

# **The Consideration Given to the Components of Life Skills in the Human Sciences Curriculum Used in Fourth and Fifth Grades of Elementary Schools for the Mental Retarded Students in Iran**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This survey aims to study the degree of consideration given to the components of the life skills in the human sciences syllabus used in grade four and five of primary education for the mental retarded students. In the following survey, the researchers use both the descriptive method to identify the components of teaching the life skills and also the content analysis method to analyze the human sciences syllabus used in grade four and five of primary education for the mental retarded students. The statistical community of this research in the section of the content analysis of the human sciences syllabus used in grade four and five for the mental retarded, included ten books; and the whole society were selected for the research. The instrument applied here for gathering data, included the list of purpose analysis, the books' content analysis and the teachers' guides analysis, which were suggested and compiled after studying the theoretical principles, and their durability and ... have been determined by the educational experts. The content analysis and inserted pictures unit existed in the text books and the teachers' guide books. In the section of the content analysis, the most important findings indicated that in the total section of the average objectives, the degree of consideration that the investigated objectives had given to the components of teaching the life skills in grades four and five, were 7.3 and 6.2 percent, and in the content of the investigated text books, the average of the accord in grade four and five was 11.3 and 16.2 percent. The degree of consideration given to the recognition aspect was 6.5% in grade four and 3.3% in grade five, to the attitude aspect was 2.6% in grade four and 1.8% in grade five, and to the skills aspect was 5.6% in grade four and 3.1 % in grade five. The highest degree of consideration was paid to the recognition aspect in relation to the components of the life skills.

**Key words:** Life skills, Mental retarded, Curriculum, Elementary school.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Amongst various factors such as family, school, management and organization, cultural facilities and provisions, teacher and student book, the educational system and the evaluation system which all are effective in education, the book and the content of text materials are the most important and from the viewpoint of the most educational experts, it is the only symbol of the activities accomplished for the realization of the person's potential capabilities [1].

Experiences, situations and the provided and unorganized learning activities comprise the content of the syllabus, which is delivered to the learners by the use of the written signs and symbols. Therefore, the content of the text books directly affects the understanding, comprehension and the quality of the concept perception of the learners. So, the content of the text books have to be organized in such a way that it is not just the transference of the information to the students, but to prepare them for life. As "John Davy" says, it should encourage the educating of the students' natural desires [2].

Teaching the life skills prepares the person to conquer the tensions and difficulties in the future life and that's what the person and the society demands. Teaching the life skills to the students is emphasized by most trainers and intellectuals in the field of education. For example, from the viewpoint of "Davy", the main purpose of education is to prepare citizens for self-management; such learning like any other learning must be accomplished practically. From his point of view, the greatest defect of the traditional schools, unfortunately, is it that they try to educate qualified and helpful citizens for the society in such an environment which lacks the social spirit [3].

These skills, manifested in the form of structures like self-esteem, self-confidence, critical thinking, problem –solving ability and social skills are taught implicitly and explicitly to the children and teenagers by the social institutions such as family, school, teachers and media. These educations have to be taught by the teachers who themselves possess such skills, to be able to actively involve the students in the teaching and learning process, and eventually reduce the distance between small environments namely the school and the great environment, namely the society [4].

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According to the significance of learning life skills for the mental retarded children to be able to face their daily problems and difficulties and its effect on the improvement of their personal and social life and also emphasizes put upon that, sufficient consideration have to be given to the process of that education. That's why today an important part of the formal school syllabus in most of the teaching systems, allocates to these skills. Such educations have to be based on new scientific findings and increasing scientific skills. Teaching to this group is done in the following areas: reading, mathematics, science and social studies [5].

In addition, teaching scientific skills possess a great importance in the educating process of the mental retarded children. In fact, the educational content in the areas of reading, mathematics, science and social studies has to be the prerequisite of the scientific skills. Therefore, studying the content of the education, and the realization of its objectives, are such the basic issues, which the researchers in the field of educational systems have considered. Mental retarded students need to think about life skills to meet the needs of success in their adulthood [6, 7, 8,9].

Teaching life skills is one of the basic educational panoramas for the mental retarded people. The purpose of the educational programs of life skills is to enable the mental retarded people and all who suffer from an inability to live in the society by the use of such skills. The social attitude towards the retarded people is gradually transforming. One of the problems, these students are dealing with, is how to generalize the learning content with the living environment. The most important purpose of the educational programs is to realize the functionality of the educational programs; their adaptability with the living situations, out of the educational environment; meeting their current needs; reducing their outside problems; and also increasing their potential capabilities. This has been studied in several researches. For instance, Sabziyan [10], in a survey called examining the consideration of life skills in the syllabus of the primary education in Tehran, reported that life skills in the planning stage of the primary education syllabus lacks enough consideration. Refahi [11], also in a survey called the impact of teaching the life skills on the reduction of the behavioral disorders of those students who suffer from specific learning problems showed that teaching the life skills can reduce the behavioral disorder of the students and that reduction is more influential in girls than the boys.

As far as the acquisition of the life skills during the primary education, enjoys great importance especially for the mental retarded children, it has to be given sufficient consideration in the syllabus and the educational content. The purpose of the researcher in this survey includes: analyzing the human sciences syllabus used in grade four and five of the primary education for the mental retarded students, so that exactly distinguish whether the life skills have been enough considered in the syllabus content of the human sciences or not.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research method in this study is a collation method in which the documentary examination and content analysis type of the descriptive method is not much applied. The first period in this method is the descriptive method (theoretical principles). In the next period, the content of the text books, approved objectives and the teachers' guide books for the human sciences program were examined and described by the use of content analysis method. The statistical community of this survey, the human sciences syllabus used in grade four and five of primary education for the mental retarded students, was the whole society to gather the information and analyze the findings for studying. Six books in the content section and four books in the approved objectives were used. The instrument to gather information in this survey was the list of research made content analysis, in which 20 skills of more importance were applied to adjust the list. The form and content .....of the list is evaluated in an acceptable level. To be confident about the durability of the content analysis list, they were presented to a MS expert in course planning to analyze part of the mentioned course program in a parallel way and in step with the researcher. The difference between the similarity coefficients measured by two separate researchers was estimated about 0.80, which indicated the durability of the applied instrument. To analyze the data obtained by the lists of the components of the syllabus content, the content analysis method was applied, which is the unit of analysis, sentences and pictures in the text books of the human sciences, teachers' guide books and the approved objectives of the human sciences used in grade four and five of primary education for the mental retarded students. For this purpose, after studying each page of the objectives, the text of the books, and the teachers' guide books, sentences and the pictures of the life skills components were identified, counted and then evaluated according to the frequency and the percentage of different subjects.

## 3. RESULTS

To analyze the human sciences syllabus of the mental retarded students in grade four and five of the primary education, the objective content, text books' content and the teachers' guide books for human sciences were examined. The findings are presented in tables 1 and 2.

What is inferred is it that from the total 1614 sentences of the human sciences syllabus in grade four and five of the mental retarded students in the elementary course, 256 sentences (5.8%) are about teaching life skills and that indicates the insufficient consideration to such educations.

What is inferred from table 2 is it that from the total 1539 sentences of the human sciences syllabus used for the mental retarded students in grade four of the primary education, 439 sentences (28.5%) are about teaching life skills and that indicates insufficient consideration to those educations.

**Table 1.** The distribution of the consideration of the human sciences syllabus in fourth grade for the mental retarded students given to the components of the life skills

The examined situation of the components	Learning areas	Persian		Religious educations		Social studies		total	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Objectives' content	Recognition	14	21.8	--	--	3	15	17	17.1
	Attitude	4	15.3	--	--	3	25	7	12
	Skill	19	52.7	--	--	12	34.2	31	32.2
Text books' content	Recognition	50	78.1	15	5.1	17	85	82	82.8
	Attitude	22	84.6	20	6.8	9	75	51	87.9
	Skill	17	47.2	25	8.5	23	65.7	65	67.7
Teachers' guides content	Recognition	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Attitude	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Skill	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total sentences related to the skills	Recognition	64		15		20		99	
	Attitude	26		20		12		58	
	Skill	36		25		35		96	
Total sentences in the syllabus		621		291		702		1614	
Percent of the sentences	Recognition	10.3		5.1		2.8		6.1	
	Attitude	4.1		6.8		2.9		3.5	
	Skill	5.7		9.5		4.9		5.9	

**Table 2.** Distribution of the consideration to human sciences syllabus in fifth grade of the mental retarded students in the elementary course to the components of the life skill

The examined situation of the components	Learning areas	Persian		Religious educations		Social studies		total	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Objectives' content	Recognition	14	19.1	--	--	18	18.1	32	17.2
	Attitude	12	30.7	--	--	6	18.1	18	22.2
	Skill	10	20.8	--	--	9	13.6	19	11
Text books' content	Recognition	59	80.8	14	100	81	81.8	154	82.7
	Attitude	27	69.2	9	100	27	81.8	63	77.7
	Skill	38	79.1	58	100	57	86.3	153	88.9
Teachers' guides content	Recognition	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Attitude	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Skill	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total sentences related to the skills	Recognition	73		14		99		186	
	Attitude	39		9		33		81	
	Skill	48		58		66		172	
Total sentences in the syllabus		640		260		639		1539	
Percent of the sentences	Recognition	11.4		5.3		15.4		12	
	Attitude	6		3.4		5.1		5.2	
	Skill	7.5		22.3		10.3		11.1	

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that none of the objectives' scales in the areas of recognition, attitude and skill, comparing to the suggested components have reached even to 20%, and in the recognition area, the conformity of the objectives equals 18.9% and that indicates the highest rate. Some of the components have been ignored in the existing syllabus. Therefore, according to the significance of the life skill educations, it's necessary to basically review and reconsider the whole syllabus in the primary education for the mental retarded students. The produced results accord the findings of Adib [12] and Sabziyan [10].

Since those studies have been accomplished on the mental retarded students and have concentrated on their particular books, those limitations have to be considered in case generalizing those findings. It is suggested that the components of the life skills in the syllabus of various courses and also science, attitude and the

professional skills of the teachers to evaluate the lists of the life skill components be investigated in future researches.

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