


Characteristics of Entrepreneurship-Based Curriculum Objectives in the Second Elementary Education System of Iran

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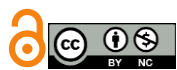
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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study was to identify the characteristics of entrepreneurship-based curriculum objectives within Iran's second elementary education system.

Methodology: The study employed a qualitative research design with an applied purpose. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with 25 experts who had significant scientific or practical experience in entrepreneurship education. The sample was selected using purposive judgment sampling until theoretical saturation was achieved. The interviews were analyzed using Strauss and Corbin's open, axial, and selective coding processes to identify key themes and categories related to the research objective.

Findings: The analysis revealed that the characteristics of entrepreneurship-based curriculum objectives in Iran's second elementary education system fall into three main categories: (1) Strengthening and nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit in students, which includes knowledge and nature of entrepreneurship, development of entrepreneurial characteristics, and acquisition of economic literacy; (2) Raising student awareness about the self-employment process, encompassing opportunities for learning through action and experience, business law education, recognition of business creation opportunities, acquisition of financial skills, and marketing skills; (3) Fostering creative thinking in students, which covers critical thinking, creative thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, risk-taking, and responsibility.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the importance of integrating entrepreneurship education into the elementary curriculum to foster essential entrepreneurial skills and attitudes from a young age.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, curriculum objectives, elementary education, entrepreneurial skills, Iran, qualitative research, educational policy.

1 Introduction

In the age of automation and artificial intelligence, the need for entrepreneurship as a sustainable source for job creation has significantly increased. In recent years, educational systems in successful countries worldwide have recognized their role in developing sustainable entrepreneurship, initiating entrepreneurship education, and following innovative educational approaches in the field of entrepreneurship to equip graduates with entrepreneurial skills for practical application (Amjad et al., 2020). Entrepreneurship is the process of designing, launching, and managing new businesses, which are often initially small businesses. Individuals who create these businesses are called entrepreneurs (Shojaei et al., 2019). Davidson and Gordon (2012) define entrepreneurship as competitive behavior that drives the market process forward (Ajala, 2024; Haibin, 2024). Entrepreneurial education programs are about acquiring relevant skills where an individual is motivated and guided to achieve self-confidence and self-employment sensitivity (Oleforo et al., 2013). Indeed, entrepreneurial education is a systematic, conscious, and purposeful process for creatively training non-entrepreneurial individuals, aiming to integrate personal entrepreneurial skills and characteristics with entrepreneurial processes and related behaviors (Iwu et al., 2021; Lackeus, 2015).

The most influential factor in advancing entrepreneurial activities from potential to actual is fostering an entrepreneurial spirit in individuals through education and strengthening the educational system. Today, in most developed and developing countries, entrepreneurial education and promotion have a special place in all educational levels. Teaching entrepreneurial skills is increasingly accepted as part of the educational curriculum in a wide range of countries. In Finland, entrepreneurship education is provided from elementary school to university; in the Netherlands, Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Romania, entrepreneurship education is incorporated into the national curriculum at various educational stages (Moghimi et al., 2019; Weng et al., 2022). Essentially, there is a widespread recognition of the benefits of entrepreneurship education for economic development and the role of entrepreneurial achievements at the macro level (Iwu et al., 2021), with the belief that in the 21st century, to succeed in work, individuals need to have entrepreneurial thinking and skills (Tican, 2019).

According to Nichols and Nichols, the curriculum, which is essentially the heart of education, should: 1. Provide all available knowledge resources and insightful judgments about teaching objectives, whether regarding specific subjects or the curriculum in general, and scrutinize them carefully. 2. Develop and test the methods and educational materials used in schools that are judged most likely to achieve agreed-upon objectives. 3. Evaluate the extent to which the planned work has achieved its goals, possibly inspiring new thoughts about the objectives themselves. 4. The final element is the feedback obtained from all experiences to provide a starting point for further studies (Maghamdoost et al., 2019). Research findings on entrepreneurial education through the curriculum have shown that entrepreneurial training has made individuals more responsible, risk-tolerant, and successful in facing potential challenges while also reducing unemployment and business failure rates (Movahedi, 2016). Additionally, entrepreneurial education has been found to enhance personal development, foster necessary specialist skills, and improve creativity, self-confidence, innovation, and social skills, responding to the complex, uncertain, and changing world that necessitates entrepreneurial competencies for individuals and organizations more than ever (Lackeus, 2015).

Maghamdoost (2019) conducted research aimed at designing and validating an optimal curriculum model for technical and vocational education with an entrepreneurial approach. The findings showed that the main components of entrepreneurship include creativity, innovation, teamwork, perseverance, risk-taking, and leadership (Maghamdoost et al., 2019). Shojaei et al. (2019) showed that variables such as policymaking and professional business management and learning, IT management, decision-making and problem-solving, effective interactions and communications, management and leadership, and learning management and human resource development had a direct and significant positive impact on the structure of entrepreneurship-based curriculum in educational sciences (Shojaei et al., 2019). Schultz (2022) showed that the impact of the business plan course (a hybrid model course) was mainly in its ability to enhance students' general interest in entrepreneurial activities with entrepreneurial intent (Schultz, 2022).

Given that entrepreneurial education through the curriculum can be one of the most impactful ways to ease the entry of a large number of graduates into the job market, and based on Guven's theoretical perspective which highlights that the achievements of entrepreneurship in elementary

programs are present for developing entrepreneurial components but are insufficient to facilitate certain entrepreneurial characteristics (as cited in Heshmatifar, 2018, p. 87), this research addresses the characteristics of entrepreneurship-based curriculum objectives in Iran's second elementary education system. Considering that values acquired before the age of twenty are retained, entrepreneurship education in elementary school is of great importance. The research question is: What are the characteristics of curriculum objectives for entrepreneurship in Iran's second elementary education system?

2 Methods and Materials

The purpose of this research is applied, the data collection method is fieldwork, and the execution method is qualitative. The research participants consisted of 25 experts and knowledgeable individuals familiar with the research topic, having credible scientific or experiential backgrounds in this field. The criteria for inclusion in this section were that participants must: 1. Have at least a master's degree. 2. Be experts in curriculum, especially entrepreneurship, and have authored books and articles in this field. Purposive judgmental sampling was used, continuing until theoretical

saturation. The data collection tool was semi-structured interviews. To ensure interview validity and the accuracy of the results, triangulation was used. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was used to calculate interview reliability. In triangulation, the interview questions were reviewed through three angles and, with the addition and removal of questions, validity was confirmed with six questions: literature sources (theories presented in books), two curriculum specialists, and the opinions of the supervisor and advisor. The Kappa value was 0.712, which is considerable, indicating acceptable interview question reliability. For data analysis, Strauss and Corbin's three coding processes—open, axial, and selective coding—were used.

3 Findings and Results

To achieve the main research objective, the text of the selected articles was entered into software, and words, concepts, and phrases were identified as open codes, resulting in 83 indices. These were then defined into 15 general components through axial coding and ultimately categorized into three main dimensions during selective coding, as shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

The Results of Qualitative Analysis

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Familiarizing students with the knowledge and nature of entrepreneurship is a curriculum objective.	Knowledge and nature of entrepreneurship	Strengthening and nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit in students
Acquiring knowledge related to entrepreneurship is part of the curriculum objectives.	Development of entrepreneurial characteristics	
Strengthening the entrepreneurial spirit and mindset is part of the entrepreneurial curriculum objectives.		
Curriculum objectives should be specifically defined by curriculum designers and simultaneously criteria for assessing and judging them should be determined.		
In elementary school, the objective of entrepreneurship education is to develop entrepreneurial skills, capabilities, and characteristics in students.	Acquisition of economic literacy	
Acquiring economic literacy should be an objective of the entrepreneurial curriculum.		
Formal education in elementary school can develop students into entrepreneurs.	Opportunity for learning through action and experience	Raising student awareness about the self-employment process
The curriculum objective in elementary school should be providing opportunities for learning through action and experience.	Business law education	
To adopt an effective strategy for teaching entrepreneurship to Iranian students, appropriate educational and curriculum programs should be designed.	Recognition of business creation opportunities	
An important objective of entrepreneurship education should be enhancing the recognition of opportunities.		
Integrating entrepreneurship education into the elementary curriculum enriches student learning experiences and increases school-industry connections.	Acquisition of financial skills	
It is crucial that the curriculum objective familiarizes students with business skills.	Acquisition of marketing skills	
In the educational systems of successful countries, familiarizing students with business laws, recognizing business creation opportunities, financial, tax, and marketing skills are part of the entrepreneurship curriculum objectives.		

The curriculum objective in elementary school should be improving students' critical and creative thinking skills.	Critical thinking	Fostering creative thinking in students
Demonstrating creative thinking behavior is an objective of the entrepreneurship curriculum in leading countries.	Creative thinking	
The objective of incorporating entrepreneurship into the elementary curriculum is to familiarize students with working environments and creativity in entrepreneurship.		
For students to become entrepreneurs, the curriculum objective should be familiarizing them with concepts of creativity, innovation, initiative, motivation, idea generation, teamwork, and business intelligence.	Teamwork	
In teaching entrepreneurship to students, emphasis should be placed on thinking methods, behavior, creativity, risk-taking, and problem-solving.	Problem-solving	
	Risk-taking	
Curriculum objectives for entrepreneurship should enhance student awareness of responsibility, risk-taking, idea identification, independence, community service, cooperation, and self-confidence.	Responsibility	

As shown in [Table 1](#), open, axial, and selective coding of information obtained from content analysis of interviews indicated that the characteristics of curriculum objectives for entrepreneurship in Iran's second elementary education system comprise 3 main categories, 14 subcategories, and 19 open codes.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The results obtained from interviews with 25 participants and analysis through three types of coding—open, axial, and selective—indicated that curriculum objectives comprise 3 main categories, 14 subcategories, and 19 open codes. The first main category is strengthening and nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit in students (1. Knowledge and nature of entrepreneurship, 2. Development of entrepreneurial characteristics, 3. Acquisition of economic literacy). The second main category is raising student awareness about the self-employment process (1. Opportunity for learning through action and experience, 2. Business law education, 3. Recognition of business creation opportunities, 4. Acquisition of financial skills, 5. Acquisition of marketing skills). The third main category is fostering creative thinking in students (1. Critical thinking, 2. Creative thinking, 3. Teamwork, 4. Problem-solving, 5. Risk-taking, 6. Responsibility). These results align with the findings of prior studies ([Ahmed, 2019](#); [Amjad et al., 2020](#); [Iwu et al., 2021](#); [Lackéus, 2015](#); [Maghamdoost et al., 2019](#); [Moghimi et al., 2019](#); [Movahedi, 2016](#); [Oleforo et al., 2013](#); [Schultz, 2022](#); [Shojaei et al., 2019](#); [Tican, 2019](#); [Weng et al., 2022](#)). It can be explained that to strengthen and nurture the entrepreneurial spirit in students, the curriculum needs to shift towards fostering creativity. As [Weng et al. \(2022\)](#) stated, creativity is considered a vital skill for student life and flourishing in the 21st century, and it is demonstrated through the creation of final products and presentations, making it an important element in curriculum objectives.

Creative students become prepared to engage in learning new things, propose innovative ideas, and collaborate with others to solve real-world problems ([Weng et al., 2022](#)).

This study faced several limitations. The sample size was restricted to 25 experts, which may not fully represent the diversity of perspectives in the field. Additionally, the study relied on qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews, which, despite rigorous analysis, may be subject to personal biases and interpretations of the interviewees. The research was conducted within the specific context of Iran's second elementary education system, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts or levels. Finally, the study did not incorporate longitudinal data, which could provide insights into the long-term impact of entrepreneurship-based curriculum objectives.

Future research should consider expanding the sample size to include a broader range of stakeholders, such as students, teachers, and policymakers, to capture a more comprehensive view of entrepreneurship-based curriculum objectives. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to assess the long-term effects of such curricula on students' entrepreneurial skills and career outcomes. Comparative studies between different educational contexts and countries could also provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of various approaches to entrepreneurship education. Additionally, quantitative research methods, including surveys and experiments, could complement the qualitative findings and provide more robust evidence of the impact of entrepreneurship education.

The findings of this study suggest that educational policymakers should prioritize the integration of entrepreneurship education within the elementary curriculum. Schools should develop comprehensive programs that not only impart knowledge but also foster entrepreneurial skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and financial literacy. Teacher training programs should be

enhanced to equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach entrepreneurship. Furthermore, collaborations between schools and industry should be encouraged to provide students with real-world entrepreneurial experiences. These initiatives can collectively contribute to preparing students to navigate and succeed in an increasingly complex and dynamic economic landscape.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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