Abstract

Various views have been stated regarding what the elements of curriculum are. Dekker Walker defines the curriculum in which three elements of aim, content and organization of content of learning have been noted. The goal of this study is comparing pluralistic and Unitarianism approaches in relation to ten elements of curriculum based on Akker’s view. This research is theoretical in which descriptive-interpretative approaches have been used in information analysis. The findings of this research indicate the difference of two approaches concerning elements of curriculum.

Keywords: Pluralism, Unitarianism, curriculum elements;

1. Introduction

Different approaches have been posed regarding the specifications of elements of curriculum that in one classification can be noted the pluralistic approach on the one hand, and Unitarianism on the other hand. Basically, pluralistic is the counterpart of unitarianism, so they have different aspects in the elements of curriculum.

The pluralistic pedagogical approach is concerned with creating opportunities for learners for active involvement and participation as a member of the school and the larger society (Kerr and Cleaver, 2004). This approach is especially focused on societal movements and social justice. The joint aims of the existing models in the approach include educating the global citizens, educating critical analysts, encouraging political participation, supporting cultural interaction and individual awareness. Pluralistic pedagogy should be primarily be concerned with elevation through which active, cognizant and inquiring citizens can effectively take part in their civil life. From this perspective, citizen education should take into account sex, race and social class structures, contributing to social justice and respect for diversity. A good citizen, in this approach, is kind, politically aware, concerned with social justice and environment, patient and tolerant toward others, hopeful, capable of and willing to converse, and an active participation seeker in social life. (Schugurensky, Pimyers, 2003, p. 4).

Pluralistic pedagogy emphasizes understanding and recognition of diverse and relevant identities, as a clear logic in cultural, national, regional and global arenas. In other words, pluralistic pedagogy recognizes and is focused on the cultural identity of the students. Such an approach equips the students with knowledge, awareness, competence...
and views enabling them to challenge inequities in their local societies, their country, and the world, and improve values and universal worldviews, contributing to the expansion of justice and democratic multicultural communities and societies. Pluralistic approach helps the students to improve decision-making skills, social skills, social problem recognition skills, gaining knowledge about their culture and language, understanding their own values and developing critical thinking. The concept that is also called “critical citizen” (Dejaeghere, 2007).

However, the unitarianism approach orientation insufficient definitions of pedagogy, seeking to improve exclusive interests and legitimize the demands and expectations of minorities in the society. In this sense, a formal and definite approach will be followed, which is realized in the form of pre-designed plans to transmit knowledge and produce unified beliefs and opinions. This knowledge concerning customs, rites and rituals; the country’s history and geography; is a governmental and administrative structure and system that basically emphasizes transmission of knowledge to the students’ minds, as well as preserving and memorizing it. Traditional teaching/learning techniques involve lecturing, advising and preaching the students, while preserving the teacher’s position and authority. Definitely, there are limited opportunities for students’ interaction, participation and creativity, and the results of teaching/learning processes are limited, and only include preserving and reiterating knowledge, whereas evaluating and measuring these results will not be a challenging task.

2.Curriculum elements

2.1.Objectives

Pluralistic pedagogy seeks to achieve the following goals, and pluralistic curriculum can pave the way for achieving these goals:

2.1.1. To develop fundamental human capacities including critical reaction, imagination or conception, self-criticism, argumentation, debating, and judgment to develop self-expression, achieve freedom and abstain from ignorance, prejudice, superstition and nonessential beliefs.

2.1.2. To develop and improve mental and ethical abilities including love for the truth, optimism in face of the surrounding world, mental enquiry, modesty, creative skepticism toward every claim to discover the truth and achieve mutual respect.

2.1.3. To familiarize the students with important scientific, religious, literary achievements, utilize mankind’s cultural capitals, induce human tendency instead of a particular social tendency, and study language, history, cultural geography, societal structures, religions and… .

What is implied in these objectives is the fact that the goals followed by pluralistic pedagogical systems are exact opposites of the goals pursued by unitarianism pedagogical systems. Basically, the educational and pedagogical systems in every society are not formed in historical and social isolation, and cannot be indifferent to culture. Therefore, education and pedagogy are not culturally inert, and their conceptual side-takings cannot be insensitive to culture, as they cannot be non-political, because they provoke especial tendencies and values that per se contribute to social and political order.

2.2.Content

In the unitarianism approach, the content serves valuable knowledge and cultural heritage, whereas in the pluralistic approach, the attempt is made to include, in the content, the modifications and developments in various fields of science and technology, and also the content to be up-to-date. In the pluralistic approach, the content encompasses dynamic and creative strategies. That is, knowledge, skills, and opinions are included and followed in the content, which help the student become aware, critical of the current status, a deep thinker, willing to participate, a pluralist thinker, as well as helping him/her to take into account different contexts and beliefs, seek improvement, become a seeker, and tolerate opposing views. In this approach, the content includes issues like individual and citizen rights, human rights, civil responsibilities, democracy and its principles, civil identities, civil society and its systems, civil principles (equity, freedom and social consolidation), globalization, teaching peace, and campaigning against racism (Banks, 2008; Potter, 2002)
The pluralist curriculum subsumes, and tries to develop in the student, topics including reading, writing, mathematics, anthologies containing significant cultural conceptions, and faithfulness to and membership in the society, which is often a public-government relation. History too is an essential topic that is used as a perspective to cultural evolution and heritage. Certain prescribed cultural values are used to form behavior and conduct, and to encourage compliance with traditional norms and national attributes. Whenever possible, conservatives prefer to form and culture conduct in a religious context.

2.3. Teaching methodology

Given the general picture of the two approaches, it can be claimed that in the pluralist approach, active and participation-based teaching/learning methods are taken into consideration. In such methods, those principle and assumptions are taken into account that are in accordance with the purposes and objectives. Among these principles are paying attention and respecting the student as the main active factor in learning, paying attention to students’ interaction and conversation with each other or with the teacher, paying attention to and respecting personal, cultural, ethical differences, criticizing ideas not individuals, respecting democratic principles like freedom of thought, evaluating ideas without racial or ethical prejudice and observing this tendency in the educational context, using group work, using learning and information technologies in the teaching/learning process, evaluating the students’ learning and the teacher, attaching learning in the classroom with local, national and global contexts, paying attention to scientific processes and problem solving in face of learning issues, taking into account critical thinking, considering social skills like active listening, explaining, questioning, turn taking, showing appropriate reactions toward peer pressure and etc. (Banks, 2008; Kerr, 2004; Potter, 2002; Trafford, 2003).

However, in the unitarianism approach, traditional and teacher-centered methodologies including lecturing, indoctrination, preaching, and narration are used. The distinctive characteristics of teaching methodologies depend on the attention they give to the unique position and value of the topic and the teacher in the learning process, student’s willingness, respect for popular and traditional values, evaluation based on predetermined criteria and purposes, observing the defined discipline and framework, active attention, accountability, certainty in the learning process, memorization, reiteration, reviewing, and habit formation.

In the pluralistic view, the teacher is expected to behave as the student’s partner in the learning to facilitate the learning flow, and adopt appropriate teaching strategies suitable for that role. There are no definite methodologies or strategies for playing such a role. The teacher in the learning flow, in any possible way and according to the needs of each student, will help them.

In the unitarianism approach, teaching strategies, as an indispensable part of the students’ activities, are often designed based on predetermined objectives. The teacher utilizes suitable methods to help the students acquire the kind of behavior and content defined in the objectives of the program. There is a common strategy known as “recognition, prescription, and assessment”. In this approach, the teacher first tries to identify at which learning level the student is and what the problems that he/she faces are, based on which, the teacher prescribes the next step for the student; finally, after the student has followed the teacher’s prescriptions, the teacher will evaluate whether or not the objectives have been achieved. Lecturing and discussion is another common strategy used in this approach. The teacher, as an aware and specialized person in the topic, utilizes he methods used for transferring the topic to the students.

2.4. Evaluation curriculum

In the pluralistic approach, evaluation is made continuously and developmentally of the student’s improvement in knowledge, opinion, and competence dimensions. The scope of evaluation is not just limited to the cognitive aspect, but emotional and skill issues are also considered to be important, and awareness as to how they change and improve is valued. Besides considering the result and the improvement level, it is also taken into account how the students participate and do activities in the teaching/learning process.

In this approach, textbook and verbal examinations, as well as observation tools, interviews, reporting, group participation level, and group reports are used. The pluralistic approach is not just limited to pen and pencil tests, or
qualitative data, and it enjoys dynamicity and flexibility, and it not only takes into account lower levels of learning, but it also covers higher levels of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects.

In the unitarianism (unified) approach, qualitative data are usually used, and evaluation is usually final and compressed, while emphasizing memorization and repeating, with no student participation in the evaluation process.

2.5. Learning Tools and Resources

Learning tools and resources in the unitarianism approach are selected and provided based on presenting the content to the students with absolute systematism. Textbooks are the most common type of learning resources in such curricula which present the content in the predetermined order of logical hierarchy of topics, thus giving the student no role to select the resources.

However, in the pluralistic approach, the resources and educational tools are determined extensively based on student’s learning needs. Textbooks are not highly valued, because they are known as systematic content for the students. Instead, a large number of necessary educational resources and materials are used that give the student the chance to analyze and organize his/her plans.

2.6. Learning Activities

Students’ learning activities, from the pluralist’ perspective, are either selected and organized by the students, or, before making any decision in this regard, the teacher consults with the students. The activities fit to this approach include those that provoke the students to get involved in a highly effective and active participation including creating something, finding necessary material, and organizing other resources; although these activities are not designed for predetermined goals, they should help the students in achieving their education goals.

However, in the unitarianism approach, the students’ learning activities are designed in such a way that they establish a direct connection between the students, the objectives (implied or explicit), and the orientation of the program. These activities are used for the purpose of accelerating the behavioral changes or focusing the attention of the students, in the learning process, to the orientations determined in the program- that usually include learning a definite set of pieces of knowledge.

2.7. Grouping

Grouping the students in the pluralistic approach is highly flexible. Different groups are formed based on the students’ needs or interests. It is emphasized that the students’ shared interests (not the teacher’s discretion) of their competences are the basis for grouping. When the groups are formed, they are flexible, short-lived, rather natural, and indigenous.

In the unitarianism approach, the students, from time to time, are grouped according to their achievement rate and their readiness to learn new material. The improvement rate of achieving the program’s goals is the basis for forming the groups, and particular activities, in accordance to the logical order of learning the content, are prescribed for every group.

2.8. Time

In the pluralist approach, the teacher controls the time flexibly and without any prior consideration. Time is identified as a source that the student himself/herself is responsible to use. A learning time schedule is not limited to the periods when the student spends in class or outside of it to do his/her homework. From this perspective, learning the issues that the student finds important is possible at any time.

However, in the unitarianism approach, the time factor is viewed as a limited opportunity that the teacher and students are bound to make the most considerable use of. The teacher involves the students actively in his/her educational tasks, and prevents them from any disorganization or interaction with each other. The time that the
student spends in class are counted as his/her most valuable times, although the student will have to do assignments at home so that the learning flow will not be limited to the school context. Time, in this view, is further divided into many parts to assign certain hours to each of the topics.

2.9. Educational Context

Educational context too, in the pluralistic approach, like the time factor, is not already systematized or determined. Of course, the class is considered to be the central context in which education takes place. However, learning flow requires the students to use many other places or facilities in the school or social context.

However, in the unitarianism approach, the context is usually constrained and limited to the class, although other contexts like library, audio/video centers, music or art room, and mathematics and science laboratories may be utilized. The context in the class is so designed as to facilitate group education or group cooperation.

3. Conclusion

The emergence of pedagogical pluralistic theories was to change the structure and quality of pedagogical programs. Along the same lines, teachers believe that one of the positive aspects of pedagogical pluralism is to enhance individuals’ capacity to tolerate and work with different people; this capacity develops through being in contact with different cultures as a form of socialization. These theories, with their presence in the field, can direct education and pedagogy towards a point that will improve individuals’ competence and desirability to participate in political, social, and responsibility processes, and create change and development in individual and social identity.

Therefore, the advocates of pluralism in pedagogy and education believe that if educational systems are to be synchronized with the rapidly changing contemporary social, political, and cultural developments, and to bring about appropriate grounds for change in identity, they will necessarily need to inject pluralistic teachings into their programs, and any resistance against that, can per se trigger identity crises. Monism-centered pedagogical systems make the students face with conflicts in identity crises (which is a corollary of being alien to other cultures), as they oppose and resist to the cultural changes in other societies, support lack of interaction with other cultures, and deny the fact that it is virtually impossible to avoid the influence of other cultures because of their dominance in media.

References