



## Content characteristics of the entrepreneurship-based curriculum in Iran's education system

Amir Reza. Nairi<sup>1</sup>, Amir Hossein. Mehdizadeh\*<sup>2</sup>, Mohammad. Nourian<sup>2</sup>, Zohreh. Ismailzadeh<sup>2</sup> & Leila. Sharifian<sup>2</sup>

1. Ph.D student of Curriculum Planning, Islamshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Islamshahr, Iran

2. \*Corresponding Author: Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Islamshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Islamshahr, Iran

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### ABSTRACT

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Corresponding Author's Info  
Email:

Amir.hmehdizadeh@yahoo.com

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**Background and Aim:** The changes brought about by globalization, technological advancements, and the dynamics of the job market in the 21st century have impacted education. Educational systems in various countries are seeking the best methods to educate children and adolescents in their daily and professional lives, considering the requirements of the 21st century. The purpose of this research was to identify the characteristics of entrepreneurship-based curriculum content in the secondary education system in Iran. **Methods:** The research was applied in nature and qualitative in methodology. To this end, interviews were conducted with 25 experts who were well-versed in the research topic, using purposeful sampling of a judgmental type, until theoretical saturation was achieved. For the analysis of the qualitative part, the three coding processes of open, axial, and selective coding by Strauss and Corbin were employed. **Results:** The results of the data analysis showed that the characteristics of entrepreneurship-based curriculum content in the secondary educational system in Iran include: designing diverse and active curriculum content (1- inspiring curriculum, 2- practicality of curriculum content, 3- quality curriculum content). Developing curriculum content aimed at educating entrepreneurial citizens (1- learning about oneself, 2- entrepreneurial knowledge, 3- skill-focused curriculum content, 4- learning about the environment and entrepreneurial networks). The third is aligning curriculum content with societal needs and scientific developments (1- ethics of entrepreneurship, 2- adapting curriculum content to changes, 3- preparing students for the business world with awareness). Emphasizing student activity in the curriculum through practical exercises and creating personal experiences (1- student competency in time management, 2- the presence of practical exercises, 3- student ability to think about starting a business). **Conclusion:** Educating entrepreneurial citizens is an urgent need in today's society as today's student is expected to have a professional life in the future and step into the world of work. Therefore, it is necessary for the curriculum content to align with global changes and transformations, equipping students to be competent and skill-focused individuals.



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## Introduction

Globalization, technological developments, and the dynamics of the job market in the 21st century have significantly influenced education. Educational systems across countries are searching for the best methods to educate children and adolescents in their everyday and professional lives, considering the requirements of the 21st century (Kreitou, 2017). Many countries have undertaken extensive reforms in their curricula to better prepare children for the demands of life and work in higher education, and various frameworks have been developed to teach these skills more effectively to students (Schleicher, 2012). Entrepreneurship education has become a regular part of the educational curriculum worldwide. However, the distinct impacts of different educational methods remain unclear (Schultz, 2022).

The curriculum, essentially the heart of education, involves the provision of all available knowledge resources and insightful judgments about teaching objectives, both for specific subjects and the curriculum as a whole, and a thorough review of these (Mahdizadeh, 2020). Entrepreneurship is defined as a process in which an individual or a group of people employ organized efforts and tools to take advantage of possible opportunities for creating value and growth, fulfilling new needs and desires through innovation (Hisrich, translated by Feyzbakhsh & Taghiyar, 2011). Davidson and Gordon (2012) have defined entrepreneurship as a competitive behavior that advances the market process (cited in Islamieh, 2018). According to Peter Drucker, an entrepreneur is someone who starts a small and new economic activity with their capital. An entrepreneur must change and transform values. Therefore, entrepreneurs are those who innovate, identify environmental opportunities, and provide a new way of utilizing resources and services to survive in a volatile and competitive environment and profit from this innovation (Moeinikia, 2020).

Researchers agree that entrepreneurship education can start from early educational stages, such as elementary school, and continue through higher education levels (Soroushfard, 2020). The Kimison report on European entrepreneurship education (2012) identified the ultimate goal of entrepreneurship education programs in elementary school as achieving an entrepreneurial mindset. According to Lagnan

(2013), there are clear reasons for integrating entrepreneurship into school curricula. By incorporating entrepreneurship into the curriculum, skills sought by employers are strengthened, and students are enabled to define their own success. Other studies have also noted that integrating entrepreneurship education into the curriculum enriches students' learning experiences (Salahi Isfahani, 2020) and simultaneously increases the level of connection between schools, industry, and agriculture. It also provides an opportunity to test content and teaching methods for entrepreneurship due to the novelty of the subject (Mojallal Choboghlo, 2012).

Experiences from different countries show that in recent years, the teaching of entrepreneurial skills has gained attention in educational policies of countries, and efforts are made to develop these skills in students from elementary to higher education. For example, in Turkey, competencies and skills referred to as 21st-century skills are included in the curricula, and in this country, initiative and entrepreneurship are among the competencies and skills presented with the goal of transferring knowledge to students in Turkey's curriculum (MONE, 2018). In European countries like Sweden, Portugal, and Norway, entrepreneurship education programs focus on entrepreneurial attitudes and involve the teaching of knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Axelson, 2015).

Chinese researchers believe that constructive ideas for the entrepreneurship education system in the educational system include: building an educational system based on a scientific curriculum, creating an ideal entrepreneurial practice system, building a system for a prominent class of qualified teachers, constructing a complete and flawless model education system and an assessment system for entrepreneurship education (Weming, 2016). A group of researchers believes that for entrepreneurial skills to be transmitted to students, teachers must first have an entrepreneurial spirit. Furthermore, an entrepreneurial society is only created with highly entrepreneurial teachers (Onel, 2018). An entrepreneurial teacher should be enthusiastic, have a positive attitude, self-confidence, law-abiding, practical, inspiring, with a good vision, focused on creative problem-solving, a free spirit, good

communicator, responsible, and capable of selling ideas (Buras, 2014).

Valerio (2014) examined entrepreneurship education programs worldwide and concluded that these programs could help advance entrepreneurial thinking skills. Other research has also shown that educational activities during schooling can increase entrepreneurship (Hinert, 2018). Fundamentally, entrepreneurship is an opportunity-based way of thinking, which is why proper entrepreneurship education, especially in schools, is valuable as it shapes the personalities of students and gradually fosters an entrepreneurial spirit in them. Entrepreneurship education at younger ages has a greater impact than at older ages. The achievements of entrepreneurship education include problem-solving ability, decision-making power, critical thinking, participation in group work, effective human relations, proper use of time, introducing creative and new products, efficient use of resources, etc. (Mousavi & Bakhtiari, 2020).

Despite the emphasis on entrepreneurship education domestically and internationally, based on research findings, the extent to which elementary school textbooks pay attention to entrepreneurial methods in the curriculum is not in an ideal condition (Hashemabadi, 2020), especially the curriculum's focus on risk-taking and creativity components is very limited (Kargari, 2020). Generally, attention to entrepreneurship components has not been a priority in elementary schools, and the distribution of entrepreneurship components in textbooks is not uniform (Abdolhosseini & Bakhtiari, 2020). Researchers in this field suggest that the Ministry of Education should focus and pay necessary attention to entrepreneurial education goals in the elementary curriculum (Shidaii, 2020). Since the elementary level is an important and impactful stage in life and according to previous research results, formal education at the elementary level about entrepreneurial attitudes has a direct effect on individuals' future entrepreneurship. When the opportunity for self-employment arises, they can choose it as a life path. Since entrepreneurship education at this age, as Axelson (2015) said, is a mindset and attitude that childhood is the ideal stage for influencing attitudes towards entrepreneurship, it encourages children towards entrepreneurship

as a career option (Bahmani & Arasti, 2018). Therefore, given the importance of entrepreneurship education in the educational system and the observed gap in this area, the researcher's question is: what are the characteristics of the curriculum content for entrepreneurship in the secondary education system in Iran?

### Method

The present study is applied in nature, with field data collection and a qualitative execution approach. The research participants comprised 25 experts and knowledgeable authorities in the field, each with a credible academic or practical background in the subject. The inclusion criteria for these experts were: 1) Having at least a master's degree in terms of educational level, and 2) Being knowledgeable in the field of curriculum, particularly entrepreneurship, with relevant books and articles published in this area. A purposive sampling method was used, based on the principle of theoretical saturation.

### Materials

**1. Semi-structured interview:** Semi-structured interviews were used as the research tool. To ensure the validity of the interviews and the accuracy of the results, the triangulation technique was employed. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was used to calculate the reliability of the interviews. In the triangulation process, the questions considered for the interview were scrutinized through three aspects: academic sources (theories presented in books), two curriculum experts, and the views of the supervising professor and advisor. A Cohen's Kappa value of 0.712 was obtained, indicating considerable reliability, thus confirming the reliability of the interview questions.

### Implementation

After conducting the interviews and reaching theoretical saturation, the data were analyzed using the three processes of open, axial, and selective coding presented by Strauss and Corbin.

### Results

After analyzing the content of the semi-structured interviews of the statistical sample, which consisted of 25 experts and specialists in the field, the results of open coding, axial categories, and selective categories are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Open, axial and selective codes

Selective codes	Axial codes	Open codes
Designing Diverse and Active Curriculum Content	Inspirational Curriculum	The content of the entrepreneurship curriculum should motivate, interest, and inspire students.
	Practicality of Curriculum Content	Familiarity with basic entrepreneurship concepts in primary education curriculum is a necessity and a principle. The content of the entrepreneurship curriculum must be consistent with the curriculum objectives.
	Quality of Curriculum Content	The curriculum content should be practical in students' lives, in addition to being of high quality.
Developing Curriculum Content Aimed at Educating Entrepreneurial Citizens	Learning About Self	Learning about oneself in our school curriculum has been neglected, and students should be strengthened in understanding their personal strengths and weaknesses, areas for personal development, personal interests and motivations, and individual and family needs.
	Entrepreneurship Knowledge	Introducing students to entrepreneurship knowledge in the curriculum is important, and indeed, for scientific advancement and nurturing an efficient generation, we have no choice but to change our perspective on content and teaching methods in schools, especially in primary education, which is the most crucial educational phase.
	Skill-Focused Curriculum Content	Textbooks in primary education should become skill-oriented and provide more in-depth information to students.
	Learning About the Environment and Entrepreneurial Networks	Curricular materials should be designed so that the learned content can be applied in solving work-related problems. The curriculum content should be such that it instills learning about the environment and entrepreneurial networks from the perspective of managing customer relations, suppliers, competitors, etc., in students.
Aligning Curriculum Content with Societal Needs and Scientific Developments	Entrepreneurial Ethics	Teaching entrepreneurial ethics in the entrepreneurship curriculum content should not be overlooked. Our educational system has paid little attention to the importance of teamwork in textbooks, and unfortunately, our children lack the ability and ethics of group work, which is a very important issue.
	Alignment of Curriculum Content with Changes	In my opinion, the content of the entrepreneurship curriculum should be compatible with the environmental, cultural, economic, and social conditions of society.
	Student Readiness for the Business World with Awareness	The curriculum content should strengthen forward-thinking and the ability to manage adaptation to changing conditions in students. The content of the entrepreneurship curriculum should clearly illuminate the ambiguous nature of entering the business world.
Focusing Curriculum Content on Student Activities with Practical Exercises and Personal Experience Creation	Student Proficiency in Time Management	Subjects such as time management, planning, and social networks are missing from the content of the primary education curriculum in our country. These topics should be practically addressed in textbooks.
	Existence of Practical Exercises	Practical topics such as financial calculations, organizing school bazaars, and being an entrepreneur should be included in the content of the primary education curriculum. The compilation of entrepreneurship curriculum content should be such that it enables subsequent and lifelong learning within the framework of formal and informal education.
	Student Ability to Think About Starting a	A curriculum claiming entrepreneurship should be designed to practically prepare students for future business success.

Business	The entrepreneurship curriculum in primary education should be multidisciplinary in nature and content. Learning about business management from the perspective of how to start and control a business in the curriculum is an issue that needs more attention.
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As observed in the table, the information obtained from the content analysis of the interviews revealed that the features of the curriculum content for entrepreneurship in the secondary education system in Iran consist of 4 main categories, 13 subcategories, and 20 open concepts, as follows:

**Main Category 1: Designing a Diverse and Active Curriculum Content**

Subcategories:

- Inspirational Curriculum
- Practicality of Curriculum Content
- Quality of Curriculum Content

**Main Category 2: Compiling Curriculum Content Aimed at Educating Entrepreneurial Citizens**

Subcategories:

- Learning About Self
- Entrepreneurship Knowledge
- Skill-oriented Curriculum Content

**Learning About the Environment and Entrepreneurship Networks**

**Main Category 3: Aligning Curriculum Content with Societal Needs and Scientific Developments**

Subcategories:

- Entrepreneurial Ethics
- Compatibility of Curriculum Content with Changes
- Preparing Students for the Business World with Awareness

**Main Category 4: Emphasizing Curriculum Content on Student Activity with Practical Exercises and Creating Personal Experiences**

Subcategories:

- Student Proficiency in Time Management
- Presence of Practical Exercises
- Student Ability to Think About Business Startup

### Conclusion

Based on the findings, the curriculum content was identified with 4 main categories and 13 subcategories. The first main category was the design of diverse and active curriculum content (1- Inspirational Curriculum 2- Practicality of Curriculum Content 3- Quality of Curriculum

Content). The second main category was compiling curriculum content aimed at educating entrepreneurial citizens (1- Learning About Self 2- Entrepreneurship Knowledge 3- Skill-oriented Curriculum Content 4- Learning About the Environment and Entrepreneurship Networks). The third main category was aligning curriculum content with societal needs and scientific developments (1- Entrepreneurial Ethics 2- Compatibility of Curriculum Content with Changes 3- Preparing Students for the Business World with Awareness). The fourth main category was emphasizing curriculum content on student activity with practical exercises and creating personal experiences (1- Student Proficiency in Time Management 2- Presence of Practical Exercises 3- Student Ability to Think About Business Startup). This conclusion aligns with the research findings of Yousefi and Kashti Araay (2018), suggesting that curriculum diversity, especially in elementary education, ensures learning if the content is of high quality. Regarding the compilation of curriculum content aimed at educating entrepreneurial citizens, it must be noted that educating entrepreneurial citizens is an urgent need of today's society, as today's students will eventually enter the professional world. Therefore, the curriculum content must align with global changes and developments, empowering students to become skilled and capable individuals who can think about business and entrepreneurship and bring their ideas to fruition.

Suggestions:

- The content of the textbooks for the second stage of primary education should be aligned with the needs existing outside of school.
- Students should be taught subjects that are needed in social life.
- Stories and tales about successful entrepreneurs should be included in the curriculum content for the second stage of primary education.
- To institutionalize ethics in business and commerce, this important aspect

should be emphasized and attended to in the entrepreneurship curriculum content.

### Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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