

Analysis of the Importance-Performance of the Main Components of the Indigenous Model of the Preschool Curriculum with an Emphasis on Life Skills

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Abstract: Preschool education, as the first stage of formal education, provides a suitable platform for the growth and development of children's personalities. Since the development of the desired development of children's personalities will not be possible without paying attention to their logical education and upbringing; and given the lack of studies on various aspects of the preschool curriculum with an emphasis on life skills, the present study was conducted with the aim of analyzing the importance-performance of the main components of the indigenous model of the preschool curriculum with an emphasis on life skills (Chistani, Alemiyan, and Kaykha, 1402). The statistical population of the quantitative section included all kindergarten teachers in Fars province, totaling 5112 people; 375 people participated in the research based on the Cochran formula and the two-stage cluster method. A 69-question researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect data. The importance-performance analysis technique was also used to analyze the data. The results of the importance-performance analysis showed that the indicators of "creative thinking, problem solving, critical thinking, and physical health" are in the "keep up the good work" area, in other words, the organization's performance in these indicators is desirable; therefore, the organization should maintain this desirable performance. The indicator of citizenship rights education is in the "low priority" area; in fact, this indicator has little importance from the experts' point of view and the organization's performance in it is also low. The reason for this could be that this concept has been addressed sufficiently. The indicators of "communication skills and effective communication, emotion management, decision-making skills, and self-awareness" are in the "focus here" area. In other words, these components are of high importance from the experts' point of view, but the organization's performance in it is low. Therefore, the organization should focus on them

Keywords: Curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills, preschool, importance-performance analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered a fundamental pillar of progress, development, and excellence of any country (Naimi and Hanifi, 1402). In this regard, preschool education, as the first stage of formal education, provides a suitable platform for the growth and development of children's personalities (Nadimi, 1397). Research conducted on preschool curricula in recent years shows the impact of rich programs and desirable educational and lesson planning for different age groups of children in the preschool period (Lee, 2022). More importantly, research findings support the need for greater investment in better education

and quality programs due to the greater success of children in the academic years after completing preschool (Perol and Abboud, 2019); because preschool education has been widely emphasized in the national education policy of most countries as a sensitive input both in terms of an individual's overall development and in terms of its impact on the admission and retention of children at the primary level. (Kole, 2014). On the other hand, all those who are somehow related to the country's education issues are aware of this fundamental and obvious point that solving the country's education problems and dilemmas directly depends on the issues of the preschool period. If the issues of this period of education are not dealt with seriously and comprehensively, there should be little hope for solving the problems of later periods of education (Nadi et al., 2018); Because today, in many advanced systems of the world, the issue of preschool education has been accepted as one of the basic foundations of education and training, and in almost all growth classifications, the age of preschool education has been emphasized as one of the stages of personality development, and the expansion of education and training of young children in preschool ages should be among the basic goals of the educational orientation of this decade (Yazigi, 2023). It is clear that ignoring the issues and problems of the preschool period and the lack of useful and effective planning with the interests and needs of children at this age will have destructive effects on the health and personality of children (Gholami et al., 1401). The experience of other countries shows that the best age to start teaching life skills is five and six years old; for this reason, global education of life skills begins before the primary school age and gradually becomes more complete (Salighedar, 1395); Therefore, if the curriculum content is balanced with learning life skills, individuals will develop a healthy and constructive attitude towards life situations, which will result in the emergence of correct behaviors to prevent mental disorders (Qalaeh Shahi, 2019).

Because humans have different physical, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, true growth and development will be achieved when all dimensions of the human personality are given harmonious attention (Sarkhosh et al., 1400). In fact, the goal of education in the field of education is to guide physical and mental growth or, in general, to guide the all-round development of the personality of the learners in order to acquire and understand human knowledge and accepted norms of society, as well as to help develop their talents (Seif, 1389). Accordingly, the goals of education and training in this period should be the complete development of life skills. It is only in the shadow of benefiting from such balanced growth that a complete and sublime foundation for existence is provided. In this regard, learning environments should be designed in a way that does not cause the individual to stop or stagnate at a particular stage. Proponents of the theory of developmental curriculum pay special attention to the integration and that cognitive, moral, and personality development have a reciprocal relationship with each other and that one dimension (for example, the cognitive dimension) should not eliminate other dimensions (Miller, 2017). The main issue of this study is the lack of sufficient attention and neglect of simultaneous attention to the dimensions of children's personality

development in the preschool period. Today, in the education system, books have been compiled in the form of familiarity with the Quran that are only in line with the development of children's religious and spiritual personality and have neglected to pay attention to other dimensions of personality development. Also, most of the concepts included in these books have undesirable effects on children's personality development due to their incompatibility with children's mental and intellectual abilities (Kanaani Harandi et al., 2017); Therefore, it is essential to provide appropriate curriculum content for this period, emphasizing the comprehensive development of the child in the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions (Klinke, 2017).

In the preschool period, the child is not able to understand the concept of rules and regulations, and in the programs, morality is based on creating good habits, but moral education in the elementary school period is based on rules and regulations, and this is called formative education, meaning that they plan according to the child's developmental stages. The programs of this period are child-centered and growth-oriented. Unlike primary education programs, these programs are not formal, but are very flexible. In fact, today we can and need to implement new preschool education programs based on our cultural origins. And since we live in a revolutionary and developing country, it is necessary to create programs for children who live in cultural and social deprivation and who constitute the majority of the children of this country that can provide the foundations for bridging the wide gap of deprivation. The results of this research provide valuable information. It can be provided to education decision-makers, educators, managers, and especially parents regarding the increase of life skills.

Since the development of the desired development of children's personality will not be possible without paying attention to the important and fundamental principle, which is their logical education, and given the lack of studies on the various dimensions of preschool curriculum models with an emphasis on life skills, the present study was conducted with the aim of prioritizing the main components of the indigenous preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills. Therefore, the main question of this research is: How is the importance-performance analysis of the main components of the indigenous preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills?

Theoretical foundations and research background

Based on psychological and educational experiences and studies, the early years of childhood play an important role in the development and upbringing of children. Because personality formation and comprehensive development of the individual are more likely to occur during this period (Vintimala et al., 2020). The preschool period plays an important role in the development of concepts, meanings, and matters that the child encounters in everyday life. Preschool education is actually the entry point of a long and important movement in the lives of our children. The important point is that after five years of various experiences and various ups and downs that they go through in family life, children enter preschool and find their first formal experience in the country's

educational system (Naimi and Hanifi, 1402). These initial encounters are very decisive in regulating the personality of children and the formation of their behavioral and belief characteristics, traits, and manners. In terms of quantity, this period is of great importance compared to other levels, both in our country and in other countries, due to the inclusion and large number of new learners and the compulsory nature of the preschool period. In fact, the first cornerstone of the construction of children's personalities and the ultimate social construction are laid in these early years; therefore, this period is of particular importance both qualitatively and quantitatively (Qazi, 2014).

Kindergarten education is the first stage of formal education that has its own goals, programs, methods, and tools, and is an important foundation for other periods of general education (Wang et al., 2019). This stage of education can be divided into two main periods. The first period is for infants and toddlers (from the first months of life to four years old). In our country, most kindergartens are under the supervision of the country's welfare organization, which is responsible for the mental development and upbringing of children at these ages. The second period, which is for children aged five to six, is called the period of preparation for entering primary school (so-called preschool period), which is basically because of the education and training perspective. Each of the periods has sub-periods that are known by different names in different countries and have their own education and training program, depending on the level of development of the needs and abilities of the children (Jo et al., 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to provide the opportunity for his growth in cooperation and coordination with the family. Paying attention to the integrity of the child's personality requires that a safe, healthy, and educational environment that is not devoid of play and entertainment be provided for him in kindergarten and preschool. There should be a specific plan and plan for the daily practical activities of educators that meets the specific needs of children and regularly promotes the child's progress in biological, emotional, mental, and social fields. The fifth and sixth years of a child's life are called kindergarten years and the period of preparation for entering elementary school or preschool. It is during this period that children are prepared to enter the preparatory period and ultimately to enter elementary school (Yazigi, 2023).

Considering the most important psychological characteristics of preschool children and their basic needs, and the vital role of the family, educators, society, and media in this period, it is appropriate to place the greatest value on cultivating and guiding the sense of curiosity and strengthening the skills, talents, and potential capabilities of children in order to develop their curious, intelligent, and wise behaviors (Amini Golestani et al., 2018). Since desirable social education and adaptation to social groups cannot be achieved alone and without providing appropriate opportunities, the sooner these opportunities are provided to the child, the easier his social development will be. Therefore, separating the child from the small environment of the home and going to preschool centers, whose core is formed by a group of playmates and peers, will increase the scope of the child's interactions and freedom and provide the basis for acquiring and

developing his social adaptation. Given the small size of the family environment and the educational and upbringing limitations, and on the other hand, the breadth of educational and upbringing programs in preschool centers, it is necessary for parents to strive to strengthen and develop their child's personality and consolidate their educational foundation in education (Mir Arab et al., 1401).

Preschool centers are one of the most appropriate places that can help both parents and teachers with proper education to resolve problems. A child in kindergarten is more flexible and more accepting than a primary school child, and by providing appropriate education, it is possible to be effective in their academic progress in primary school (Behboudi, 2018).

Life skills and curriculum are closely related to each other. Because the goal of both is to design appropriate opportunities for better learning of the learner and maximum utilization of these opportunities. Both disciplines include the stages of design, implementation and evaluation. Curriculum planning is the factor of researching the goals of educational programs and life skills are the factor of curriculum realizations (Heshmati and Estavar, 1401). Accordingly, curriculum planning is considered a set of activities that establish a connection between the main elements of curricula (goal, content, method and evaluation), but the basis for creating change and transformation in the curriculum system is created through life skills. In fact, curriculum planning and life skills, together and by benefiting from each other, can facilitate the education process. Therefore, it is a longitudinal relationship and they overlap with each other (Abdol-Wahabi, 1392).

The needs of today's life, rapid social and cultural changes, rapid changes in family structure, the expansion and influx of information resources have confronted humans with numerous challenges and pressures that require psychosocial capabilities to deal with, and the lack of emotional, psychological, and social skills and abilities makes people vulnerable to issues and problems and exposes them to various psychological, social, and behavioral disorders (Qasemian and Kharazian, 2010). Today, despite the profound cultural changes in lifestyles, many people lack the necessary and basic abilities to deal with life's problems, and this has made them vulnerable to the issues and problems of daily life and its requirements (Emami and Naeini, 2015).

Some characteristics of life skills training include:

- First, life skills training is a powerful form of education and treatment. Because clients simultaneously learn new skills in several areas;
- Second, life skills training is an educational model that teaches a series of skills and leads to fewer relapses in clients;
- Third, participants actively participate in learning and completing life skills, so they are likely to feel more ownership of the training process and efficacy (Loretta et al., 2023).
- Fourth, life skills training is a suitable way to both prevent and treat mental health problems, and the most effective and efficient way to learn these skills is to teach them directly (Corsini and Gazda, 2015).

The following is a review of the research background.

The results of the study by Rezaei et al. (1402) showed that the life skills empowerment model for children under the care of day care centers for welfare includes 6 components (friendship, kindness, participation and cooperation skills, creative thinking skills, sense of responsibility and self-confidence) and 36 indicators. The findings of the study by Panahandehpour et al. (1402) showed that in shaping the appropriate preschool curriculum model in Iran, the dimensions of macro-governance management, attention to family awareness, proportionality of preschool programs with the culture of the society, educational facilities, use of creative teaching methods, comprehensiveness of educational content, and attention to the educational environment are influential. The research-based preschool curriculum model in the study by Arjomandi et al. (1402) includes three dimensions of structure (management, planning, organization, coherence, culture, rules), education (content, method, learning activity, evaluation, environment, instructor, equipment), and skills (visual-spatial, linguistic-verbal, logical-mathematical, sensory-motor, musical, extrapersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, moral, spiritual, identity, emotional, social). The components of the principles of philosophy for children, the characteristics of philosophy for children, goals, attention to age, educational resources, stages of philosophy education, teaching methods, teacher characteristics, learning methods, learning activities, evaluation methods, and consequences of the philosophy curriculum for children were the 13 main components of the philosophy curriculum model for preschool children aged three to five in the study of Maheri et al. (1401). The results of the study of Mir-Arab Razi et al. (1401) showed that the goals of the problem-based curriculum model in preschool include six categories: "problem-solving ability", "strengthening the spirit of questioning and searching", "responsibility and accountability", "strengthening the spirit of joy and vitality", "all-round development (general skills)", and "cultivation of mental powers". Mir Arab Razi et al. (1400) conducted a study with the aim of designing a problem-based curriculum model in preschool. The results obtained were analyzed using the Van Manen model. The results showed that in the area of problem-based curriculum objectives in preschool (17 components), in the area of content (14 components), in the area of teaching-learning methods (10 components), in the area of evaluation methods (7 components), in the area of place (18 components) and in the area of time (10 components) and a total of 76 components were identified as components constituting the elements of the problem-based curriculum in preschool. The results of the study by Loretta et al. (2023) indicate that lifelong learning is implemented in play groups by providing stimuli related to activities that promote the development of life skills in childhood. Life skills are implemented in playgroups through life skills centers. Life skills include social living, responsibility, self-awareness, gender awareness, decision-making, survival, and self-care. Life skills-related activities stimulate children's lifelong learning. Yazegi (2023) conducted a study titled The Need for an Integrated Preschool EFL Curriculum in Lebanon.

This paper found that an integrated curriculum for preschool enriches children's linguistic environment, leading to better and more natural learning of the target language and concepts from different contexts. This paper begins by reviewing the existing literature on child development, foreign language learning in this field, and integrated curriculum. The development of a comprehensive curriculum for preschool children in Lebanon is considered with the healthy cognitive, emotional, and psychological development of preschool children in mind. Li (2022) conducted a study on the construction and modification of a vocational curriculum for preschool children based on big data. In the first stage, this paper introduces a vocational curriculum for children and develops its development and perspective. Secondly, the method of period analysis is proposed, and the innovation of reforms in the teaching mode is carried out to construct and modify a vocational curriculum for preschool children. According to the empirical results, it can be seen that the current degree of construction and modification of the professional curriculum for preschool children is 65% higher than ten years ago. Halfdanardutyr et al. (2022) concluded that the preschool life skills program is prepared as a classroom-level program to teach important social and communication skills to preschool children. The preschool life skills program is an effective method for teaching children's social skills and also reducing problem behavior. However, there is a need to further evaluate the feasibility and generality of the program in different cultural contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-survey in terms of method and nature. Also, the present study was conducted cross-sectionally in 1402 from the perspective of the time horizon.

The statistical population of the quantitative part of the study consists of all preschool teachers in Fars province, 5112 in number. Considering the number of people in the statistical population and using the Cochran formula, the sample size was determined to be 357 people. Considering the possibility that some questionnaires were unusable, 418 questionnaires (ten percent more) were distributed, of which 397 were returned. Of the returned questionnaires, 376 were usable. A two-stage cluster sampling method was used to select the research subjects. Thus, first, the cities of Fars province were divided into five clusters: North, South, East, West, and Center, and then two cities were randomly selected from each cluster as shown in Table (1):

Table (1). Population and Sample Size

Sample size	Percentage of sample size of each city to the population size	Community size	Selected County	Distri ct
164	5/43	718	Shiraz	Center
43	4/11	189	Marvdasht	North

21	6/5	92	Eqlid	South East
21	6/5	93	Abadeh	
24	4/6	106	Lar	West
20	3/5	88	Lamerd	
16	2/4	70	Arsanjan	Distri ct Center
11	3	49	Estehban	
34	1/9	150	Kazeroun	North South
22	8/5	96	Noorabad	
376	100	1651		East

Based on the sampling method, stratified random sampling was used in proportion to the population size. Questionnaires were distributed and collected among the teachers of the cities listed in Table (1). The data collection tool in the qualitative section was a semi-structured interview with experts, and in the quantitative section, a researcher-made questionnaire with 69 questions based on a five-point Likert scale, as shown in Table (2):

Table (2). Specifications of the questionnaire used in the research

Source	Number of questions	Component	Row
Researcher-made questionnaire	9	Citizenship Rights	1
	6	Emotion Management	2
	7	Critical Thinking	3
	11	Problem Solving Skills	4
	7	Creative Thinking	5
	10	Communication Skills and Effective Communication	6
	6	Decision-making skills	7
	7	Self-awareness	8
	6	Physical health	9
	69	Total	

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The aim of the present study is to analyze the main components of the indigenous model of the preschool curriculum with an emphasis on life skills, which was presented by Chistani et al. (1402). Figure (1) shows the proposed model:

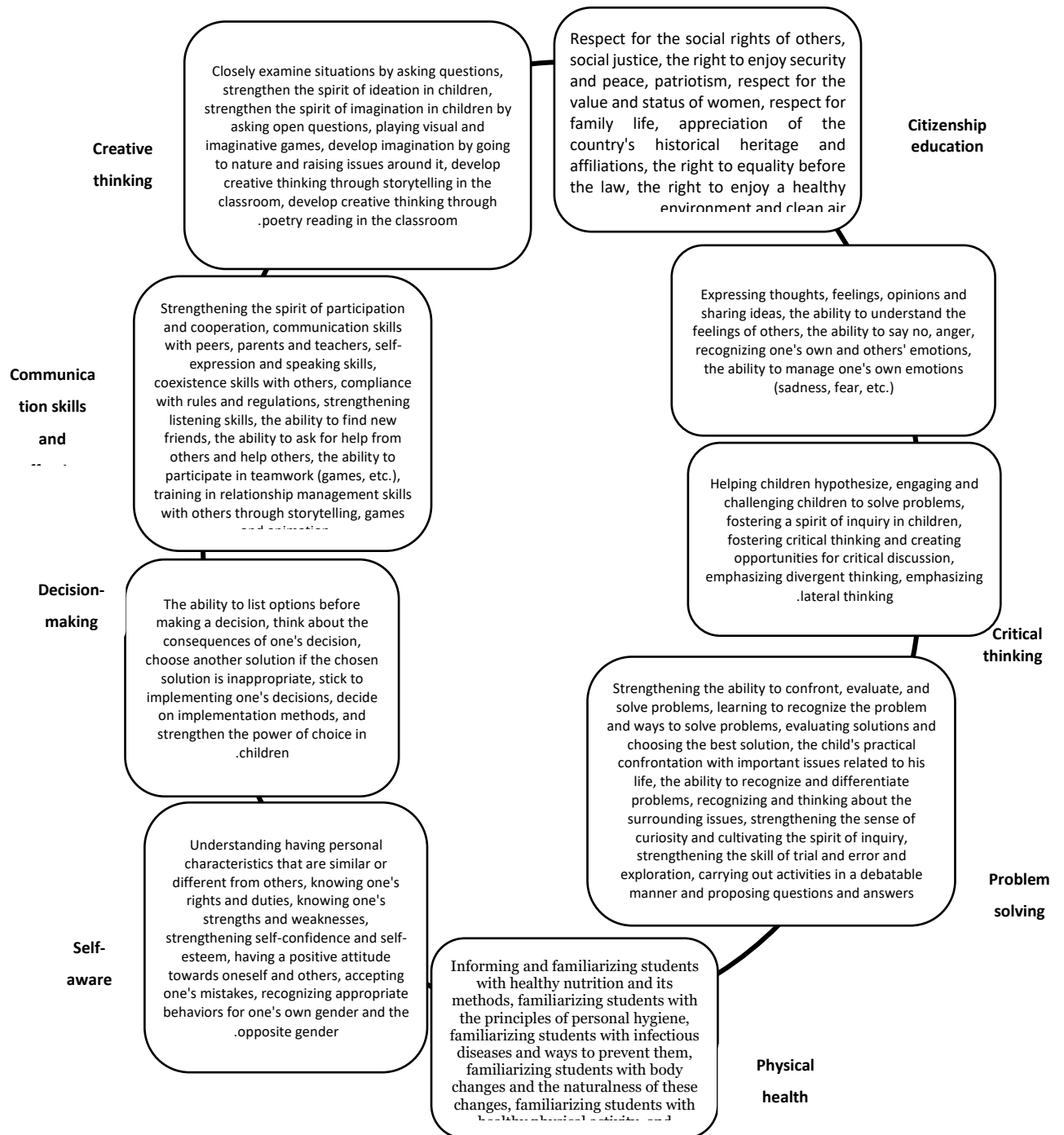


Chart (1): Model of citizenship rights education for primary school in Iran (Chistani, Vasefian and Kaykha, 2014)

Table (3) shows the results of the importance-performance matrix analysis of the main components of the preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills:

Table (3). Importance-performance analysis

Concept	District	Performance	Importance	Index
Low priority	Third	88/2	25/3	Citizenship Education
Keep up the good work	Second	45/3	92/3	Creative Thinking
Focus here	First	35/3	85/3	Communication Skills and Effective Communication
Keep up the good work	Second	64/3	86/3	Problem Solving
Focus here	First	10/3	93/3	Emotional Management
Keep up the good work	Second	78/3	96/3	Critical Thinking
Focus here	First	28/3	4	Decision-Making Skills
Focus here	First	22/3	85/3	Self-Awareness
Keep up the good work	Second	52/3	94/3	Physical Health
		36/3	84/3	Threshold Value

The four areas of importance - the performance of the main components of the preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills are as shown in Figure (2):

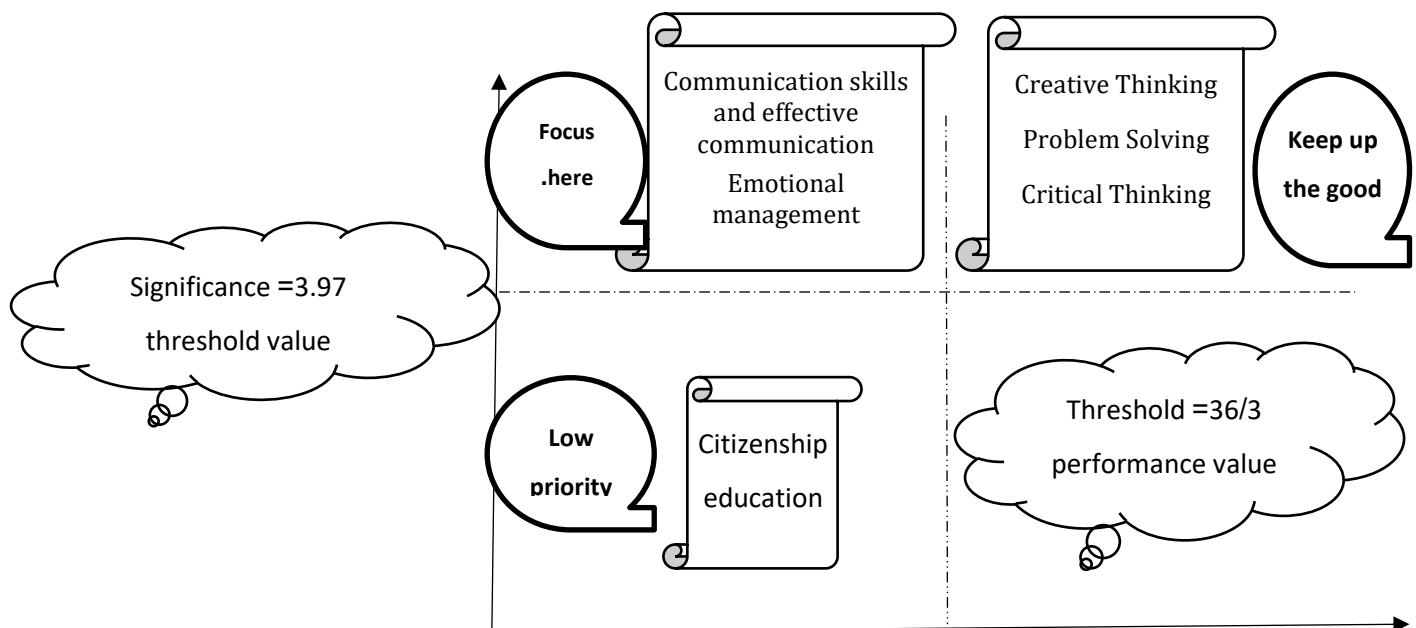


Chart (2). The four areas in the importance-performance matrix

The weight and priority of the main components of the preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills are as follows in Table (4):

Table (4). Weight and priority of indicators

Priorit y	Normalized weight	Weight not normalized	Index
7	072/0	20/1	Citizenship education
5	110/0	84/1	Creative thinking
4	115/0	93/1	Communication skills and effective communication
8	051/0	85/0	Problem solving
1	195/0	26/3	Emotion management
9	042/0	71/0	Critical thinking
2	172/0	88/2	Decision-making skills
3	145/0	43/2	Self-awareness
6	099/0	65/1	Physical health
		75/16	Total

- Based on the results of the importance-performance analysis of the main components of the preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills, it can be said:
- □ The indicators of "communication skills and effective communication, emotion management, decision-making skills, and self-awareness" are in the "focus here" area;
- □ The indicators of "creative thinking, problem solving, critical thinking, and physical health" are in the "keep up the good work" area;
- □ The indicator of citizenship rights education is in the "low priority" area.

Discussion and Conclusion

- The present study analyzed the importance-performance of the main components of the preschool curriculum with an emphasis on life skills. Based on the results of the importance-performance analysis of the main components of the preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills, it can be said:
- □ The indicators of "communication skills and effective communication, emotion management, decision-making skills, and self-awareness" are in the "focus here" area. In other words, these components are of high importance from the experts' point of view, but the organization's performance in them is low. Therefore, the organization should focus on them. Based on the weight

calculated for each indicator, improvement should be made in the following order of priority:

- 1- Emotion management
- 2- Decision-making skills
- 3- Self-awareness
- 4- Communication skills and effective communication
- □ The indicators of "creative thinking, problem solving, critical thinking, and physical health" are in the "keep up the good work" area, in other words, the organization's performance in these indicators is desirable; therefore, the organization should maintain this desirable performance;
- □ The indicator of citizenship rights education is in the "low priority" area; In fact, this indicator is of little importance from the experts' point of view and the organization's performance in it is also low. The reason for this issue could also be that this concept has not been sufficiently addressed.
- Given that no research has been conducted to analyze the importance-performance of the components of the preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills, it is not possible to examine the alignment of the results for the main research question. Based on the main components of the model, the following practical suggestions are made:
 - • It is suggested that experts and designers of preschool curricula consider the list of components and examples of citizenship rights in formulating goals, content, learning opportunities, and other elements of the curriculum, and empower educators in how to teach these examples to preschool children.
 - • In designing a preschool curriculum, basic emotional words such as happiness, anger, sadness, and fear should be taught how to express them. A great way to help children learn about emotions is to discuss the feelings of different characters in books and use storytelling. Therefore, preschool curriculum design should introduce characters that the child can identify with and put themselves in the shoes of the main character in the story.

• Curriculum design should be such that it arouses the child's curiosity and interest from the beginning of the lesson. Start the lesson with a story, poem or short slide in a way that makes the child eager to know the essence of the subject. Abstract concepts that broaden the child's intellectual circle should also be used in preschool lesson design because children are extremely curious about these topics and are always seeking to discover the relationship between them and their daily lives.

• Children learn rules and frameworks every time they play intellectual games and solve problems. They realize the limitations and possibilities and eventually try different solutions each time to achieve the result. This gradually and spontaneously teaches children the path to the solution. In addition, they also practice the side skills needed for

problem solving such as the power of prediction, cooperation, teamwork and risk-taking. Games should be used to strengthen the problem-solving ability of children.

- Doing activities that help people identify tools that help them build things. Activities such as building a building using materials such as bricks, sand, activities for the five senses (smell, taste, sight, hearing, and touch). In designing activities, the child should be given many opportunities to experiment and experience. The child is curious at this age, and curiosity is a prerequisite for learning.
- Group teaching and doing activities in groups is one of the ways to increase children's participation in doing something. For this purpose, steps should be taken to make group work interesting for preschool children. For example, ask students to choose a name for their group. In this way, they will give their group an identity and attach more importance to it. Ask students to talk about themselves in the group and introduce themselves more to their friends. This will help them get to know each other better and work together better. Ask students to clearly state their expectations of each group member and make sure everyone's responsibilities are clear at the beginning. Explain the rules for group work to students.
- There is no better way to teach children and students about decision-making than to read a book and analyze its characters. Therefore, in the lesson concepts, you can include parts where the main character of the book makes a decision and then the teacher and students analyze the decisions made in that lesson. This will act as a teaching point and create meaningful discourse in the class. Invite students to share the decisions that the characters in the textbook make with the class. Then discuss whether the students in the class make the same decisions that the characters in the book make and encourage students to criticize and judge the decisions of the protagonist.
- Teaching concepts such as respecting and learning from others, valuing differences, eliminating stereotypes and dictated values, discovering common ground in every relationship, creating new commitments, and trying to bridge cultural gaps can all help children understand themselves. By telling stories that recommend courage and relying on individual abilities, children can be taught how to live. Never neglect the importance of educational stories in this path and know that they can play an important role in increasing children's self-confidence.
- Using the technique of games, drama, stories and poetry, such as: teaching children how to properly wash their hands and faces with soap before meals and after defecation, teaching how to properly brush their teeth after eating at mealtimes, using personal hygiene items such as towels, toothbrushes, combs, teaching how to bathe properly (at least twice a week), giving children sufficient and useful information about a healthy diet, for the hygiene of the genitals of children, especially girls, it is necessary to change their

underwear and wash it separately on a daily basis, teaching how to properly use public hygiene items, for children to learn personal hygiene correctly and correctly, a person is needed to fully supervise the children's actions until they learn correctly.

The limitation of the preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills to Fars experts is the main limitation of the present study; therefore, caution should be observed in generalizing the results of this study. Finally, the design and validation of the preschool curriculum model with an emphasis on life skills using the meta-synthesis technique and data-based theory to other Researchers are recommended.

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