Dissemination Strategies of Iran's National Curriculum in the Present and Ideal Situations in the Perspective of the Related Planners and Authorities

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Abstract Applying of an effective method for promoting the National Curriculum and making it formal and accepted as a part of the current culture, with the use of internal and external capacities of educational system, is one of the mandatory implications of the curriculum implementation in Iran. This curriculum with its all implications is running now and the planners expect that, with the help of adopted strategies, pave the way for optimum dissemination of this curriculum. Some available evidences signify that this process has faced with a couple of challenges. The aim of the current research is study and investigation of some strategies in dissemination process of Iran's National Curriculum in the present situation and also analysis of the Ideal and favorable condition in the eyes of its planners to provide some clues for an efficient dissemination for the national curriculum of Iran in the best way. The research methodology is qualitative and precisely concentrates on Glaser's Grounded Theory. The field of the study was National Curriculum planners and authorities who were selected through semi-structured interviews using purposive chain sampling congruent with theoretical saturation. Interviews were conducted individually and were encoded precisely. After the tenth interview data was saturated but for more validation it was continued up to fourteenth. Analyzing of information was according to the subjective encoding. Validation of the findings was gained through three-coordination models and to increase its reliability in a previously planned way, with giving required instructions interviews were conducted in an appropriate place in terms of interview conditions and away from any bias imposing or specific comments. The results demonstrated that the implemented strategies in dissemination of Iran's National Curriculum in the present situation were focal-oriented and faced with the unilateral management.
Keywords: Curriculum dissemination, National Curriculum, guidelines for effective dissemination

Introduction

Iran's National Curriculum and the Fundamental Reform Document of educational system are the most important documents on the base of which the current change in education process has been taking place (Samavi, Bakhtari, & Nakhodaei, 2016). In order to create and plan an Islamic-base training process of the students, lots of efforts have been made. In paragraph 14 of the dissemination requirements of the National Fellowship Curriculum Document, there is an emphasize on "the use of some effective methods for promoting the National Curriculum and making it formal and accepted as a part of the current culture with getting help of internal and external capacities of educational system"(IranianNationalCurriculum, 2011). According to the defined elements and factors of the National Curriculum planning process, it was expected from its implementers to adopt some much more effective strategies to put into practice.

Ghaedi (2008) believes: "The national curriculum requires different standards in various areas (both in implementation and educational domains), but unfortunately just a small amount of them exists. Learning related standards, in different areas and subjects, are considered among the top and most important ones. Other standards are related to psychology, personality, interests and etc. In terms of the universal parameters and standards, it

shows that educational system of the country is not in the good situation, and consequently the curriculum implementation process in this situation will be faced with some difficulties.

In correspondence nature of studying field with the personal ability, particularly, managerial standards and some parameters related to human recourses suffer from a serious drawback. It is clear that well planned curriculums will be inefficient with weak and poor implementation. All the requirements and implications of the National Curriculum should be considered and observed very carefully (Desimone, 2009). Silver Alexander Lewis (1980), in this case, thinks that many curriculum plans face with failure and defeat just because of some teacher's avoidance to perceive and accept their standards (Egan, 1989).

In this regard Khandaghi and Dehghani also believe that "the implementers and executives of focal and non-focal curriculum, in putting it into practice, are faced with some misunderstandings. In other words, studies show that educational systems, in implementing what is called focal and non-focal system, do not respond correctly and do not accomplish these plans appropriately… for changing educational system a complete, comprehensive and practical plan should be prepared and implemented. Before any planning, a great deal of information from the current situation is needed in order to plan the future activities and movements on the basis of it. Apparently this process is not sometimes applicable, and in practice, its existing capacities cannot be understood and implemented very well" (Nejad, Abbaszadeh, Hassani, & Bernousi, 2012). It is worth noting that the challenge in dissemination process of the curriculum has a worldwide background. The dissemination and development of ideas, applied methods and tools, their

acceptance procedure, and gaining popularity or getting lost and defeated turned to be some important issues for investigation during some years. Famous scientists like Tard Gabriel (1903), French sociologist, Break Ryan and Neil Gross (1940), also Doug Sohn and John B. St. Mark, have done a number of researches in this area. Furthermore, Everett Rogers, one of the leading scientists of this realm, has conducted a lot of investigations and in this regard is considered as a theory holder (Nejad, et al., 2012). Some reports of educational centers also confirm the existing concerns and challenges. In the global monitoring report on Education for All (2008), it was stated in this way:" the most important results driven from the international evaluation (assessment) of the students, demonstrated that the learning outcomes in most parts of the world are too poor and weak. PIRLS 2001 assessment revealed that in many parts of the world including Argentina, Colombia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kuwait, Morocco and Turkey, more than 40% of fourth grade students have trouble in their reading skills, in a way that unfortunately their reading ability can only be ranked among the other lower school grades (Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez, & Chrostowski, 2004).

In Yarmohammadian'sopinion (2015) these challenges primarily occur due to the teachers' adopted approaches. "Any change or modification should be introduced in a way that all the workers could match themselves with it easily and implement it in the most reasonable way. Successful reforms and effective changes, and also applicability of the suggested plans, all depend to the teachers' acceptance".

Despite of the planning process, these challenges are due to some overlooked considerations in adopting appropriate strategies for dissemination of the

curriculum.

McLachlan, BIS, Craig, and Coldwell (2011) believe that in implementation of the curriculum, there are two considerations. "The perspective of curriculum changes along with the linear management and a bureaucratic standing point, in which the curricula modification process (planning and implementation) takes place under the supervision of different forms of the management (in transferring knowledge to the implementers, classrooms and training centers). Planners think that these changes will be implemented exactly in the same way that they are intended to (figure1), but in practice they will just occur in the same way that the teachers want (figure 2)."

In these pictures you can see all the events that occur during the implementation process of a planned curriculum due to disorganization in its poor dissemination process and management.
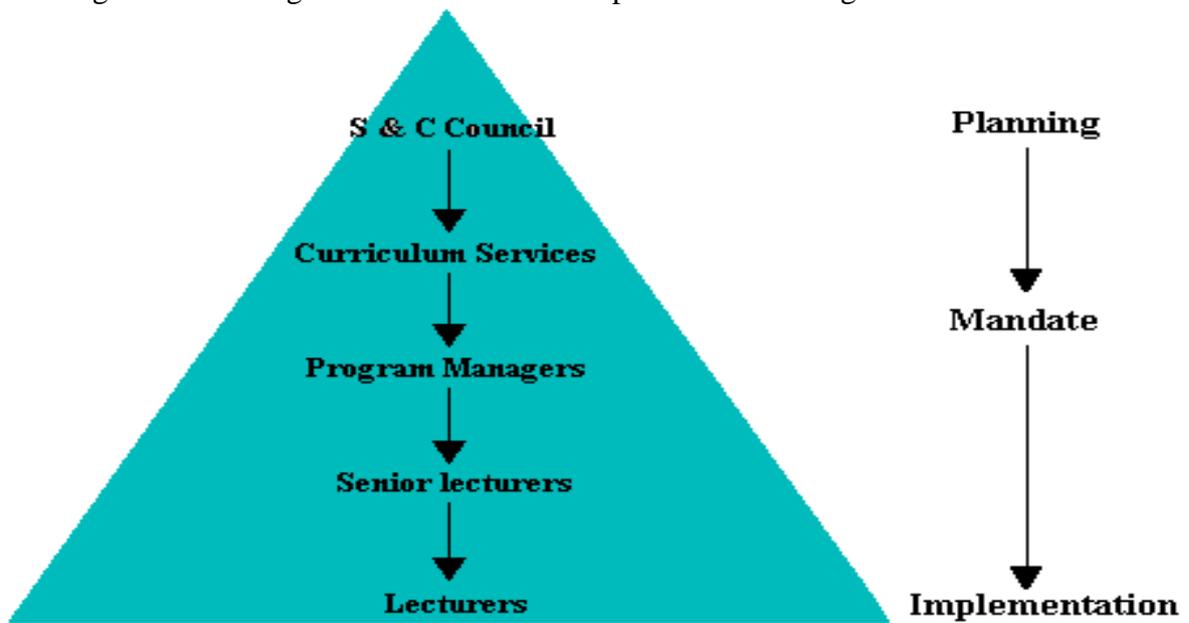
Figure 1: Bureaucratic perspective on curriculum change (MAcBeth 1997).
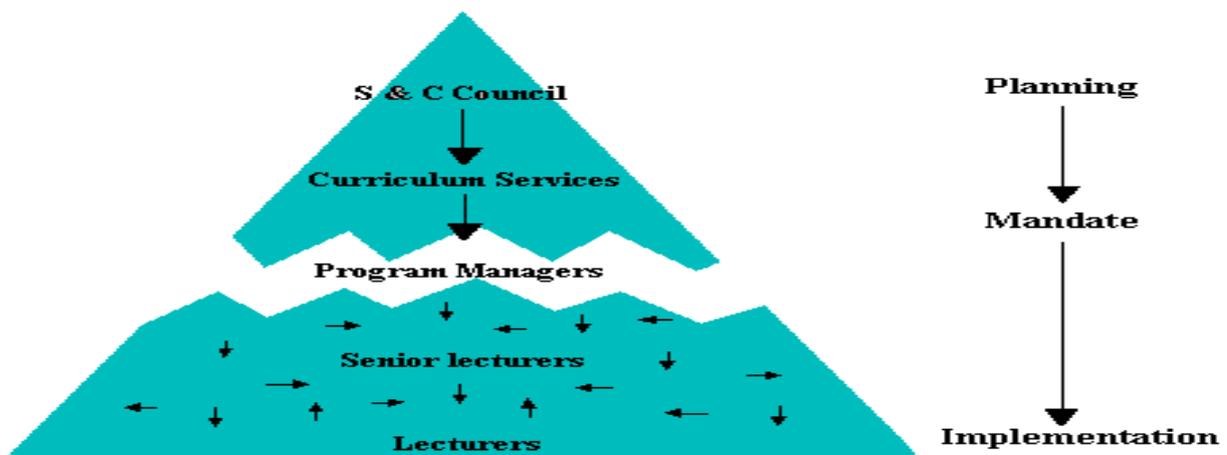
Figure 2: Trauma in TAFE dissemination process (McBeath1997).

Evidences indicate that the same situation (arose challenges in disseminating curriculum process and teachers' poor believe in the National Curriculum) exactly can be seen in Iran's educational system. In fact, the educational system, with its previous structure and without any basic changes, has affected all the processes and functions of the new educational system, especially in term of the National Curriculum, and has also faced all the process with some serious challenges. According to the these mentioned facts and with the assumption that all planners of Iran's National Curriculum always use the best resources to provide and develop optimum dissemination strategies, the current study tries to find an appropriate answer to these two research questions: What are the best strategies for dissemination of the National Curriculum in the present situation of Iran and How its the most ideal situation would be pictured in the eyes of the related planners and authorities? This investigation was conducted to find and discover the abstracted perspective of the National Curriculum planners about the appropriate dissemination strategies in the present situation and in the most ideal and desirable one.

Results

There are two research questions: What are the best strategies for dissemination of the National Curriculum in the present situation of Iran and How its the most ideal situation would be pictured in the eyes of the related officials and planners? After open and axial encoding, and exploiting one of Glaser's family of the "Strategy" the findings were integrated and categorized precisely. After removing the extra codes, the resulted concepts in relation to the second research question, which represents National Curriculum planners' standing point in case of the adopted strategies in dissemination process of the curriculum at both, present and ideal situations, were limited and categorized according to Glaser's family of the "Strategy".

Open categorization:

This table is related to the adopted dissemination strategies of the National Curriculum in the present situation, in the form of open categorization

National curriculum Dissemination Activities and Proceedings in connection with Glaser's families	Open Categorization
Adopted dissemination strategies in the present situation	exclusive and focal strategy in planning dissemination process
	acceptance of the authority of teachers in curriculum dissemination process
	Following the strategy of having only one authority in charge of curriculum dissemination process
Adopted dissemination strategies in the ideal situation	Adopting the comprehensive strategy with the participation of different organs and social communities

4

	in dissemination process
	The inclusive participation of all the social communities in dissemination process
	Theory-based dissemination strategy
	Comprehensive dissemination strategy with a deductive approach

Axial categorization: This table is related to the adopted dissemination strategies of the National Curriculum in the form of axial categorization

Glaser's Family of the "Strategy"	Axial Categorization
Adopted dissemination strategies in the present situation	**Dissemination with the self-center and teacher / book oriented strategies in educational system**
Adopted dissemination strategies in the ideal situation	**Dissemination with community-based strategy according to dissemination theory with a deductive approach**

Discussion and conclusion

Regarding the adopted strategies in dissemination process of the National Curriculum in the perspective of its planners and on the basis of Glaser's family of the "Strategy", the findings and results of this research were integrated and classified precisely in seven open categories in addition to two axial ones.

In relation with dissemination strategies in the present situation, findings confirm that in this case the dissemination process is planned and implemented according to the exclusive and focal strategy. Dissemination of curricula in all fields is managed in one dimensional way and according to a linear perspective. Focal-oriented and centralized strategy in planning and dissemination process has led to the reduction of the implementers' autonomy and has overlooked the existing capacities and potentialities in the community. This kind of dissemination, with its focal-oriented outlook, just accepts the teachers and school executors as the only official implementers of the curriculum. Therefore, in this way the dissemination process is only limited and confined to the teachers' activities and proceedings at schools, whereas, the students and their parents should be placed in center of attention. This situation is the result of a strategy which has created and promoted the rule of linear perspective in dissemination process of the curriculum. According to the expert and official planners, one dimensional perspective and focal-oriented nature of the current planning system is not suitable for the dissemination purpose and weakens the implementation of the National Curriculum. Thinking in this way, along with holding two linear and mechanical perspectives, is the result of taking top-

down approach in implementation process of the curriculum. In this view, taking advantage of the capacities and capabilities of teachers, who are considered as the only implementers of the National Curriculum dissemination, is a fundamental strategy in this process. Paying all the attention to teachers in this case, is followed by underestimating the importance of the others. Practicing of this strategy in the present situation has limited the dissemination process just to planners' departments and writing a number of school text books. Of course in addition to the teachers, all other curriculum related individuals are entitled to play role in this field and should be definitely considered in adopting dissemination strategies and implementations.

Morse and Allensworth (2015) argue that "students are regarded as the heart of curriculum implementation and the heart of the whole school and community as well, because they are the recipients of the educational plans and services, therefore, it should be ensured that they are healthy, safe, in accordance with the intended plan and able to share and support it and play role in dissemination process of the curriculum. ". Some times this process (dissemination) is investigated in the realm of theoretical frameworks and principles of curriculum changes. . Erickson (2015) in his study indicates that five principles can make the changes in curriculum successful:

creating confidence in implementers of the curriculum, distribution of educational leadership, providing well structured and well targeted time for teachers to learn and collaborate, creating some capacities through setting the professional development as their goal, and providing opportunities for participation of all curriculum related individuals in the process.

Croft (2015) in a research (for the doctoral

degree at Ohio University) titled "Evaluation of school and non-school progresses of the students in Sweden and Finland" and in an attempt to find an answer to this question that why in math and science (with a15-year gap among the old students' marks in math, and reading and taking test in science between the two countries) Finnish students in comparison with Swedish ones, under the identical conditions, are one year ahead, comes to this conclusion that " to understand this difference between the students considering all the changes in social environment is needed. Wen-Cheng, Chien-Hung and Chung-Chieh (2011) in a study, about the capabilities and limitations of elementary school teachers in participating in the curriculum planning process in Korea, demonstrates that the effectiveness of a curriculum is directly subjected to the participation amount of the individuals and experts, and the amount of attention which is paid to the teachers' opinion and schools. Hung also emphasizes on expanding the knowledge and awareness of all the teachers and other curriculum related agents who are somehow involved in the planning process. Mischoulon believes that: "Dissemination is formed around the three main axes which all are in relationship with each other in terms of their concentration on the dissemination process:

A set of dissemination mechanisms along with some labor division among the dissemination related individuals, a timetable for gradual implementation of dissemination mechanisms, and dissemination and identification of institutions and groups. "He also states that" in planning of dissemination process there should be a complete ccontinuity and consistency among the three elements of controlling the quality, planning of dissemination strategies, and its intended

6

objectives.

Despite the emphasize on participation of all curriculum related individuals in its implementation, in educational system of Islamic Republic of Iran there is just one authority in charge of curriculum dissemination process and that is the *Educational Research and Plan Organization* (department of plan and composition of school books), while many other academic institutions and professional organizations and authorities in this regard could play much more efficient role.

In relation with dissemination strategies in the ideal situation, findings indicate that the first strategy, which all the expert emphasize on it at the same time, is the adaptation of a comprehensive strategy with the participation of different organs and social communities in dissemination process. This underlines the fact that in implementation of the National Curriculum, as it was considered in Reform Document, public attendance in the process was not strong. The implementation of the National Curriculum is caught among the loop of focal-oriented executive system. Due to its national and public nature, it is in need of a dissemination process in which can attract the attention, support and excusive participation of all organs and social communities.

In addition to some participants in internal part of educational system, a couple of social networks and special expert groups can also be effective in achieving educational goals according to their very own functions in the society. Of course this strategy is very valuable but its theoretical aspects are in need of localization.

Studying of some evidences related to the Reform Documents indicates that no certain studies have been made during the National Curriculum planning process in

relation to its dissemination strategies. Any fundamental attempt, related to dissemination, is in need of theoretical clarification first. In order to understand and have a precise picture of what should be done in dissemination process of the National Curriculum, the implementers and executive agents would be in need of some theoretical definitions. Accordingly, curriculum officials and planners always insist on the theoretical-based feature of any dissemination strategy. A dissemination strategy should be comprehensive and subjected to clarification on the basis of deductive approach. Unfortunately the current dissemination of the curriculum is running imperfectly according to the mechanical strategies, consequently it has been faced with the resistance of the teachers. The planners are responsible in this case to provide them with the required illuminations. Shrumen and his colleagues mention six following approaches for facing with this arose resistance to change:

1. Education and Communication:

This can take place through face to face communications, group discussions, written reports or providing some experimental guidelines. The aim here is to inform the implementers and help them to understand the reasons and logic of the intended change. It seems that when the resistance is on the basis of incomplete or false information, the best approach for its elimination is accurate education and communication.

2. Participation:

The purpose is allowing all the curriculum related individuals to help in its planning, implement or reform process. This approach demands all to share their attitudes and suggestions about the applicable features of change. When an agent does not have all the information about applying the intended changes successfully, this technique is a special.

7

3. Facilitation and Support
It includes providing moral and financial support to those who endure the received hardships of the change. A manager, who wants to apply this method actively, should listen to the propounded complaints and problems and facilitate new educational procedures to reduce the working pressure of the staff due to the application of the intended change. This method is recommended when some are under pressure because of working problems.

4. Negotiation and agreement:
It is very useful when an individual or a group loses its profits.

5. Devise and Cooperation:
It means the use of a pervasive effort for affecting the others. It includes providing selective information and structuralizing the events in a way that the intended change occur or come true.

6. Explicit or Implicit Pressure:
It is the exertion of pressure on individuals in order to force them to accept the change. In this case the resisters are threatened or if continue will face with some adverse consequences. This procedure may occur when the speed of change and its fulfillment matters.

Proposing a model of change acceptance by the teachers, Punch (1985) provides some experimental evidences from some of the factors that affect the teachers' acceptance amount. They can be stated as follow:
Some beliefs about the problems of public education
General attitudes towards the former system of education
New education system's capacity for being implemented in the class environment
Perceived expectations and beliefs about some important aspects of the new system of education Perceived support from the teachers as the main sources of the new education system Evaluation and assessment of the personal profits after the

change, and some beliefs about the important aspects of the new system in comparison with the former one.

Increasing the quality of the National Curriculum's implementation procedure depends on an efficient dissemination process in which all the organically attended implementers could put it and its needed changes into the practice, within the framework of the National Curriculum, altogether like-mindedly, in one line and one synergy. In this approach they (implementers) should have authority in order to apply some changes in the process in accordance with the dissemination requirements.

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