states of need-assessment model for school-based curriculum. It has been then concluded that: The Iranian education system is of the centralized educational systems; although crave toward a semi-centralized system has been seen in the recent years. The need-assessment of the curriculum in Iran is done by the experts and specialists of the headquarters in the

education system and the curriculum is devised and offered for execution based on this work.

The role that is being assigned to the teachers in the Iranian education system is one of an operational kind. The teachers are responsible for operating the offered plan by considering the offered instructional guidelines. The teachers are not allowed to make changes in the curriculum. Also, the students have no participation in compilation of the curriculum and its related basic structures. The most common role for the students is to learn the content of the curriculum and the only participants in the curriculum planning and curriculum need-assessment are the experts and specialists. In the curriculums that are prepared, the parents, the principals, the members of the local community, and the school education departments have the least impact. In other words, there has been no place allocated for any of the mentioned elements in the education system for activities in the area of need-assessment and curriculum compilation. The Iranian's curriculum planning does not completely match any one of the three offered scenarios. But it can be claimed in the first stage that it is most close to the limited need-assessment model, and after that, it can be turned compatible with the moderate scenario. Therefore, the first and the second scenarios can be suggested for being put to use in the Iranian curriculum planning system.

In the end it can be said that not even the limited school-based curriculum need-assessment model is being vastly used. Therefore if we are to accept the reference group's opinions, meaning that of the country's curriculum experts and the specialists about the SBCNA model and its scenarios, it would be necessary to prepare the needed ground for operating these scenarios in the entire country. With this regard, the limited scenario can first become operational throughout the country and the operation can eventually move toward the moderate and the distributed scenarios. As a second viewpoint, all three scenarios can simultaneously be used as situational across the country depending on the facilities, readiness, and the local conditions.

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