Social Foundations of Curriculum: Social Equality and Education

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ABSTRACT: Sociology and education are closely related to each other. Whenever we speak of sociology, education system and schools have been studied as social phenomena. Thus the sociology changes affected social foundations of curriculum. Social foundations of curriculum are different considering attitudes of community planners toward society and the role of education in the engagement of these two subjects. In this paper, the main curriculum approaches influenced by social approaches, including cultural transmission theory, democratic citizenship and social reconstruction are being discussed. Through studding the historical development of sociology and the resulting change in curricula based on sociological perspectives, it can be understood that what is common within entire theories, approaches the related practices is the concerns of social equality and human effort to attain the ideal of seeking justice. However, the way to achieve "social equality" is challenging and varied. In this study, due to social changes and the need for prospective, a future-oriented approach to provide curriculum according to Islamic - Iranian identity for students to enter the indeterminate and international global arena, have been studied.

Key words: Foundations, Curriculum, Social, Educational

INTRODUCTION

The base in the Persian word means building, construction, base, basis, and first basis. Its English synonyms are basis, or foundation and it is the support of the foundation on which everything else is built on. According to this definition, the base of anything, including curriculum, foundation, basis and rules are underlying principles upon which the curriculum is built. Norouz Zadeh and Fathivajargah [1] believed that the social foundations of Curriculum are significant and major foundations for curriculum planners that according to which they understand the nature of society and culture. From the early years of the field of academic curriculum, the major role of social fundamentals on curriculum was fully clear and obvious. Dewey believed that people who are trained are social people and the society is an organizational unit of people. If we eliminate community and people factors from a society, we will have soulless and senseless mass of people [2]. Charters believed that first step is to define and determine the main objective and he tried to determine the objectives of education based on human social life [3]; Tyler introduced the overall objectives based on three data sources of teaching, learning and community [4] and since 1970s reconstructionist introduced school as one factor for change and modify the society [5-7]. In general it can be said that the footprint of social foundations, as an important principle in all of the theories of curriculum and education, is obvious; although the perspective and method of the theorists is varied in this regard.

Moreover, addressing the social foundations of curriculum is easy and impossible in the same time. It is easy, because there is a clear approach in the curriculum that its main part is society. At the same time, it is impossible because in addition to the major approaches, the social issues, social needs and social conflicts arising from economic and political systems also affect education and curriculum of the societies. Smith declared that the curriculum is a complex of communication patterns, social situations, expectations and values of individuals, groups and cultures that make up the school community, and cannot be separated from social context [8].

Based on these descriptions, it is clear that in this article we want to speak about subjects and cortexes that are important in the social basics of curriculum; The main feature of curriculum theories and views expressed by the views of the community; the features of the significant theories and perspectives of curriculum is described based on the social perspectives; the role of different social perspectives on dimensions and factors of curriculum is studied and based on the frequent changes of social life, the place of these changes on the perspective of curriculum is investigated.

Investigated Topics and Issues in Social Foundations of Curriculum:

Sciero [5] cited some topics about social foundations of curriculum that includes contemporary society and curriculum, the community and its problems, population distribution and demographic characteristics, academic and cultural development, economic issues and issues of particular groups in society and social welfare. Parvand [9] studied on the topic of the social foundations of curriculum discussed issues such as desired and undesired effects of social factors and their impact on educational activities and understanding the nature of these factors. He believed that the most important duty of schools for transmission of culture is to create the generations and reconstruct the society [10]. In discussing the social aspects of sociological education and social role of the individual in society are examined and analyzed. Hansen has stated that through the transfer of customs, laws, religion and ethics, multicultural issues, poverty, changes in family structure and technology, a society may influence the schools. Meanwhile, the need for religion, spirituality and moral values is felt in different societies. But the instructors believe that school shall not order these values to the students. But there are some values such as integrity, honesty and trustfully that should be taken seriously in schools and youth shall have the opportunity to experience the values and attitudes [7]. Marsh [6] Poverty and Socio - Economic status impacts are of major debates in education. Ministry of Education, as a powerful institution that can lead to social equality, is introduced as an opportunity for achieving goals and a tool for fight poverty in the community. But the well known report [11] showed that the school facilities has no significant impact of on student achievement and the teacher quality does not have much effect, but the status of the family has a major role on the educational status of students [12]. On the other hand, training opportunities are not equally available to people of different races and social - economic status [7]. Moreover, international studies have shown that social-economic status is another important factor for academic achievement of students in all countries of the world [13, 14].

On the other hand, social equality and justice are the ideals of humanity and to achieve them, some topics such as democracy, citizenship and social reform are discussed. Schools are considered as the builders of a community free from poverty, oppression, war and pollution [5] and the future needs of society are forecasted and provided in terms of educating the younger generation [15]. On the other word, social equality is a common spot for consensus and agreement of theorists in sociology that criticized or defended democracy and reform; although they provided different paradigms and frameworks to see and understand different issues. Since the theory of sociology, including functionalism, interactionism, conflict and cognitive-interpretation perspectives and context-oriented have formed the basis of curriculum perspective, the most important views are influenced by the social views are studied in this paper.

The Main Theories of Curriculum Approaches Influenced by Social Perspective:

Views of cultural transmission, democratic citizenship and social change are the most important perspectives of curriculum influenced by the views of society. In view of cultural transmission influenced by functionalism theories, the discussions of transfer, socialization, internalization of social values arises. And the education ministry is obliged to internalize the social existence. The social existence in this perspective includes a system of thoughts, feelings and actions that manifested in our character as a member of society [10]. According to this view, the components of society and its institutions are linked together and perform certain activities and functions necessary for the survival of the community workflow [15].

In view of democratic citizenship, which formed under the influence of stable democratic debate, focus is on growing awareness of the democratic process through skills such as critical thinking, values analyzing and skills of the group process to participate in democracy. The governing power of people on their fate, the values of human dignity, rationality and pluralism are some of the most important concepts that will shape the view.

But some critics believe that the democratic citizenship arose from the idea of progressivism, and they insist that such an idea is in search of an agreement between the majority and minority; Majority that is forced to admit the minority groups and the minority that do not quit its wants. Waghid [16] and Katanoric [11] have suggested that instead of a class struggle that is a policy that puts the majority against the elite, the democratic struggle must be introduced. Struggle for equality, freedom from unconscious discrimination, respect for diversity and a deeper and wider participation in decision-making at all levels of society are from the most important concepts of democratic citizenship education. Ellis and Scott [17] are also critical of citizenship education, and argues that democracy means accepting the government's policies and not what the government wants. It means to be critical of government policy. It means criticizing the economic policies, war and inequality that we are faced today [18]

In view of social change it is believed that through education, schools can play a key role in the reconstruction of society. Three major approaches to social change perspective include social reconstruction, social education and social action [8]. The views are in opposition to the philosophy of progressivism and philosophy of positivism and are under influence of a cognitive- descriptive approach and philosophy of post-structuralism emerged.

As it can be seen, the social views that are affected by the changes of the social perspective look into the curriculum from sociological point of view, but their attitudes and points of view are different. Perspectives of socialization, emphasizes on socialization, consistency and consensus and democratic citizen view promotes liberalism and positivism ideas. View of social change, includes social reconstruction, social literacy education and social reaction has a radical and critical look at the work of education and believes that education shall have an

active role to influence the society. It is natural that educational aspirations, looking to learn, teacher, learner, learning environment and evaluation are different in all of these approaches.

Different Social Perspectives Role on the Curriculum and Curriculum Elements:

Objective: In the cultural transmission perspective the aspirations and educational goals are to suggest important roles and values of society. In the democratic citizen perspective, the objective is to respect the democratic values of society. In the social change perspective the objective and educational goals is engaging students with social issues and problems and educating them skills related to the presence in the community, and its modification. The social change perspective considers children as meaning makers. Based on this perspective, all of the dimensions of life of learners including their experiences, thoughts, feelings, dreams, relationships, and practices, values and modes of behavior shall be considered and the activities inside and outside of school shall be related [5].

Content: Content includes a set of concepts, skills and tendencies, as well as the selection and organization of activities and also defined the results of teaching - learning activities [10]. In view of cultural transmission the vocational training programs, job training, work programs - education and behavioral training programs can be named. They are mainly aimed at transmission the culture and socialization. Mehrmohammadi [8] in the democratic citizen perspective, content includes projects and activities that in transferring it, the teachers can use a generalized process to teach the students a democratic language with a fluent language. [4]In social change perspective, knowledge is both cognitive and empirical. Although knowledge is a personal experience and attribute, but advocates of this theory have some concern about the knowledge of society. Constructivism believes that knowledge has multi-dimensional nature and all of its aspects are questioned and create new forms of knowledge [5].

Methods: In view of the cultural transmission the learners is passive and learning environment is inflexible. The teacher is the primary source of teaching - learning process, and he appears to be a role model for students [15]. Teachers need to maintain different standards and instructional practices. In view of democratic citizenship, emphasizing the skills and analysis of value conflicts are performed through dialogue. Learning is an interactive processes between the learner and the learning environment, and learning takes place through being immersed in conflicts and social issues. Learner is intellectually gifted individual and he is able to apply it in dealing with social policies. The teacher creates an atmosphere of support for negotiations and has an investigative approach to learning. Interactive process of learning and respect for pluralism and different opinions in the classroom is dominant learning process in the view [19]. In this perspective, teamwork and regular communication with each other and team work have special importance [17]. In social change view the learning process is beyond the student's interaction with the environment and it starts through student's efforts to improve the environment. Learner is a social activist and agent of change, teachers must be prepared to participate in social practice and its role is more of a provider [20]. Fans of view of social change, consider teacher as a partner [5]. The teacher is leading the research project [7, 8] and curriculum implemented with an emphasis on social experiences with problem-based methods [7].

Assessment: In view of cultural transmission, the assessment is performed in order to realize the evaluation of students achieving mastery of the knowledge and skills that they will make a positive function in society [20]. In the democratic citizen perspective, assessment focuses on the skills required to analyze social policy and it means to gain required skills for the analysis of social conflicts in the world [21]. But in the social change perspective assessment means looking at the student while he is doing a team work and it emphasizes the direct engagement of student in school and society [20].

Social Changes and the Future Prospects in the Curriculum:

Katanaric [11] considers social changes in 3 different aspects related to culture material elements, cultural change with changes in science, religion and arts, social change including social relationships and balance and believes that all of them are related and network of social relations affected by any changes and changes in social relations also happened to be both a cause and an effect [22]. When societies are faced with enormous cultural changes, especially if these changes affect their basic behavior, the image of society is blurred and the people saw themselves unable against natural and logical activities [3]. Marker [23] stated that less than 20 years, the Internet, Facebook, iPad, websites, blogs and e-mail have changed our lives dramatically. Downloading music and videos, chat, computer games and mobile phones are part of our and our children daily lives. You must remember that some of the current events had no place even in the dreamed of people in hundred years ago. For example, to people in one hundred years ago, imagining a plane, subway, radio, etc., which is natural to us, seems unlikely. Nowadays, because of frequent changes we can expect more amazing changes in science, technology, lifestyle, economy, education, demographics and the politics. Some of these predictions are including: over thousands of people who work at the space orbits on the Moon and Mars; reduction and replacement of body parts, remove any identification or password, and the ability to identify individuals with their organs; Purchase by personal databases based on the latest status of each individual wardrobe and set design (For example, you will receive a message to inform you that your jacket does not match with your jeans and you have to purchase a new one until the end of next month); or even the keyboard can only be seen in the museums. Artificial intelligence systems or neural networks strengthening human intelligence, and human decision-making power will increase. Learning

virtual rooms allow students to ask questions from the scientists. Web sites are designed to provide information on individual learning styles and adapt resources to suit your interests and needs. Non-linear thinking and multidisciplinary approach will become ordinary events in education curriculum [23].

Toffler, as a futurist says all education comes from some assumptions about the future. If taught of a society about the future is clearly wrong, the youth education system will be betrayed [24]. Anyway, as we make plans for curriculum, we need to think about abilities and possibilities that may occur in the future. We will be faced with complex problems that we cannot respond to it. These include terrorism, human rights, pollution, attention to the rights of individuals and respect to the family, and control of different communities based on an authority. The problem will be solved with critical thinking that today we can hardly imagine it. We shall educate citizens that can make decisions based on science. Either now or in the future, our curriculum must be open and flexible against uncertain and intangible consequences. The curriculum planners shall have a future based approach and to predict and monitor changes in values and their implications for curriculum changes to promote more informed methods for curriculum. Changes in the curriculum focused equally on where we are going and where we are right now [23]

RESULTS

The definition of social bases of curriculum and its dimensions varies based on the perspective and point of view of the planners and the role of society in educations. Obviously, traditionalists tend to maintain cultural values and socialization and use schools to serve the community. Accordingly, the social foundations of curriculum topics discussed by them are to maintain the integrity and organization of the community. The planners who believe the change and modification of the society want to change the status and reform the society though schools. And based on this perspective, social foundations of curriculum focusing on social change and the role assigned to schools instead of being receptive is to change and correct. This perspective forms a spectrum that two conflict perspectives of culture transfer and social change are 2 different parts of it. Democratic citizen perspective is more moderate and tries to accept the values of democracy and it is placed in the middle of this range.

According to the paradigm and perspective that curriculum planners select from these three perspectives, the main elements of the curriculum, such as the purpose, content, and evaluation methods will vary. Reflecting on these changes, many different effects of these views on education can be observed and assessed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the study of historical changes of sociology and in result, changes of curriculum development on the perspective of society can be said is that between all of the approaches and theories and the acts that are done based them, the concern for social equality and human efforts to achieve aspirations for justice is common. Besides concerns of equality, fighting poverty, giving voice to individuals that are valuable objectives that scholars, particularly since the introduction of industrialization, were actively been seeking them, and the term democracy that was its result, ways to achieve "social equality" is challenging and varied. So to achieve that utopian social equality in the real sense, in the reconstruction of social issues such as gender, feminism, race, war, pollution, poverty, globalization, citizenship and so on are frequently mentioned. Many of the critics have been questioned the method of examining and resolving these issues. Oppressors against the oppressed and majority against minority is always a considerable topic for sociologists and academic planners (especially in view of social change) and there was always the fear that democracy and equality will be a new tool or apparent logic to exploit of the majority or the oppressed [6, 16, 24]

On the other hand, the boundaries of communities are always open for constant and undetermined changes. Different communities cannot resist against global change. It might just change process in various communities based on how fast or slow the progress or regress will occurred [12, 25, 26]. What is important here, is to anticipate and keep pace with social change for education and curriculum. That is looking at the future of education for the curriculum development.

However, due to the long history of our country, it's facing religious, cultural and other challenges. Social principles upon which the curriculum development is based, needs multilateral perspectives. Vision and attention to religious, history and culture background on the one hand and looking to future and pay attention to future changes on the other hand can be considered as a framework for social foundations of curriculum. Our religious historical and cultural identity cannot be denied, but against the successive social changes and uncertainty of theories it can provide a solid and reliable foundation for the creation of an education system and curriculum. And by combining logical and rational perspectives with the futuristic look against new changes, we can use the social foundation based on our Islamic – Iranian culture and proper the students for entrance to the uncertain and international world.

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