

## Curriculum culture of non-governmental schools (an ethnographic study)

Fatemeh MardanArbat<sup>a</sup>, Yousef Adib<sup>b\*</sup>, Hamdollah Habibi<sup>c</sup>, Ali Imanzadeh<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Ph.D. student in Curriculum Planning, University of Tabriz, Iran. ORCID Code: 5337-5220-0002-0000.

<sup>b</sup> Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Tabriz, Iran

<sup>c</sup> Associate professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Tabriz, Iran

<sup>d</sup> Associate professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Tabriz, Iran

Corresponding Author: Yousef Adib

**Article History:** Received: 14 July 2020; Accepted: 2 January 2021; Published online: 5 February 2021

**Abstract:** The present study aimed to identify the culture of non-governmental school curricula. This goal was achieved through the active presence of the researcher in the study community. This study was conducted in two non-governmental primary schools in Tabriz within the framework of a qualitative approach. The educational ethnography method was used to conduct this study. Also, the required data was through field observations and semi-structured interviews. The thematic content analysis method was used to analyze the said interviews and observations. Components of non-governmental school curriculum culture were categorized as follows: goals, logic and the reason behind the curricula culture of non-governmental schools, valuable content and educational materials used in non-governmental schools, teaching and learning strategies and teachers' role in non-governmental schools, time and space of activities, and school-family relationships. According to the research findings, there was a tendency towards consumerism and materialism in the curriculum culture of non-governmental schools. Also, the purpose of the implementation of the curriculum was to enhance scientific competition and provide families with a choice regarding their children's education.

**Keywords:** culture, curriculum, non-governmental schools, teaching-learning strategies, teacher role

### 1. Introduction

The term culture is a central concept that studies the issues related to education in the context of the broad culture of individuals (teachers, students, and in general, agents and factors involved in learning) (Nickname & et al, 2011). Meanwhile, the context of schools and their curricula have unique features which make them important for understanding the school culture and its programs. These features are due to the nature of the educational system as the carrier of the society's cultural capital, a cultural generator, and the creator of the culture of the society. Researchers and intellectuals in developed countries have acknowledged this significance and have made many efforts to improve it (Alaqband, 2007). The most important context for understanding the nature of culture is understanding school culture, curricula, and school capabilities. According to Neller (2009), to understand the capabilities of schools and to identify the factors that neutralize the schools' function, education must be examined in the context of culture as a whole. "Education and learning, like other cultural activities, take place over a long period through life, participation and interaction, both overt and covert, complex and informal. Besides, sustainable education changes human thought and action. This type of education is provided to humans through living and their continuous participation in a cultural situation that pervades education and goes beyond formal teachings (Sarkar Arani, 2013).

Fazeli (2011) states that the cultural approach to education means recognizing education by taking into account culture and its specific patterns. In other words, education and new educational systems, at various general and higher levels, are systems for shaping and building modern and contemporary culture. Moreover, curricula can be considered as programs in which the design, implementation, and evaluation stress culture and its specific patterns. Curriculum culture refers to the underlying ideas and meanings associated with teaching and learning and the requirements of the curriculum (Joseph, 2000). The curriculum can be changed in different ways; however, the thinking that governs its culture and structure must be taken into account as well (Cheng, 2005).

In the study of education and schooling issues, the factors that are mentioned are usually social, economic, demographic, political, organizational, technical, and budgetary factors and less attention is paid to the cultural context of education. When the cultural context of education is ignored, sufficient attention cannot be paid to the roots of this problem (Ebrahimi, 2012; Fazeli, 2011). Proper knowledge of school culture and school curriculum, therefore, seems to be essential and inevitable. Accordingly, it can be stated that there is a significant research gap as there are not many studies that deal with the dimensions of student culture, science culture, and curriculum implemented in our country at the macro level. One of the important changes and events that our country's education system has experienced over the years since the Islamic Revolution is that non-governmental schools have been operating alongside public schools. Non-governmental schools, despite the assumptions and

underlying principles of their laws, were formed to reduce a part of the costs of education by transferring them to affluent families, to emphasize taking care of the children of non-affluent families and those in need. Finally, the aim has been to improve the level of education by relying on the power of the people (Abbaszadeh, 2000). In many countries, some private schools have attracted the attention of people in their community by providing desirable education and facilities. In this way, they have made a positive impression as far as quality education is concerned. However, some other schools have had poor performance, which has resulted in negative attitudes towards them. Even in countries where non-governmental schools operate alongside public schools, there are many challenges and issues regarding curriculum culture and the effectiveness of such schools (Winkler & Grashberg, 2000). Accurate identification of this type of culture in non-governmental schools provides useful information to the authorities involved. Given what was mentioned, the main question in this study was: What are the components of the curriculum culture of non-governmental schools?

### 1.1. Theoretical foundation and research background

Although the relationship between the two disciplines of cultural studies and school curricula is a relatively new topic, there can be some discussion on the history of the relationship between the two. Richard Hogarth (founder of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham), Williams, and Stuart Hall spoke at the starting point of the Cultural Studies Conference at the 1960 National Teachers' Union in England, entitled "Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility". The main topic of discussion at this meeting was a critique of the "theory of Leavisism"<sup>1</sup> and an examination of how popular culture entered the British education system. Although no specific conclusion was reached at this meeting, the need for further discussion of contemporary culture in England was agreed upon. This type of discussion eventually led to the establishment of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (Bahar, 2007).

In this regard, Hogarth and Williams have pioneered cultural studies as teachers in the "adult education" course. In the beginning, most cultural scholars focused on culture and education, so it is not surprising that Richard Hogarth's and Paul Willis' books were named "Applications of Literacy" and "Learn to Labour", respectively.

In general, cultural studies initially sought to explain the process of cultural and social reproduction, which was the reproduction of class structures and class cultures, knowledge, power relations, and resistance in society, and in school in particular. The students generate meaning by gaining experience and judging the events of their environment. In other words, students do not essentially act under the rules of social structures. The production and reproduction of culture both take place in school. Thus, school is a systematic spatial system that is responsible for both the production and reproduction of culture. Students do not act in schools only based on the experience they gain there, but they actively evaluate their experience and resist and act against material and ideological forces (Bahar, 2007).

Evidence and statistics reported by researchers show that research on "school and curriculum culture", as an independent subculture with its characteristics in the educational process, is limited not only to education studies and scientific research, but this concept is also not too well-known in the country's education programs and policies (Ebrahimi, 2012 and Fazeli, 2011). Proper knowledge of school culture and school curriculum is essential and inevitable. These areas are pristine areas to explore that should be addressed by the curriculum academic community. Questions that must be answered are as follows: How does the mind and conscience of the student work in schools? How does a student see science, learning, education, school, success, etc. in school, and what do they think of them? What are the beliefs and mental assumptions of students and teachers in schools in this regard? How are school classes? What norms, procedures, expectations, and social relations govern the classes? How do the students see themselves in the classroom at school and how do they relate to the classroom? What are the cultural differences and adaptations that students feel between their school culture and the culture of their everyday world? What are the benefits and values that shape the culture of school classrooms? What are the features and specifics of the curriculum implemented in schools? What is the relationship between students and the curriculum in schools? How do economic, social, and political factors affect school culture and the classroom? What is the most important goal for the development of knowledge in schools and what direction do the efforts of the various components of the school take? What is the social structure of non-governmental schools and what effect does it have on the school and the classroom? What are the cultural conditions of society and social classes that affect careers, possible destiny, and students' search for their identities?

Curriculum cultures in non-governmental schools include different perspectives on educational theory and practice, assumptions about students and their needs, the role of educators and education, norms associated with the subject matter, and learning environments.

<sup>1</sup>The spread of Leavisism or a kind of literary study, inspired by Leavis F. R., was created to popularize what has been called cultural capital following Pierre Bourdieu. Rejecting new experimental works, the Leavisist supported some literary works aimed at increasing the moral sensitivity of the readers. It was claimed that the study of this type of work provides the ground for the growth and flourishing of the personality of individuals and the granting of a reasonable and balanced view of life. Serious criticism of the so-called "modern mass" culture is one of the hallmarks of this trend.

---

In non-governmental schools, extra psychological and emotional pressure is put on children and their families. This extra stress is the result of many factors. Some of these factors are the propaganda aspect of these schools, the number of students admitted to public schools for talented and gifted, too much emphasis on math and science courses, and the neglect of other courses even at the cost of elimination of some courses, holding extracurricular classes too many times, teaching fast skills for test-taking, holding multiple mock tests, filling leisure time with class activities, etc. These pressures can have short-term and long-term effects on the education system, the curriculum, and the mental health of students and their families. Accurate identification of this type of culture in non-governmental schools provides useful information to those involved. Since ethnographic studies look at norms, both normal and expected, thought patterns, and the approach to the curricula, it undoubtedly gives readers insights into school cultures and classrooms. Given what was mentioned, the main question in this study was: What are the components of the culture of non-governmental school curricula?

The ethnographic approach to curriculum studies initially requires people who study in classrooms to temporarily assume that they are unfamiliar with the environment so that they can overcome perceptual barriers to familiarity with the environment (Spindler, 1982).

In this regard, Izadi, Bakhtiari, and Khalil Nia (2016) conducted a study entitled "An ethnographic approach to elementary school curriculum culture". According to their findings, the students' population of the studied schools, the density of students in the classrooms, the location of schools on the outskirts of the city and/or other urban areas, school facilities, green space, and school size were effective in strengthening the students' morale, happiness, and joy.

Almasi, Akhsh, Hosseini, and Ebrahimi (2016) conducted a study entitled "Culture, teaching, and learning". In their research, they concluded that human factors affected the culture of teaching and learning. That is, the interaction between the three pillars of "parents", "students and peers" and "teachers and educators" and their influence on each other was undeniable.

Sarkar Arani (2013) did a study entitled "Culture of teaching and learning: Ethnographic research with an educational approach" has introduced the learning processes in schools in Japan, the United States, and the cultural approach to education in Iran. Comparative studies of Japanese public education with the West show that Japanese education is of high quality and that equal access to quality educational opportunities is guaranteed throughout the country.

Lewis (2009) researched the learning culture of Iranian and Japanese schools entitled "Education as culture" and showed that Japanese teachers evaluated their students based on their writing ability. While Iranian teachers insist on students' verbal ability to answer classroom questions. In their view, Iranian teachers value students' ability to speak more than their writing ability.

## **2. Research methodology**

This study is ethnographic research. Ethnography is a set of collection methods that are still used today, meaning a kind of closeness and entering the subject and even becoming one with it. These methods are not just descriptive methods. Ethnography begins with the principle that each social group constructs its reality and has its accepted concepts. This type of research mostly emphasizes that experience is the best tool for understanding social behavior. In the ethnographic method, which is widely used in qualitative research, participants' voices are heard in a new way, and issues are represented from their perspective (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Since the nature of curricula is rooted in the culture and social relations of individuals, it does not seem appropriate to use quantitative methods to identify curriculum culture. The in-depth, aesthetic, and ethnographic approaches of this method make it possible to address a wide range of issues, to look under the surface, and to explain and interpret the school and the curriculum phenomena in depth. In this respect, ethnography is one of the qualitative methods that can be used in this field to lead the researcher to discover and represent the underlying layers of the curriculum and the role of culture. The research steps in this method are as follows:

### **Step 1: Subject selection**

In ethnographic research, like any other research, a decision must be made regarding the selection of the studied group. The curriculum culture of non-governmental primary schools was selected as the subject of study given the previous field of study and research field, as well as the researcher's work experience. The first question that was asked to determine the study field was: In which type of non-governmental primary school would the dynamics and culture of the curriculum be more interesting? Given the advertisements in the city about some non-governmental schools and the various services that were seen on the advertising banners, as well as the survey of some parents whose children study in the non-governmental school and various services such as gifted exams, advanced reinforcement classes, and test-taking classes, etc., the researcher was more inclined to visit schools in certain districts of the city.

### **Step 2: an overview of the literature on the available documents**

The present study examined domestic and foreign studies in the field of curriculum culture which showed

---

that there was no qualitative ethnographic study on curriculum culture, especially in non-governmental schools.

### Step 3: Data collection

This stage is one of the key steps in the ethnographic process. The ethnographic method is usually known for the use of various methods to collect data during the research process. Data collection in this area is based on observation which may be supplemented by interviews and document analysis as well (Abdolhasani, 2019).

The study population in this study was composed of all students, teachers, and executive staff of the two non-governmental schools, as well as all parents who were in some way related to the school and its executive agents. Ethnographic sampling is determined by the number of participants in the studied group or subculture. In this regard, the purposeful sampling technique was used in this research, because participants have specific knowledge or experience on the subject. Purposeful sampling means judgmental sampling that includes the researcher making a conscious choice of a particular subject or element in the study that is made concerning the participant's membership. After conducting administrative correspondence in January, the collection of data required in this research officially began from within the studied schools. Research data were collected by the researcher by observing the daily interactions of school members and recording the characteristics of these interactions. In this method, the researcher attempted to study the daily activities of the staff of non-governmental schools by mere observation or participatory observation (in different degrees) to understand the reasons behind those activities and how they are practiced. The most important reason for adopting the participatory observation method was to find out about the activities of people in school and the reasons behind them. Besides the fact that participatory observation logically enabled the researcher to provide a model for applying this method in non-governmental schools, it was also a suitable tool for studying and recognizing these types of schools. The sample size was determined based on theoretical saturation, which refers to the time when no new information was obtained from the observations. The validity of the data was examined and confirmed through long-term contact with the research environment, continuous observation, and collection of data from different time angles. To confirm the validity of the data, the supervisor reviewed and monitored all the coding steps and stored all the files in special folders for others to track, review, and confirm (Pen, 2019).

### Step 4: Analysis of the collected data

In ethnography, analysis is done by arranging the data obtained from observation, interviews, documents, and other sources, as well as finding the relationships between them. This includes regular reviews, creative insight, and careful attention to research objectives. This stage is an interpretive and conceptual process. In qualitative research, analysis begins with the collection of preliminary data and continues until the research is complete and recorded. Analysis of observations and field notes in this study was performed using three types of coding; i.e. descriptive coding, in vivo coding, and process coding.

**Descriptive Coding:** In descriptive coding, the main subject of the text is summarized in the form of a short (mostly nominal) word or phrase. This gradually provides a collection of covered topics that help the researcher to label and construct the issues. In such a way, the social environment can be easily described (Pen, 2019). For example, in the following sentences:

"During the break between classes, I was in the teachers' room. The fourth-grade teacher was talking to the school principal. When I listened to them, I heard the fourth-grade teacher say: Madam principal, please tell the art teacher to take a break from their lessons this week. They do not need to come to the class, we're going to dedicate the art lessons to solving math exercises, as I'm going to take a math test next week."

The descriptive code here is a name that is attached to the interconnected pieces in this sentence that refer to facts. The code "**ignoring the art lesson**" is the researcher's choice for the initial coding in this sentence with a descriptive approach.

**In vivo coding:** This is a well-known method in which words and phrases in the text are used as codes. This method can be applied to all qualitative studies. For instance, in the previous example, using this code, the "art teacher does not need to come to class" code within the text alone carries a concept and can be used as a meaningful code and label.

**Process coding:** In process coding, infinitives (verbs that have become nouns, such as to understand, to see) are used to refer to an action or a process. This method is also used in all qualitative studies, especially grounded theory studies that aim to extract participatory action/interactions and their consequences. For instance, in the previous example, the code "**neglected objectives of the subject of art in non-governmental schools**" is a process code for sentence coding that uses the infinitive, and in fact, represents an act of qualitative research.

Finally, the aforementioned process was used in a similar way to name all the components. By analyzing the observations and interviews, six main components and several sub-components were obtained, which are presented below:

---

### 3. Findings:

By analyzing the observations and interviews, six main components and several sub-components were obtained, which are presented below:

#### 1. Goals, logic, and reasons behind the school curricula

The logic and goals of non-governmental school curricula included the components of attitudes toward education, perceptions of learning, and the type of curriculum governing non-governmental schools, which are explained below:

##### 1.1. Attitude towards education

Attitudes toward education are strongly influenced by environmental factors and people's perceptions of these factors, which are widespread among families and educational and social systems. The educational environment of the studied school was centered on the subject and did not focus on the learner and their abilities and interests in the learning and teaching process. Parents of students in these schools cared a great deal about their children's academic achievement as a means to personal achievement, higher social status, and wealth. In these schools, the developmental needs of children for leisure, pleasure, and sleep were completely neglected. The psychological and emotional health of students was also ignored in these schools. Very little attention was paid to the children's interests.

##### 1.2. Perceptions of learning

As the process of advertisements regarding acceptance in public schools for talented and gifted continues, gaining proficiency in the field of mathematics and science courses was the goal of the curricula used in the non-governmental schools. The purpose of the curriculum used in such schools was to achieve information about individual disciplines, neither about social needs nor about life in the modern world. In this school, test results and evaluations were the largest and the only source of information about students' academic performance.

##### 1.3. Type of curriculum governing the school

In the studied schools, tests guide education. In these schools, teachers focused a significant portion of their teaching activities on the knowledge and skills that were assessed by tests. Test scores were considered indicators of progress and correction, and the curriculum was resistant to the teacher.

#### 2. The contents provided

In this section, the content provided in non-governmental schools is described in detail:

##### 2.1. Neglected goals of art lessons in non-governmental schools

In the studied non-governmental schools, teaching arts had become an essential part of school brochures. There were a lot of advertisements for art lessons. These schools focused on teaching music, painting, and calligraphy by an experienced instructor as a part of their curriculum. The schools' mottos could be seen in the advertising billboards of these schools. However, practically none of these promises were fulfilled, and art lessons were sacrificed for the sake of mathematics, science, testing, and advanced problem-solving. In the studied schools, it was only the school counselor who, thanks to Gardner's multiple intelligences, tried to treat students' imaginary disorders using art therapy, and found effective storytelling effective in reducing students' learning disabilities.

#### 3. Educational materials

In this section, the educational facilities of non-governmental schools are described:

##### 3.1. Laboratory

The school laboratory, as an operational unit of the educational system, played an important role in the flourishing of students' creativity by cultivating creative thinking, training exploratory, creative, innovative, and productive people. There was no separate laboratory in the observed school. There was only a closet next to the bookcase (the so-called school library) which held the science testing equipment, which was very limited. However, it must be noted that some teachers prepared the equipment needed for the experiments through some special planning one day before the test, with the help of the parents. Therefore, they did the experiments in the classroom using the said equipment.

##### 3.2. Audio and visual facilities

In the observed schools, all classes were equipped with projectors and computer systems, and educational videos, PowerPoint, etc. were used for teaching in the classrooms. In audio-visual education, the teacher provided information to all students in the classroom with the help of video and photo display tools. In this method, only the teacher was active and the students, although they saw the teaching and wrote everything done, did not play a very active role in learning. They were more interested in the curriculum than in the study of phenomena and discovering scientific results.

---

#### 4. Teaching-learning strategies and the role of the teacher

In this section, the sub-component of the dominant patterns of teaching in non-governmental schools is explained in detail:

##### 4.1. Dominant teaching patterns in non-governmental schools

Some education staff sometimes obtained a license to teach in a non-governmental school by completing a two-month training course, and an informal force was allowed to enter the school without the legal process. But a non-formal instructor would not be able to teach effectively and efficiently with only two months of training. During my time in the class of an employed teacher, the most common method of teaching was lecturing, and these teachers did not teach at all and only engaged in sporadic and one-sided activities in education. Instead, there were retired teachers, who had chosen to fill their free time with teaching in such schools. The classes offered by such teachers were extremely efficient. They used active teaching methods in their classrooms. By observing these schools, it was concluded that the teaching of lower grades (first, second and third) was quite practical and using teaching aids. For example, in teaching ones and tens, children worked with strata, and wherever there was no tool, the teacher worked hard to teach the students; but there were no games in the second period (fourth, fifth and sixth). There, the teacher began his teaching by stating the basic concepts and tried to consolidate the desired concept in the student's mind with numerous examples and various exercises. Extra exercises were offered as homework to deepen learning. The teacher solved the exercises of the gifted books in the classroom so that the students became familiar with a variety of questions on the subject of the lesson. Instead of understanding the problem, students tried to find answers to the questions. The student who answered most correctly is considered the smartest.

#### 5. Time and space

In this section, according to the observations made, the educational space, physical symbols, and arrangement of classrooms and chairs in the studied school are described objectively:

##### 5.1. Educational space

Non-governmental schools make every effort to remain in the competition with other schools to attract more students. Apart from the promise of using stylish and large educational spaces, to make their activities more attractive, they do not hesitate to rent or take over sports and cultural spaces outside their schools. Also, in terms of seemingly real equipment and facilities (only the list of these features is in the brochures, but in the real world there is no news of these features for students), they have placed themselves among the best. Based on the observations made, such schools used certain video clips for advertisement and promotional purposes. These clips displayed scenes of students attending gyms, a school equipped with a dining hall and self-service, uniforms and sportswear, celebrations and national-religious relations, the presence of a counselor and a psychologist, holding regular periodic tests by presenting a report card to assess the quality level of the student, holding various art classes, and other equipment and facilities. Being present in the study and the research scene, the researcher did not see anything other than a parking lot with a very small area covered with artificial grass for sports and other types of entertainment. The school was equipped with a kitchen which was not a pleasant scene at all. Test questions were copied from the internet and made available to students.

##### 5.2. Physical symbols

From the perspective of environmental psychology, physical-architectural conditions and factors of the environment affect human behavior. In the schools observed, the area of the schoolyard was non-standard, because most of the buildings rented for non-governmental schools have residential uses that have been converted into non-governmental schools. A small yard and parking lot that was closed from the beginning of the school year and remained closed until the end of the exams. The school building was a four-story building, 100m<sup>2</sup> floors, with two classes on each floor. Classrooms were painted before the start of the new school year and were interestingly designed to make the learning environment more attractive. The designs for the preschool classes were pictures of the sea and the forest. The principal said, "We design our classes based on the content of the lessons. That is, each book has content that spirals into the books each year. We draw and design that concept on the classroom wall so that the children can learn with the help of pictures."

##### 5.3. Arrangement of the classrooms and the chairs

It is safe to say that all elements of the school's social structure have cultural characteristics. Some of these characteristics are classrooms' physical conditions, textbooks, chair arrangement, as well as the expectations and judgments of teachers and school officials, rules and regulations, teacher-student interaction patterns. The observed classes consisted of 12 to 17 wooden chairs arranged in several interconnected rows. Besides, some classes were equipped with benches. Each class could not fit more than six benches in the classroom. There was a blackboard in the front of the class for the first graders and a whiteboard for the higher grades, a teacher's chair, and a desk. The chairs were arranged in a row in front of the teacher's desk, which implied that students were inactive listeners who must only listen to the teacher. This sitting arrangement also indicated a lack of communication and conversation between students.

---

#### 5.4. Student density

Learning in the classroom also depends on the number of students, and the smaller this number, the greater the amount of learning. Observations and interviews with non-governmental schools indicated that one of the strong reasons for parents to enroll their children in non-governmental schools was the small number of students in the classroom. According to parents, in sparsely populated classrooms, the teacher communicated best with the student, regularly gave feedback to the student, and received feedback from the student. Here are some of the words of some parents: "The number of students here is small. It works like a private class with each student. Because there are so many in public schools, there is a significant lack of discipline."

#### 6. Relationships between school and family

In this section, the sub-components of attracting public participation, parents' demands, and the competition between families in non-governmental schools are explained in detail:

##### 6.1. Attracting public participation

Attracting public participation in non-governmental schools has only been achieved in terms of tuition. According to the observations, the participation of the people in such schools was exclusive to the affluent class in the education of their children, not the participation of the people in the development of education. Families contributed to the school just by paying their children's tuition and nothing else. People did not participate in establishing educational equality, helping the students in need, and providing the education expenses of these students in such schools.

##### 6.2. Demanding parents

Parents reign in non-governmental schools, anything they say goes. A few of the non-governmental school teachers stated that: "Parents feel that they have bought a non-governmental school, just because they pay tuition. They give orders to teachers and the principal, want everything at school to be run to their liking, and whenever there is any objection from the principal or teachers, the parents respond with we are paying tuition, the school must meet our expectations and be run the way we want it". An example of these expectations is as follows: A parent who was a doctor stated: "I am a working parent and I enrolled my child in a non-governmental school so that the teacher can take on all of my child's academic responsibilities. I do not like my child to go home with homework at all because I do not have the time or the patience to take care of them." It was clear from the tone of all the parents that all the parents were exempt from taking any responsibility for their children because of the tuition they paid and they found the teacher to be responsible for the children's homework.

##### 6.3. Competition between families

Today, due to the modernity and the industrialization of societies, human needs are expanding and with the increase of competition between families, most of the real consumption has been replaced by dramatic and pretentious consumptions. People consume goods to show their social status and to distinguish themselves from the upper and lower classes. Based on this study and the observations made during the enrollment of students in non-governmental schools, the researcher found out an interesting point about some families. Some families were complaining about their economic situation during their children's enrollment (the situation they described was very sad). But when these families were asked why they enrolled their children in a non-governmental school, their answer was that because a relative of theirs was studying in a non-governmental school, which was a point of pride for their family. They did not want to be less than their relatives. Therefore, they decided that their child should study in a non-governmental school so that they would not feel ashamed in front of their family. Such families competed with others to pretend to have more class, dignity, and prestige. They are constantly consuming, wasting, or pretending to be better than others.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

When we think of the culture of a school or classroom, we do not think of something with a static nature, but of a group of people with different family cultures, understandings, and values resulted from race, ethnicity, gender, and social class, religion, their creativity and ideas. The fact that these people participate in joint school and classroom activities and have almost the same understanding of their work and affirm certain values about knowledge, learning, and behavior which are all indicative of a culture – and of course not a very integrated one. All aspects of the curriculum reflect culture. School curricula and classroom conditions are always reflective of explicit curricula and unspoken cultural values that include considerations associated with social class, gender, and the rights of social powers. The curriculum is a reflection of cultural beliefs, folk traditions, moral-political values organizations of the society (Joseph, 2000). Ethnographic research can be used to conceptualize the curriculum by truly representing the formal educational system and examining the pattern of intellectual and behavioral beliefs within educational and classroom systems. In recent years, a type of school has come into being that operates under the name of non-governmental schools and has a special culture and pursues a certain type of customs, activities and goals. The curriculum of non-governmental schools focuses on knowledge and standard values. Wherever and whenever this curriculum culture is applied, a great deal of emphasis is put on

---

---

degrees and elitism. Another goal of the curriculum culture is to cultivate cultural identity and memory. Advocates of the curriculum culture focus on standard knowledge, believe in the importance of memory and argue that teaching cultural heritage makes it possible for the students to understand conventional relationships. Students who acquire cultural capital have goods that are culturally acceptable education (Hirsch & et al, 2002). Classical studies – especially math and science – involve very challenging courses that require extreme memory training. They have been taken into account because they argue that content memorization strengthens the mind. A consequence of most beliefs regarding students is that such education is not be out of reach for any learner, and everyone can benefit from such a classic curriculum. The content of the curriculum in the standard knowledge path, which is common in non-governmental schools, depends on the subject matter and must be designed in a way that learners would have access to the necessary background knowledge in language skills, mathematics, science, history and geography. Students develop their skills in reading, writing, speaking, and creative problem solving through the guidance of teachers. Advocates of such curriculum believe that this type of learning ultimately helps students to understand the points and values hidden in selected cultural pieces and apply them in their lives (Adler, 1977-1988). This culture focuses on the curriculum content as being a treasure filled with wisdom. In this culture, textbooks do not automatically reflect the daily life of children and adolescents. The curriculum culture that is based on standard knowledge is like a humorous caricature full of soulless information and hints. Teachers and the general public do not value the resources of this type of curriculum. In the current environment of the school system, which emphasizes the acquisition of computer knowledge and professional skills, this type of curriculum certainly receives little support from society. Can this curriculum teach learners how to guide their moral life through knowledge acquisition? However, teachers may pay attention to students as they help them develop their intellectual talents; but the main focus here is not on teachers engaging students' hearts and minds with the community around them or others, or on establishing a relationship with their teachers based on empathy. Curriculum content is traditional in nature and resists change. The question that arises here is this: Can this type of curriculum can educate people who are sensitive to social conditions and the dynamics of cultural change? We do not want to teach young people the right history, but we want to teach them to create their own history. Can teachers establish relationships between learners and cultural wisdom, and at the same time make them self-centered to critique their culture and values? Furthermore, many non-governmental schools have been established in buildings that do not meet the required standards for educational, welfare and sports facilities. Residential and office buildings have changed their use, transforming bedrooms into classrooms. They enroll children at great expense to parents, while having far more limited facilities than public schools in some cases. Students of such schools grow socially, intellectually, emotionally, economically, and so on. When students play in the schoolyard, they undergo social and emotional development. However, the courtyards of some non-governmental schools do not have the capacity to ventilate in proportion to the number of students, let alone allowing the students to express playful behaviors, all of which lead to one-dimensional growth of the children. On the other hand, because non-governmental schools have fewer students per class, classrooms are more well-managed than public schools. The teacher can work with each student, examining students' learning disabilities, practicing and repeating the subject more, and generally giving the student more time, which facilitates the students' progress. While studying and comparing the equipment and facilities of non-governmental schools with public schools, it was concluded that the audio-visual facilities and equipment of non-governmental schools are not much different from public schools. Another finding of this study is the neglect of art lessons in non-governmental schools. One of the blessings that God has given to all human beings is artistic talent. This talent should naturally be developed like any other talent and should be used for the moral and religious growth and excellence of children and adolescents. Art education paves the way for the development of creativity and intellectuality and facilitates the acquisition of a variety of skills in other subjects. However, despite having goals, educational programs, and topics, this course has not yet reached its true place, and art lessons are more known as the time to have fun, rest, or compensate for the shortcomings of other courses. Another culture that prevails in the curriculum of non-governmental schools is the popular participation and demands of parents and the competition between families, which has created a special kind of relationship between school and home. To deal with the financial shortage in education and to take advantage of the economic power of the affluent class, non-governmental schools were established for reasons such as public participation in education. Using the financial resources of the affluent class in education does not mean the development of participation in education. The goal of developing people's participation in their education has requirements that must be met in addition to providing financial resources. However, due to the structure of the education system, this has yet to be achieved, as it is not possible at all. People's participation in education cannot be achieved only through financial assistance, and this has not happened in non-governmental schools. Parents' perception of participation in education is different from that of authorities that discuss it. To put it bluntly, parents demand high-quality education in exchange for paying for their children's education, and they tend to have a utilitarian approach to this matter. Such an approach cannot be considered as people's participation in education, but a kind of investment for their children without considering slogans such as helping to develop education or paying for their children to help poor children (Yargholi, 2013). Paying tuition has created false expectations in families who have always considered themselves creditors and want the school to fully fulfill their wishes. There has always been a gap between the expectations and needs of people and students and what

---

---

education offers. The discussion of tuition payment by families can be an analysis of the covert functions of consumption and pretentious wastage, all of which are clear signs of the position of affluent families in society. This is a way for such families to compete with others to enhance their status. The findings of this study indicated that families are constantly trying to show off their lives, belongings, and happiness to win the battle with other families. Enrollment in non-governmental schools is also an example of ostentation and pretentious behaviors on the families' part (Brighouse, 2007). According to the research findings, some suggestions are provided for improving the performance of non-governmental schools:

1. Avoiding the separation and classification of students to prevent discrimination
2. Eliminating intelligence and scientific entrance exams for public schools for the talented and gifted to reduce stress and increase the level of happiness in schools
3. Prohibiting the prescription of test books and teaching aids in primary schools
4. Emphasizing social education and skills development in primary school
5. Reconstructing the curriculum culture of non-governmental schools, changing it from a memory-oriented culture to a culture that is based on self-cultivation, understanding, and self-direction
6. Parents' paying attention to the educational capacity, talent, purpose, and programs of non-governmental schools when enrolling their children
7. Improving the methods of evaluating academic achievement and educational processes with scientific methods, building and equipping lovely and lively schools, and creating a proper educational space
8. Officials' paying attention to how the tuition fees for non-governmental schools are collected and to prevent the profiteering of some of these schools' principals and founders
9. Seriously pursuing the implementation of Shahab project (which stands for identifying and guiding top talents) instead of holding exams for the public schools for the talented and gifted
10. Changing parents' attitude to university majors and informing them about their future careers and skill development
11. Studying the curriculum culture of non-governmental and public secondary schools and comparing them quantitatively and qualitatively
12. Investigating the effect of cultural, political, and economic structure on the culture of non-governmental secondary schools
13. Studying the curriculum culture of public primary schools and comparing it with that of non-governmental schools.

## References

- Abbaszadeh, Seyed Mir Mohammad (2000). Comparing the effectiveness of public schools with non-public schools. *Journal of Mashhad Faculty of Literature and Humanities*, 1 and 2. (Persian)
- Adler, M. J. (1977/1988). *Reforming education: The opening of the American mind*. New York: Macmillan.
- Alaqband, Ali (2007). *Theoretical foundations and principles of educational management*, Tehran: Ravan Publishing. (Persian)
- Almasi, Leila; Akhsh, Salman; Hosseini, Fatemeh; Ebrahimi, Ahmad (2016). Culture, teaching, and learning. In the fourteenth annual conference of the Iranian Curriculum Studies Association "Culture and Curriculum", Bu Ali Sina University of Hamadan, September 10 and 11, 2016. (Persian)
- Applebee, A. N. (1990). Book-Length Works Taught in High School English Courses. *ERIC Digest*.
- Aschbacher, P. R. (1991). Humanities: A thematic curriculum. *Educational Leadership*, 49, 16–19.
- Bahar, Mehri (2007). *Cultural Studies: Principles and Foundations*. Tehran: Samt. (Persian)
- Bakhtiari, Abolfazl (2017). Education culture; Research approach to school culture and classroom culture. *Journal of Teacher Development*, 307: 67-66. (Persian)
- Brighouse, H. (2007). Equality of opportunity and complex equality: The special place of schooling. *Res Publica*, 13 (2), 147-158.
- Broudy, H. S. (1984). The uses of humanistic schooling. In C. E., Finn, Jr., D. Ravitch, & R. T. Fanche (Eds.), *Against mediocrity: The humanities in America's high schools* (pp. 15–29). New York: Holmes & Meier.
- Ebrahimi, Reza (2012). The role of university culture on knowledge creation from the perspective of higher education experts. Thesis for obtaining a master's degree, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Al-Zahra University. (Persian)
- Fazeli, Nematullah (2011). *Ethnography of education: Several ethnographic studies in the field of education in Iran today*. Tehran: Elm Publishing. (Persian)
- Fetterman, D. M. (2010). *Ethnography: Step-by-step* (2ed ed.). Sage Publication.
- Hirsch, E.D., et al. (2002). *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy: What every American Needs to Know*. Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Izadi, Samad; Bakhtiari, Abolfazl; Khalil Nia, Marhamat (2016). An ethnographic approach to primary school curriculum culture, in the 14th annual conference of the Iranian Association for Curriculum Studies "Culture and Curriculum", Bu Ali Sina University of Hamadan, September 10 and 11, 2016. (Persian)
- Joseph et al (2000). *Cultures of curriculum*. New Jersey: LEA.
- Lewis, Catherine; Take o, Deway. (2009). *Education as culture*. Translated by Mohammad Reza Sarkararani, Toyoko Morita, and Naomi Shimizu. Tehran: MonadiTarbiat Publishing.
- Martinez, D. (2014). School Culture and American Indian Educational Outcomes. *Procedure - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 199 - 205.
- Neller, George Frederick (2009). *Educational Anthropology*. Translated by Mohammad Reza Ahanchian and YahyaGhaedi, Tehran: Ayizh Publishing.
- Nick name, Zahra; Fazeli, Nematullah; MehrMohammadi, Mahmoud; Fardanesh, Hashem (2011). Experimental Science and Culture Education: Anthropological Explanation of Experimental Science Learning. *Iranian Curriculum Studies Quarterly*, 6 (20): 36 - 8. (Persian)
- Noddings, N. (1994). Learning to engage in moral dialogue. *Holistic Education Review*, 7 (2), 5-11.
- Penn, R. (2019). Detailed Descriptive Coding: An Example Based on the Study of Political Graffiti.
- Rezaei, Mohammad (2008). *School Discourse Disorders: An Analysis of Student's Everyday Life*. Tehran: Publication of the International Research, Cultural, Artistic Institute of Society and Culture. (Persian)
- SAGE DATASETS, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526489005>.
- Sarkar Arani, Mohammad Reza (2013). *Culture of teaching and learning: Ethnographic research with an educational approach*. Tehran: Madraseh Publications. (Persian)
- Winkler, D. R., & Gershberg, A. I. (2000). *Education decentralization in Latin America: The effects on the quality of schooling*. The World Bank: Washington DC.
- Yargholi, Behbood (2013). Investigating the philosophy of creating non-profit schools and its compatibility with educational justice from the perspective of education experts: a hermeneutic approach. *Journal of Fundamentals of Education*, 3 (2), 210-195. (Persian).