



Study of aspects and factors for qualitative-descriptive assessment for multi-base classes I elementary school perspective of aims and approaches

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ABSTRACT

Background and Aim: In response to the negative consequences of the traditional evaluation system and its reform, the Supreme Council of Education has replaced older methods with descriptive evaluation. Despite the good reception of this method, like any other innovation, it has faced challenges and criticism. Therefore, the purpose of the present study, is to study aspects and factors of qualitative -descriptive evaluation for multi-base elementary course from perspective of aims and approaches. **Methods:** Study method is qualitative approach and grounded theory method. Participants were educational development assessment specialists, educational science specialists, curriculum and educational psychologist from all universities of the country and also staff managers of ministry of education in elementary education (whom had at least three indicated works in area of assessment, teaching in multi-base classes). considering the nature of this subject, theoretical targeted sampling was used. According to the grounded approach used in this research, open, theoretical, and selective coding were used for data analysis **Results:** results show that qualitative-descriptive evaluation must be process oriented with structuralism approach and be spread on multi-bases of student's life as in all aspects, areas and dimensions. **Conclusion:** reporting structure to be qualitative and cause mental health growth and evade competitive environment and the multi-level final exams should be changed to multi-participatory exams.



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Introduction

Achieving sustainable and knowledge-based development requires a fundamental transformation in education (Gilisen, Knipples, & van Joolingen, 2020). Education is the foundation of every country's development. Among different levels of education, the primary education system has a high mission and position due to its role in shaping the educational foundations of societies (Cranston, Mulford, Keating, & Reid, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to the factors affecting the quality of primary education. One of the factors that can affect the quality and effectiveness of this course is the evaluation method of the student's learning (Mosavivand & Bahrami, 2018). The ideal form of assessing students' learning in elementary school should be in such a way that students learn basic skills and develop multiple dimensions of their existence. Above all, learning is enjoyable for them (Lee, 2010).

In Iran's education system, in addition to millions of students in regular schools, many students, especially in deprived and rural areas, are studying in multi-grade classes (Teheri & Shabani, 2019). Schools with multi-grade classes are often located in remote and deprived areas of the world, where teachers live and work in challenging conditions and are not well supported by the educational system (Aksoy, 2008). In the definition of a multi-grade class, it is stated that these classes are a place where more than one group of students of different ages are taught in the same class by the same teacher. In different parts of the world, different names have been given to it, such as multi-level class teaching, mixed class, integrated class, and partial teaching (Little, 2001). In teaching multiple grades, the teacher must use two or more educational programs in different grades simultaneously (Ozturk, 2007). Therefore, evaluating the students of multi-grade classes is more complex and challenging than in normal classes. Of course, multi-grade classes also have advantages. In most countries, to prevent illiteracy in remote and sparsely populated villages, it is seen as an opportunity that provides quality learning and grounds for unity and real and enjoyable communication for teachers and students (Sarivan & Alina Crina, 2017). These types of classes develop social skills and better academic performance of students (Jones, 2017). However, in addition to all the advantages, experimental and research evidence shows that

the teachers of these classes face serious challenges in the process of teaching and learning and evaluating the students' learning, and meeting the needs of learners in a classroom with different educational levels (Taheri & Shabani, 2019).

In Iran, according to the report of the Education Organization, the number of primary schools is around 60 thousand, and a significant part of them have multi-grade classes (Khakzad et al.). One of the important topics in multi-grade classes is the evaluation of academic progress (Heuvel-Panhuizen & et al., 2021). Therefore, the analysis of the dimensions and components of descriptive qualitative evaluation is the most basic and important part of this form of evaluation. As one of the country's education system's research priorities, it has received practitioners' attention. Hence, the present research has answered the following research question to identify the dimensions and components of descriptive qualitative evaluation from the perspective of goals and approaches in multi-grade classes: What are the dimensions and components of academic progress evaluation (descriptive qualitative evaluation) in multi-grade classes?

Method

The research method was based on qualitative and grounded theory approaches. The statistical population includes specialists in the evaluation of educational progress (authors and researchers in the field of educational progress evaluation with at least three significant works in the field of evaluation, teachers of multi-level classes with bachelor's degrees and above), specialists in educational sciences, curriculum, educational psychology, from all universities of the country, and also including the managers of the Ministry's staff Education was in primary education. The interview questions were designed in the framework of the Strauss coding paradigm (Felik, 2013, translated by Jalili) and implemented to the interviewees in order. In this regard, purposive and theoretical sampling methods were used for sampling. A semi-structured interview tool was used to collect data. In qualitative studies, the number of interviewees depends on the theoretical saturation of the research questions. Theoretical saturation happens when the researcher concludes that the

interviewees' answers are the same and no new topics are raised.

Results

The present study achieved theoretical saturation after interviewing 11 qualitative-descriptive evaluation specialists and people with teaching experience in multi-grade classes. According to the grounded approach used in this research, open, theoretical, and selective coding methods were used for data analysis. The coding steps were as follows: First, the conducted interviews were written down and matched with the recorded information. Finally, the transcribed texts of the interviews were analyzed. Open coding deals with extracting open codes or primitive concepts. The data was carefully decomposed into the smallest possible components in open coding, and the basic concepts were formed. The grounded theory of the study was created and presented in the theoretical coding of the extracted categories and axes from the previous stage based on semantic commonalities. Theoretical coding indicates how presuppositions are formed and the relationship between them based on real codes. These codes can draw a comprehensive picture of the subject under study. In the selective coding stage, the basic concepts have been compared and classified based on their differences and similarities. The main axes of the study have been extracted. Based on that, the dimensions and components of the evaluation of the academic progress of the multi-level classes have been discovered, abstracted and extracted. The dimensions and components of the descriptive qualitative evaluation approach extracted from the opinions of experts and descriptive evaluation designers in the current education system using the data analysis model in the constructivist GTM version (CO-GTM), discovery, abstraction and in 78 open categories and 11 core or theoretical categories, and 1 selective category was categorized and integrated.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative research was to study and analyze the dimensions and components of descriptive qualitative evaluation of multi-grade classes in elementary school from the perspective of goals and approaches. In this regard, the results of the analysis of digital documents and resources and interviews with experts in educational sciences, curriculum, and

educational evaluation indicate 11 theoretical categories. It was in the field of goals and approaches. One of the dimensions and components was comprehensive evaluation and its extension to the life of multi-level students. The extension of evaluation to the child's life is aligned with the findings of Davoudi and Shokrolahi (2011). They assert that in the evaluation, the teacher should consider the child's actual performance and look for signs of their appearance in the behavior and life of the child. In this regard, Blease and Condy (2014) believe that the environment in which children live and grow directly affects their learning, including the acquisition of writing skills.

The second component from an approach point of view was a comprehensive descriptive evaluation. This finding is in accordance with the principles governing the evaluation of academic progress approved by the Supreme Council of Education, which states: In the evaluation, attention should be paid to the various aspects of the physical, mental, emotional, social, moral, and movement development of students. The third component of the qualitative-descriptive evaluation of multi-grade classes was the qualitative improvement of descriptive evaluation with a change in the reporting structure, a topic that the educational research and planning organization of the Ministry of Education has emphasized. The fourth component was process-oriented qualitative evaluation with a constructivist approach. In the global scope, descriptive evaluation is in the paradigm of constructivism. This finding is in line with the views of Brooks and Brooks, who believe that assessment in the constructivist classroom is like this: when the student does not know the exact answer to the question, instead of being told "No, this answer is not correct", the constructivist method teacher tries to understand the student's thinking. It is about that topic, and through non-judgmental questions, it leads the student to build a new understanding and acquire new skills. Constructivists believe that assessment should be considered a tool to increase student learning and that the teacher's understanding of the student's current understanding is consistent (Ebrahimi Qavam & Hosseinzadeh Yousefi, 2008).

The fifth component was strengthening the motivation, attitude, and skills of multi-level students. A component that conforms to the

principles governing the evaluation of academic progress in the national curriculum document. The sixth component of the descriptive-qualitative evaluation was from an approach point of view, paying attention to the educational processes and performance of multi-grade students. This component is consistent with the findings of Foroutan et al. (2016) regarding the practicality of descriptive evaluation; the findings of Bahaloo and Gouya (2018), Saidi and Omidian (2018), Hosseini et al. (2017); *Teacher's Guide to Descriptive Evaluation* (Ministry of Education, 2011), based on judging academic progress based on the performance of the entire year. The seventh component was strengthening mental health and avoiding a competitive atmosphere in multi-level classes. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Tridane et al. (2015), Hattie (2012), and Fathi Azar et al. (2018) that the implementation of descriptive evaluation in the classroom leads to improved learning, academic progress, increased motivation, and self-confidence of students. Furthermore, with the findings of Azizi and Heydari (2013), Mohtadi (2019), Salehi et al. (2015), the Educational Research and Planning Organization of the Ministry of Education (2011), Khoshkholq and Sharifi (2006) that descriptive-qualitative evaluation and eliminating the competitive atmosphere improves the quality of learning and level of mental health in the teaching-learning environment.

The eighth component was deepening the learning of multi-grade students with innovation in descriptive evaluation. The positive effect of using descriptive evaluation and its tools, such as portfolio and graded evaluation, in deepening learning and measuring the ability, skill, and knowledge of learners has been reported in the research of Moya and Mali (1994) and Griss (1992). Moreover, the findings that have been repeated in the studies of Camp and Tepro (1998) in England, Lee Hay, Lion, and Thomson (2005), Lane, Park, and Stone (2004) and Budd (1995) (Fathabadi, 2006, quoted by Karameian et al. 2013).

The ninth component was strengthening consensus with Ejtehadi's approach in the descriptive evaluation factors (teachers, parents, etc.). This finding agrees with Rafati et al. (2013) that sharing learning intentions and criteria and providing evaluation feedback to learners moves

them forward, as well as with the findings of Messimanga and Madofela (2019) that sharing resources by teachers and students in different grades.

The tenth component was the change of authority from multi-level final exams to multi-authority. This finding is in line with the findings of Hosseini et al. (2017), Hasani and Ahmadi (2007), regarding the importance of change in the promotion decision-making authority in that the final score is not a judging criterion and decisions regarding promotion should be collaborative. The eleventh component was a multi-level descriptive evaluation based on the goals of the academic course and curriculum. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Hosni (2011), Davoudi and Shekralhi (2010), Hosseini et al. (2016), Khoshkhalq and Sharifi (2015), Educational Research and Planning Organization (2016) and the National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the objectives of the courses Education in descriptive qualitative evaluation is consistent during the implementation of the curriculum in the entire academic year. These findings showed that the teachers of multi-level elementary school classes could have an evolved view of descriptive qualitative evaluation according to these dimensions and components of the approach. The components that the implementation of each can improve the quality of teaching and learning in multi-grade classes. From another point of view, the message of these findings to education managers is that it is necessary to improve the descriptive qualitative evaluation of managers' awareness of these components and provide their implementation contexts. Undoubtedly, any research in the implementation process faces limitations. The present study is not an exception to this. It has limitations, such as the lack of people with scientific and practical experience in the field of descriptive evaluation in multi-grade classes, the lack of supporting theories for descriptive-qualitative evaluation, and the limited generalizability of the findings due to the geographical diversity of the areas with classes. He has faced several bases. At the end and according to the findings of the research, the following practical suggestions are presented: drawing a descriptive evaluation map in education departments for multi-grade classes; expanding the dissemination system; empowering managers and teachers of multi-

grade elementary classes in the field of understanding, believability and correct implementation of descriptive evaluation; Establishing the office of descriptive evaluation studies in areas with multi-grade classes.

Conflict of Interest

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

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