Comparative Study of the Elementary Physical Education Curriculum in Iran and Some Selected Countries

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this comparative study was to describe and compare the physical education curriculum among Iran and some selected countries, with the aim of providing information for developing a physical education curriculum. For this purpose, sixteen countries or one of their provinces from all continents of the world were selected according to their availability of their curriculum to the researcher. Countries consisted of China, Japan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Germany, England, France, Russia, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, Canada, United States, Brazil, and Australia. Six variables of Kline's (1991) curriculum components including: educational goals, contents, time, place, resources, and evaluation method and three variables of educational components including: educational approaches, curriculum evaluation, and the teacher for physical education were studied. Descriptive and comparative analysis of data showed that each of the countries under study in this research accept different settling for physical education curriculum in their elementary educational goals and the standard for student evaluation. The result showed that in physical education curriculum of countries under study, the most frequent and important educational approach is "decision making on healthy and active life style among students". Daily physical activity is on the top in physical education curriculum of countries under study. As a result, educational approach for physical education curriculum based on lifelong daily physical activity and health during and after school is suggested. Eventually curriculum framework for elementary and high school physical education in Iran was suggested.

Key words: Physical Education, Curriculum, Elementary, High School, Comparative Study.

Introduction

Since 1960, in the shade of the scientific progress in curriculum areas, physical Education has started to develop as well. In Iran, as The New Education & Training System was established and the Cultural Constitution was confirmed in 1911, Physical Education has been introduced as one of the Education & Training System Courses. Studying the history of Physical Education in Iran Education & Training System shows that although since 1927 Physical Education course has been included formally and compulsory in all different levels of studying, but as its facilities and financial and expert human resources hadn't been predicted, it didn't run efficiently[10]. Eighty year curriculum history in Iran schools sport and physical education shows the lack of any suitable plan or suggestion for such a curriculum considering all its elements and components [9].

Adineyee(1999), Esmaeeli(2004), Zandi and Farahani(2008) have been conducted in the country investigated the characteristics of physical education course or its curriculum and instructional plan. There are some other comparative studies regarding physical education curriculum which have been carried out outside the country and include Iran too like Nabavi(1978) and Moeni(1981). However they are old and belong to some decades ago while Iran physical education curriculum has been changed a lot during these years. Moreover, these researches are descriptive and don't compare neither the quality nor the quantity scales of elementary physical education in Iran and other countries. Anyway physical education curriculum data in each country has been offered separately. Noticing the causes which were mentioned about the importance of physical education reveals clearly the necessity for paying attention to planning and designing a suitable curriculum. Such a curriculum needs some
researches which provide the managers' necessary data by different methods. Because one can design a plan just if he could achieve the necessary data and the present situation was described. Moreover, the comparative studies are appropriate methods to achieve physical education data and show its educational status among other countries which can lead the planners and the teachers. In order to know the different countries curricula, comparative studies along with different researches are mentioned to carry out an adequate physical education curriculum. Comparing the physical education characteristics among two or more societies or countries and investigating their differences and similarities is the main goal of a physical education comparative study.

This research which is a kind of comparative study describes and compares the world different sample countries physical education curricula. Physical education variables such as: goal, content, timetable, training place, facilities, educational equipments & aids and the students' career assessment method are being studied. Furthermore, assessing the curriculum, human resource (teacher), the curriculum approaches as well as offering a curriculum model are being studied. Using the following countries related experiences, the curriculum in 16 countries from different continents including south Africa Germany, Australia, England, USA, Brazil, Turkey, China, Russia, Japan, France, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Egypt, Nigeria and Iran- or their selected states- have been chosen and studied to find a better model for Iran and

Methodology:

This is a basic research which has been conducted in descriptive and comparative methods. The research population has been chosen from the elementary, guidance and high schools in different countries in all various continents and it contains physical education curricula of 15 selected countries or one of their selected states together with Iran, in total 16 countries include: South Africa, Germany, Australia, England, USA, Brazil, Turkey, China, Russia, Japan, France, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Egypt, Nigeria and Iran. The selected countries have been listed in Table 2 due to their continents.

The research population and the selected countries have been chosen from different countries in all various continents. In this way; Iran, one country from Oceania(Australia),3 countries from north & south America(Canada, USA, Brazil) ,3 countries from Africa(Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa) & 4 from Asia( china, Japan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia) have been chosen. We tried to choose not only the countries which are more developed in physical education, but also those of which their curricula are more perfect and modern and accessible through the internet. We studied the curricula of the capital or one of the largest states/ provinces of those countries of which their state/ provinces curricula are designing.

The research variables are 6 variables out- of Klein's 9 variables as: goal, content, time, space (place), materials& facilities, and physical education course evaluation method. The Data collection method included investigating the official library documents. The research data are the curriculum variables in the studied countries which are collected by investigating the library documents and through internet. Some of the data were collected through the official sources of physical education curricula in the libraries of each country. Anyway the most important method was searching in the Internet and investigating different countries educational systems official websites. Descriptive statistics containing; Descriptive tables, frequency counts, frequency (percentage); have been used to show the curriculum variables in the studied countries.

Finding:

Physical Education Course Goal:

The necessary data regarding physical education course goal in some countries weren't available or didn't mention in their curricula. So physical education goals in 12 countries are being compared as follow:

Cognitive domain:

1) Increasing physical fitness and physical exercise knowledge and information and applying this knowledge.2) Increasing health, hygiene, safety in physical activity and nutrition knowledge and information and applying this knowledge.3) Increasing the knowledge and information of sport and motional skills, the ability of analyzing movement and its elements, Learning game techniques and strategies and applying this knowledge.

Affective domain:

4) Developing positive view on physical activity, interest in participating in physical games & different kinds of sports and respecting regular physical activities and healthy habits.5) Developing positive view on game rules, respecting and using them and creating responsible behavior in sport and game situations. 6) Social Growth. 7) Individual and personality growth.

Psycho – motor domain:

8) Helping motor development and physical growth. 9) Achieving physical fitness. 10) Participating in sport & physical games and regular physical activity.11) Learning sport skills. 12)
Creating movement partners by improving coordination and control on performance.\(13\) Participating in formal sport competitions and matches which are regulated.

**Table 1:** Comparing Physical Education Course Goals in different Countries Elementary School Curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Physical Education Course Content:**

Investigating physical education course content in the studied countries reveals 18 following activities as their texts and performances: 1) Training physical games. 2) Teaching and exercising the fundamental motor skills and manual skills and compounding patterns. 3) Teaching and exercising the fundamental sport skills and the introductions of different sports. 4) Gymnastics5-Dancing6- Track and field (Athletics),7 Swimming and water sports.8) Mountain and rock climbing.9) Martial and competitive sports10- Snow and ice sport.11) National and Traditional sports.12) Physical exercise. 13) Theoretical teaching of the individual and social skills (during doing the sport or game or separately) and their use in the Life.14) Theoretical teaching of the principals and advantages of health, physical activity and exercise, safely principals of life and sport, suitable nutrition, hygiene and applying it.15) Theoretical teaching of the relationship between physical education course and other courses.16) Outdoor activities & camping and exercising in nature.17) Sport competitions and matches.18) Teaching adjustment to the world of work.

**Table 2:** Comparing physical education course contents in different countries elementary schools.

| No | Goals | Countries | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|----|-------|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | South Africa | -- | * | -- | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 2  | Germany | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 3  | Australia | -- | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 4  | United Kingdom | * | * | -- | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 5  | United States | -- | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 6  | Brazil | -- | * | * | * | -- | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 7  | China | -- | * | * | * | -- | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 8  | Russia | -- | -- | * | * | -- | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 9  | Japan | -- | * | * | * | -- | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 10 | France | * | * | -- | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 11 | Canada | * | * | -- | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
| 12 | Iran | * | * | -- | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- | * | * | -- |
|    | Total | 6 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | -- | -- | 5 | 5 | 7 | -- | 1 | 1 | -- |   |

**Physical education course time in elementary schools:**

Physical education course weekly hours (sessions) in the studied countries curricula have been summarized in table3.

**Physical education course space (place):**

This research was going to find some standards in physical education course spaces by investigating different countries curricula. But not only there was no data available regarding these standards in their curricula but also there was no data even regarding any physical education course spaces in most of these curricula. It seems that choosing physical education course spaces depends on the decision of the schools totally and they choose them noticing their financial sources and the accessibly of the sport spaces. Different kinds of sport spaces mentioned in the studied countries curricula are as: 1) Play ground. 2) Sport fields, courts or sport halls (ball games places) 3) Sport hall (having mat and Gymnastics apparatus suitable for Martial Arts and Comparative sports. 4) Pools 5) School yards 6) Classroom. 7) School auditoriums. 8) Skate slope, Biking track and Bowling alley. 9) Lawn
Table 3: Comparing physical education course time in different Countries elementary schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Counties</th>
<th>Physical education weekly hours</th>
<th>Total countries weekly hours</th>
<th>Percentage of physical education hours to total courses hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>6.6</td>
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<td>11.5</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Iran</td>
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<td>26.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td>2.21</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Physical education Materials and Facilities:

In most of the studied countries physical education curricula, there is no information about the necessary physical education materials and facilities at all. In fact choosing the quality and quantity of these materials and facilities has been put in charge of the teachers regarding their schools available facilities. In this way, materials and facilities for all the province or country schools aren't predicted totally. But using some special sport equipments has been focused in some of the countries. For example in Iran there is a list of necessary public equipments to perform physical education course. In Japan Judo training film (as their national sport) has been distributed among the schools and in Canada providing Gymnastics apparatus at schools has been emphasized.

On the other hand, in some other countries the quality of materials and facilities has been focused. For example sport materials and facilities aren't predicted in England national curriculum and in the curriculum of Ontario province in Canada but their safety and security have been focused. A list of different kinds of sport materials and facilities mentioned in the studied countries curricula is as follow:

1) Different kinds of balls  
2) Different kinds of nets and ropes  
3) Different kinds of rackets, books  
4) Magazines and brochures  
5) Training film  
6) Computer, multi media  
7) Gymnastic apparatus  
8) Cycling, Skating and Bowling equipments  
9) Physical Fitness Station (Laboratory)  
10) Necessary equipments for sport Camps

### Physical education Course evaluation:

Regarding the accuracy, there are three levels of evaluation: No-evaluation, Theoretical or Subjective evaluation & Objective evaluation. On the other hand, there are two different kinds of evaluations as: Summative evaluation and Formative evaluation. Considering different methods of physical education evaluation in the studied countries shows that different kinds of these methods are used to evaluate this course among them the most important ones are:

1. observing the skills function at the end of the class (to evaluate the skills)  
2. Non-direct observing of the skills function during the game and sport (To evaluate the skills)  
3. Physical fitness test with national, province or class standards (to evaluate physical fitness)  
4. Observing behavior during the class (To evaluate the affective domain)  
5. Written or oral test (To evaluate the cognitive domain)  
6. Homework, reports and projects  
7. Comparing the student with himself and evaluating his progress.

### Result and Discussion

Investigating physical education curriculum variables in the studied countries reveals that the planners haven't carried out all the variables according to Klein's view completely [11]. In each country just some of these variables have been noticed. For example physical education class time hasn't been mentioned in US, Canada and Australia curricula but has mentioned in the other studied countries curricula. To perform this course some other curriculum variables including materials and facilities are ignored more than the others.

Although this research shows that in the studied countries curricula, the training games and teaching of health principals have the most frequencies and sport competitions have the least frequencies, but Wilcox's research indicates that the competitive sport has changed into the first priority among physical education content [17].

There are some similarities regarding physical education course time in the studied countries between the findings of this research and Hardman and Marshall's research [6]. Of course the studied
countries are different in these two researches, but
there are no differences regarding their physical
education course time data among the countries in
both researches.

Daily physical Activity in elementary curricula
of some of the countries like Ontario province in
Canada and New South Wales in Australia have been
emphasized. In some of the countries including those
which are well-known in sport competitions, physical
education course time takes longer than the other
countries. For example the most attention is paid to
physical education course in Germany and China
where 3 hours per week is devoted to this course at
schools. Every week %13 and %12/5 of total courses
hours in the curriculum belongs to physical education
classes in these two countries. It is worth mentioning
that these two countries, having the most attention to
physical education course, take the top levels of table
of medals and place as one of the fourth top countries
among all in Olympia Games.

A physical education course mean hour per
week in elementary schools of the studied countries
is about 2/3 hours per week. Although in a country
like England, according to the suggested National
Curriculum, this time decreases to just 1/5 hour per
week, but extra – curriculum sport activities are often
so common in this country by which the children's
movement and physical needs are provided. Mean
while physical education course time in Iran
primary schools is 2 hours per week. Considering
the research findings regarding physical education
course weekly hours in the studied countries, it's
suggested to increase this time to 3 hours per week,
preferably in 3 different every other days. Vannier &
Gallahue (1978) and Fait (1964) suggested different
lists of sport materials and facilities in this course. In
the studied countries curricula in this research some
sport materials have been also suggested. But we
should notice that deciding about different sport
materials needs appropriate care to the goals and
content of this course as well as the schools facilities.

The available data shows that sport hall has the
most frequency among sport spaces of the studied
countries. As sport hall not only prepares necessary
sport space but also isn't influenced by different
weather conditions, so most of the time it's a good
place to perform physical education course. To
perform physical education course, Vannier &
Gallahue have also mentioned 4 sport spaces which
are similar to what has been mentioned in this
research. In this research in addition to these 4
spaces, the school yards have also mentioned as one
of the places of performing this course. Of course we
should pay attention that the school yards are used
just when there aren't better places to perform the
course. So the necessity of preparing a suitable place
to perform physical education course is clear.

In this research, 5 different evaluation methods
have been mentioned that are similar to Lidz's
physical education evaluation methods list. Although
the titles of the methods are different, but it shouldn't
be ignored that as Schiemer has pointed the students
should be evaluated by various tests [15].

Studying and investigating the findings of
the researches inside or outside of the country shows
some differences on the performance of physical
education course in or out of the country schools.
The results of the researches in the country shows
that unfortunately now after a long time of 25 years
from the first research describing this course
performance, plans and functions, there is no positive
change and reform in its performance and no news of
eliminating its problems and weak points and even
sometimes the lack of enough attention to this course
has caused its long distance from its real position in
the educational system which has leaded to decrease
the society mental happiness and physical health. In
fact in spite of all planners and authorities' speeches
and talks regarding this course importance, the result
of these researches shows somehow a sad reality
which reveals the lack of attention to this course.

- Studying the documents, reports and papers of
other countries physical education curricula on some
of their curriculum elements reveals their Curricula
Patterns process. However noticing this research
subject to design an elementary physical education
curriculum model, we can find that there are few
researches on this subject and the reason of this
limitation is decentralization of other countries
educational system which offers more authorities to
the states and regions and requires less researches to
find a suitable model.

- Investigating the previous researches we can
conclude that there are different problems in this
course in Iran. These results indicate that the lack of
sport and educational materials and facilities,
shortage of expert human resources in planning field,
weakness and lack of correct planning, shortage of
specialist physical education teachers, unsuitable use
of the available facilities and lack of this course
content cause its weak performance. Which its
results to the decrease of this course quantity and
quality. One of the fundamental problems of this
course is the lack of educational planers and parents'
positive view toward this course. So the school
authorities and parents don't care it as an important
course.

The result of previous researches offers some
suggestions to improve this course in Iran. There are
different suggestions to plan and performance this
course. Some of them have pointed the importance of
planning; writing goals, content and the teachers'
evaluation methods.

- Providing enough budget and employing
enough teachers have a great influence on the
improvement of this course quality. So there is a
need to review physical education program and
educational plan to solve the materials, tools and
facilities problems and to prepare special physical
education programs for disable and employ enough
specialist teachers. Investigating the other countries researches also shows that although different authorities have focused on the importance of this course, but it faces a lot of problems in these countries too. Anyway it's somehow like what happens in Iran but the type and degree of the problems are different among different places of the world. Active life method approaches, movement approval and personal-social and cultural approach are the main approaches of the elementary physical education curriculum. Different models of designing curricula are investigated from different points of view. There are 10 main curriculum patterns in documents which can be used to design physical education curriculum. Klein and Melograno have called these patterns in their book: Physical Education Curriculum [4]. The goals of this course are investigated more carefully. These goals are studied in US, Australia and Germany [3, 2].

These goals reveal some important points regarding the goals level, considered domains and their role on other factors of the Curriculum. Physical education curriculum approaches not only reveals the planners and program designers' interaction with this course in different countries but also shows its characteristics and attributes in the curriculum. Different designing curriculum patterns were considered from different points of view and showed the planners' care to this course. Educational goal and contents were studied in different documents and plans which showed their characteristics and role in physical education curriculum. Physical education curriculum evaluation and teaching strategies were also investigated and indicated the kinds of teaching and evaluation methods in each curriculum and their characteristics. These matters are the basis of this research to design a model as its aim.

References

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