Investigating the Effect of Educating Philosophy in the Children on the Spiritual Development of Female Students with 12-14 Years Old in the City of Isfahan

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Abstract

The goal of this study was to investigate the effect of educating philosophy curriculum in the children on the spiritual development of female students with 12-14 years old in the city of Isfahan. The present study is a semi-experiment research. The research design is pretest-posttest research with experiment and control group. In order to select the sample members, cluster sampling method was used. For this purpose, the curriculum was conducted for 15 sessions in the experiment group. The curriculum was conducted two times in week. The research data were analyzed through multi-variable COVARIANCE Analysis in the SPSS. The findings of this study revealed that implementation of philosophy curriculum education program leads to spiritual development of students in terms of God awareness, grandiosity, and instability ($p \leq 0.05$). Also our findings indicated that implementation of philosophy curriculum does not affect spiritual development of students in terms of impression management and realistic acceptance ($p \leq 0.05$). Based on the results of this study, it can be said that implementation of philosophy curriculum leads to the spiritual development of students.

Keywords: Philosophy Curriculum, Spiritual Development, Female Students

1.   Introduction

The specialists of the World Health Organization define human as a biological, mental, and spiritual creature. They refer to the physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects of mankind and concentrate on the spiritual aspect in his/her development. Indeed, spirituality is a dimension of human that refers to the capabilities in all aspects of mankind (Elkins et al., 1988; Yaaghoubi, 2010: 94). There is significant relationship among cognitive, social, and affective aspects of mankind. It can be said that spirituality is holistic perspective to mankind and his/her surrounding environment. In the modern approach, spirituality is a fundamental and inherent quality for mankind and his/her evolution (Samadi, 2006: 103).

In the recent years, spirituality has been considered by authors. Usually, spirituality is based on the spiritual attitudes of adults and a few studies have been done in terms of spirituality in the child. However, inattention to the spiritual aspects is one of the main interests of educational institutes and even society. Recently, spiritualty has been considered as an ignored especial part in terms of cognitive area (Hedayati and Zaribaft, 2012).

In order to study the physiological aspect of spirituality in themankind, the authors have manipulated human mind and recognized a part of mind which aims to remember and examine spiritual affairs. They define this part of mind as "God Spot". Since this part of mind tends to the celestial, realistic, and ontological discussions. Based on such an exploration, it will be proved that the need for the spiritual issues and exploration in the existing aspects of human is not an external need, but it is an internal need (Zohar and Marshal, 2004: 98).

Generally, mind of the children are exploring the meanings continuously. It is the obligation of schools, as the main educational institute, to help child in research and education. Lipman refers to school as an institute educates thinking in the society. Unfortunately, educating most of the human aspects is done in the later periods. The spiritual development usually is considered as theosophy in the adult periods. Although this element is ignored in the childhood, meaning exploration is dominated in childhood (Lipmann, 2000).

Unfortunately, a few studies have been done in terms of spiritual development of children. In this regard, Helminiak (1987) refers to five aspects of spiritual development. According to Helminiak (1987), these steps

start in adolescence period. Kohls studies spiritual aspects of children. In this regard, he interview children with different religious tendencies in different countries. He indicates that along with cultural and religious differences in the children, their involvements in spiritual affairs are similar. He points out that spirituality of children derives from their tendency to understanding and they attempt to explore reasons of environmental events (Helminiak, 1987).

The researchers believe that spiritual development leads to development in the cognitive, social, affective, and physical abilities and capabilities of children. Now, this question should be answered "why do not any action in terms of spiritual development of children? Coles indicates that spiritual development leads to reinforcement of human aspect in the children and thereby it is the obligation of parents and coaches to cultivate spiritual aspects of their children (Vialle, 2008: 148). The curriculum of philosophy has been introduced in the 1968. The purpose of this curriculum was to cultivate children as thoughtful, rational, flexible, and consciousness humans. The cycles of philosophical discussion aim to reinforce rational capabilities of mankind (Fisher, 2007: 266-268). Children tend to exploration, creativity, propensity, and understanding. This is why that childhood should be considered and used for reinforcing thinking and creativity capabilities in the children. It is inevitable to educate children for having a healthy society (Hedayati and Zaribaf, 2012).

Educating philosophy in the children is a key factor that can lead to the development of thinking as the main internal aspect in mankind. Lipman designs and implement educational periods of philosophy in the children to improve position of philosophy in the minds of mankind. According to Lipman, philosophy is not unique for adults, but children can learn it. He employs philosophy in its real meaning (Ghaedi, 2004).

The programs of philosophy education in the children have several cognitive goals such as creating challenge in the mind through challenges, principle thinking, and structural interaction (Haynes, 2001). Fisher believes that the programs of philosophy education in the children are an effective method in the education of thinking. The global evidences in about 50 countries showed that education of philosophy helps to development of their thinking skills. Indeed, education of philosophy in the children is a design that leads to positive outcomes through concentrating on the peer and consciousness discussion. This design is used as one of the most famous methods in the cultivation of thinking all over the world. Such designs focus on the complex cognitive skills and capability of children. Safaei Moghadam (1998) introduced education of philosophy in the children in the academic environments in our country (Yari Dehnavi and Hatami, 2010: 136). Although this program has been entered to Iran about 15 years ago, but it has been introduced about 45 years ago in western countries (Abedi and Norozi, 2014). This is why the goal of this study was to investigate the effect of philosophy curriculum on the spiritual development of female students with 12-14 years old in the city of Isfahan.Indeed, the present study is a systematic attempt to improve dimensions of spirituality such as awareness, realistic acceptance, disappointment, instability, grandiosity, and impression management. The children with 12-14 years old are in a sensitive period. Indeed, this period affects the future of children. It can be said that development of spirituality and its dimensions in the children can be effective in their spiritual direction. This will be possible when appropriate conditions and prerequisites of spiritual development can be achieved.

2.   Research methodology

The present study is a practical research from purpose view and is semi-experiment research from perspective of research methodology. The independent variable of this study is education of philosophy in the children and dependent variable is spiritual development.

A.   Statistical population, sample, and sampling method

Since the purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of philosophy curriculum on the spiritual development of female students with 12-14 years old in the city of Isfahan, the second municipality area of Isfahan city has been selected for survey. When all of the population members are not available, the author may prefer to select some of the members as sample members. In order to select the sample members of this study, cluster sampling method was used. If the cultures are similar to each other, then the sampling accuracy will be decreased (Delavar, 2009). In the present study, a group of sample members were assigned as experiment group and the members of another group were assigned as control group. In the second step, a sample of 30 students was selected including 15 students for experiment group and 15 ones for control group. The experiment group members were participated in a pretest and then philosophy education design was implemented for them.

B. Data-collection instrument

In order to collect the research data, the questionnaire of spirituality (Wadvars, 1996) was used. The questionnaire measures two parts of spirituality development including God awareness and quality of the relationship with God. The first version of questionnaire has been developed with five sub-measures including disappointment, instability, and grandiosity. The questionnaire has been revised in the 2002 and impression management has been added to it. The present version of questionnaire includes six dimensions. The self-administrated questionnaire consists of 47 dimensions. The questionnaire was developed in Likert five-point scale in which 1: strongly disagree and 5: strongly agree. Since the questionnaire has been developed for adults, the authors of this study have reviewed the questionnaire.

3. Findings

The findings of this study are presented in two parts including descriptive and inferential findings. In the second part of this section, the average and standard deviation of research variables are presented. These findings are presented in table 1.

Table 1: the average and standard deviation of research variables

Variables	Groups	Test step	Frequency	Average	Standard deviation
Awareness	Experiment group	Pretest	115	69.93	10.51
		Posttest	15	78.26	9.93
	Control group	Pretest	15	66.80	10.00
		Posttest	15	68.53	12.54
Realistic acceptance	Experiment group	Pretest	15	20.06	9.48
		Posttest	15	21.00	8.80
	Control group	Pretest	15	19.80	11.79
		Posttest	15	25.01	10.10
Disappointment	Experiment group	Pretest	4.15	16.30	4.82
		Posttest	15	13.33	6.46
	Control group	Pretest	15	15.80	6.80
		Posttest	15	19.93	6.39
Grandiosity	Experiment group	Pretest	15	20.20	7.00
		Posttest	15	17.53	4.40
	Control group	Pretest	15	23.53	5.71
		Posttest	15	23.86	5.12
Instability	Experiment group	Pretest	15	23.73	3.78
		Posttest	15	23.26	4.70
	Control group	Pretest	15	29.20	5.26
		Posttest	15	30.80	5.03
Impression management	Experiment group	Pretest	15	18.80	3.58
		Posttest	15	14.80	7.36
	Control group	Pretest	15	19.80	3.48
		Posttest	15	17.80	3.93

As the results of table 2 revealed, awareness of experiment group in the posttest has the most average. Also the findings showed that disappointment of experiment group in the posttest has the least average. Also the average of instability, grandiosity, disappointment, and impression management of control group has been decreased in the posttest.

In order to investigate the effect of philosophy curriculum on the spiritual development of female students with 12-14 years old in the city of Isfahan, the multi-variable COVARIANCE analysis was employed. The philosophy education program is independent variable and spiritual development is dependent variable of this study.

Main hypothesis: education of philosophy curriculum in the children affects spiritual development of female students with 12-14 years old in the city of Isfahan significantly.

Table 2: the results of Box test

Box test	First df	Second df	F	Sig
25.40	21	2883	0.92	0.55

The results of table 2 revealed that the variance-covariance matrixes are homogenous.

Table 3: the results of COVARIANCE test

Effects	Values	F	df	df of error	Sig	Effect%	Test power
Group	0.395	4.34	6	17	0.008	0.60	0.91

Based on the results of table 3, it can be said that the hypothesis is supported. In other words, education of philosophy curriculum in the children affects spiritual development of female students with 12-14 years old in the city of Isfahan significantly ($p \leq 0.05$).

4.   Discussion and conclusion

Spiritualty is one of the internal needs of mankind. In this regard, some authors refer to spirituality as prerequisite of higher levels of cognitive-moral development. Many authors indicate that spirituality is an instrument by which a person can give meaning to his/her life. The results of past studies revealed that along with cultural and religious differences in the children, they have same interests in terms of spirituality which refers to their tendency toward understanding and knowledge (Vest, 2004). The results of past studies revealed that people with spiritual life have more psychological health than others. It can be said that attention to the development of spirituality and its reinforcement in the current conditions is not inevitable. If development of spiritual aspect of mankind is delayed, then their values and beliefs will be weakened (Vest, 2004). Unfortunately, a few studies have been done in terms of spirituality in the children and school managers do not consider this issue. However, spirituality is necessary to the social development. Gives the importance of philosophy education programs in the children and its role in the development of children, it is necessary to study this issue in the children (Hedayati and Zaribaf, 2012). With development of technology in the current conditions and its role in day-to-day life, it should be noted that spiritual and fundamental values of the life is threated. Along with new explorations and development of knowledge, it is the spirituality and its values that should be noted. Also inattention to the spiritual aspects of life in the educational programs of children, their spiritual dimensions will not be exploited in the future. We should train our children thinking methods such critical thinking and responsibilities. They also should be educated to understand their relationship with surrounding environment. It should be noted that the dimensions of spiritual development is consistent with goals and principles of philosophy education in the children. It will possible through philosophy education programs in the children. It is one of the main and fundamental goals of educational institutes such as schools to help children in improving their questioning and answering capabilities. Unfortunately, a large part of this education is ignored or delayed. The authors of the present study were determined to reveal the necessity and importance of this issue. In order to analyze the research data, COVARIANCE test was used. The results of the main hypothesis indicate that education of philosophy curriculum in the children affects spiritual development of female students with 12-14 years old in the city of Isfahan significantly.It can be said that education of philosophy curriculum in the children can be effective on the spiritual development of female students. Comparison of the results of pretest and posttest in both experiment and control groups indicate that there is a

significant difference between implementation and not implementation of philosophy education program in the female students with 12-14 years old in the city of Isfahan. It should be remembered that implementation of philosophy education program in the female students with 12-14 years old in the city of Isfahan is effective on their spiritual development. Also our findings indicated that implementation of philosophy curriculum do not affect spiritual development of students in terms of impression management and realistic acceptance. Like to other studies, the present study had several limitations such as implementation of program in limited time, lack of students' cooperation in the program, and not presence of some students in the sessions. Also the present study is a cross-sectional research and it is the main factor that limits its generalization. It is suggested that educational managers apply such programs in their institute for improving their educational periods.

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