Review and Analysis of Religious Education in the Primary School Textbooks of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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A R T I C L E I N F O	A B S T R A C T
    K E Y W O R D S 	The purpose of this article is to explain the content of primary school textbooks of the Islamic Republic with regard to the goal of "religious education". The research population included all books of the six grades of the primary school and the sample was limited to examining the contents of the Qur'an and "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks. The research method was qualitative (using the content analysis approach) and the documentary method was also used to collect data. To analyze textbooks, four elements of purpose, content, teaching method and evaluation method were taken into consideration. The findings reveal that there is a wide range of religious goals, which include very complex religious concepts - such as the concept of God, resurrection, alliance & dissociation - and simple concepts such as good behavior with neighbors. Another finding shows that the authors of religious textbooks have tried to teach Iranian children the appropriate content by using texts, poems, paintings and photos, considering the religious goals and the three domains of cognition, emotion and action, although the mechanism of achieving these goals with attention to the different levels of each domain is ambiguous. Also, although the authors apparently emphasize the use of various teaching methods, the active role of the teacher in the cognitive field and active role of pupils in the emotional and action domains have been emphasized more. In order to evaluate the students' performance, criteria such as the teacher's personal opinion and her/his knowledge about pupils - along with the practical performance of religious rituals such as ablution and prayer by the child - have been taken into consideration.

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1. Introduction

According to their social, cultural and political characteristics, different societies determine many goals and missions for educational system. One of the goals is religious education of children and youth. Proponents of this goal believe that religion is the only reliable source that, with a comprehensive look at human characteristics and talents and all aspects of life, can bring happiness to human beings (Azarbaijani, 2017; Botshakan & Saadatmand, 2014; Pakzad, 2010; Sajdi, 2016). Based on this, the general goals of religious education are gaining insights into religion, faith combined with inner commitment, and regulating behavior & habits based on religious orders (Samadi & Mehr Mohammadi, 2012). To achieve these goals, there are different approaches regarding which aspect of religious education is more important. Some experts believed that only "faith" dimension should be paid attention to in religious education (Saeidi Rizvani, 2010). Another group emphasizes the role of reason and rationalism in religious education (Mahdavi Keni, 2008). Also, according to Bloom's theory, there are different views on the realization of the three goals of cognitive, affective, and sensory/psychomotor in the field of religious education. Cognitive domain deals with intellectual knowledge and skills. Learning in this domain includes the acquisition of specific facts and information, which includes concepts, theories and principles, cognitive skills, decision making, problem solving, and critical thinking (Hoque, 2017). According to the cognitive domain, in religious education and in the first step, students are asked to learn by memorizing scriptures and answering questions how they can apply religious orders in their life situations; such as discussion, analysis and integration of religious topics - to achieve a deeper understanding. The emotional domain includes development of values, attitudes and beliefs (Brett, Smith, Price, & Huitt, 2012). The goals of religious education with regard to the affective domain are focused on the use of feelings, excitement and acceptance for shaping the interests, attitudes, and religious values of the learners. The range of sensory/psychomotor includes physical activities that require a degree of physical coordination and muscle skills (Ajam & Saeidi Rizvani, 2013). In religious education, these activities include religious rites & customs that pupils must learn and perform well.

Anyway, from the historical point of view, in many human societies, religious education - with regard to the three domains of cognitive, affective, and sensory/psychomotor - has been mainly the responsibility of institutions such as family and religious centers. The emergence of general education system and modern schools provided a new opportunity for religious education (Itulua-Abumere, 2013). Proponents of religious education consider schools as one of the best places for this because they think that children, teenagers and young people are better mentally and psychologically prepared to accept religious teachings (Jafralie, & Zaver, 2019; Niculescu & Norel,

2013). On the contrary, opponents believe that schools should pay attention to "education about religion" instead of "religious education" (Dinham & Jones 2012; Klutz, 2016). According to these people, teaching about a particular religion can lead to an increase in prejudices and religious differences, especially when students' religions are different from each other. They also believe that instead of teaching the principles of a religion, it is better for teachers to introduce students to different religions and the similarities and differences between them (Vang, Hou, & Elder, 2019). Thus, today's educational systems can be divided into two groups: systems that support religious education and systems that oppose it. Iran's educational system is among the first group.

The fall of the royal regime and establishment of the Islamic Republic can be considered as the beginning of dominance of religious discourse on the educational system of Iran during the last four decades. According to Iran's political system, the desirability and necessity of religious education - whether in all social systems or in formal education system - are undeniable (Godazgar, 2001). Based on this, from first days of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, one of the most important missions of the educational system was determined to be the religious education of the young generation. Based on this mission, investing in religious education is essential in the Islamic society, and therefore the educational system is obliged to provide appropriate programs and books for training of children in order to raise a generation with faith (Danaei Fard, Bagheri Keni & Ali Khani, 2014) . For this reason, in the upstream documents of Iran's educational system, such as the "Fundamental Transformation of Education Document of the Islamic Republic of Iran", the priority of religious education - compared to other goals of the educational system - has been emphasized a lot (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2016). Also, these documents emphasize that in case of conflict between the programs and plans of the Ministry of Education, administrators and teachers should always prioritize religious education over other matters (Haji Babaei, 2013). The consequence of this policy has been the creation of fundamental changes in the programs and textbooks of different academic levels during the past four decades (Rabiei, Fayaz, Mahrozadeh, Bakhtiari & Khorsandi Taskoh, 2019). It should also be said that since majority of Iranian are Muslim and Shia Imamia, changing the content of programs and textbooks is often dedicated to teaching and promoting Islamic and Shia principles. However, according to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, students of other religions can also enroll in their special schools or receive education related to their religion.

Anyway, what the dominant atmosphere of Iran schools shows is the effort to realize "Islamic education" through teaching new norms of behavior such as observing Islamic hijab by all female students, performing congregational prayers, holding Islamic ceremonies and studying religious

books and lessons (Arjamand 2017; Mehran, 1990). In the meantime, school textbooks have played the main role in process of Islamic education of the young generation. In fact, the content of textbooks plays a very important role in directly teaching religious concepts, principles and attitudes to learners. As Yar Mohammadian (2017) emphasizes, in the curriculum of centralized educational systems (such as Iran's educational system), most of the activities take place within the framework of textbook and its content.

Since in Iran's educational system, textbooks for all students are compiled by the Ministry of Education and distributed throughout the country, so curriculum planners use two approaches for the religious education: First, preparing books which in them, the principles and rules of Islam are directly taught, such as school textbook of "Religious Teachings"; and secondly, non-religious books such as Persian, history, and social teachings and dedicating a part of them to Islamic contents, examples, stories, and events. Also, curriculums in Iran's educational system have been designed by following patterns based on "codified subjects" (Noorian, 2017). In these models, the learning resources are completely organized and students and teachers do not play a role in defining the content and its organization - scope and logical sequence of topics - (Colin 2009). Also, the horizontal connection between different subjects is predetermined and given in the textbook. Learning resources - mainly textbooks - guide student and teacher activities and there is a direct connection between these activities and goals. Therefore, this basic question is raised as to what subjects are taught to children, adolescents and young people in the process of religious education - with regard to the three cognitive, affective, and sensory/psychomotor domains - and through textbooks. To answer this question, let us take a look at the findings of previous research regarding the content of religious books in Iran schools:

Amiri (2018) by analyzing the content of primary schools "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks (Grades 2, 3 and 4) showed that while the pictures and questions are active and involve the student well, the text of the book is passive and non-dynamic. Also, all categories of religious education are not used equally and more emphasis is placed on teaching the concept of prayer and fasting. Afshar Menesh (2017) in examining the obstacles and threats to the cooperation between family and school to promote the religious education of primary school students found that there is a conflict between educational climate of families and the religious education of schools. Abedi, Manadi, Khademi Ashkazri & Kyamanesh (2017) found that the characteristics of textbooks have the greatest impact on the realization of religious goals. Jafari Harandi, Najafi & Omidi (2017) revealed that in the Persian books of primary and middle schools in Iran, topics such as prayer, fasting, *Khums*, *Zakat*, *Hajj*, *Jihad*, *Amr Be Ma'rouf*, *Watuli & Tabari* are mentioned 411 times. The findings of

Hosni & Vajdani (2015) also indicated the confusion and lack of a written program for presenting moral values in textbooks. Rashid (2015) and Zahrakar, Khanzadeh, Khodadadi & Moziri (2013) acknowledge that despite numerous programs of the Ministry of Education for religious education, we see a number of students not adhering to Islamic principles and values. This issue indicates the failure to achieve the goals of religious education at the society level. Hosni (2013) in the historical review of the moral education curriculum in Iran showed that since the distant past, its logical and psychological order and classification have not been considered by the planners.

Faramarzi & Abedini (2013) also noticed that the emphasis of primary school textbooks is primarily on cultivating the spirit of religiosity and familiarizing students with the principles and branches of religion, while cultivation of religious interpersonal skills has a lower priority. Dramami (2011) by examining the content of primary school textbooks (Grades 3, 4 and 5) found that most of the contents are presented in the form of abstract themes and the teaching methods appropriate to the age group of the learners of this stage are used less. Sajdi (2007) considers among the important challenges of religious education to be routine training, teachers' use of methods of consolidation and imposition - instead of wisdom and analysis -, limited to direct, superficial, non-continuous methods and the use of passive educational methods. The findings of Kalbali (2014) showed that primary and middle school textbooks in order to familiarize students with Islamic and Iranian values need to be reviewed and modified - both in terms of the quantity of concepts included in the textbooks and quality of presenting the concepts. Bahrani (2003) also came to the conclusion that there is no specific procedure in presenting value concepts in primary school textbooks. According to Keshavarz (1999), the most important problems in the religious education of students are lack of planners and experts with qualifications to design and produce religious curricula, the gap between content of lessons and experiences of students, use of traditional teaching-learning methods by teachers, and inappropriate evaluation methods. Bahonar (1999) believes that the existing experiences indicated that religious education is not in a favorable condition and sometimes even has the opposite effect. In the mid-1990s, Sadei (1995) announced that the holding of numerous seminars, conferences and summits - by Iran's educational and cultural institutions and centers - is a sign of a sense of danger and an increase in religious vulnerability in the new generation.

In a brief summary of the findings of previous researches, we can mention two points: First, despite the fact that content of religious books has changed several times during the last four decades - in different educational stage - but still in determining the goals, choosing appropriate content, application of teaching methods and evaluation methods are many challenges for the

teachers of this subject; Second, despite the fact that religious education is the most important goal of Iran's educational system, not much research has been done on the content of textbooks, and more attention has been paid to its criticism and evaluation. Each point shows the necessity of conducting the current research. Based on this, the main goal of this research was to investigate and analyze religious education in the primary school textbooks of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The research sub-objectives are investigating and identifying objectives, content, teaching and evaluation methods of religious education in the primary stage.

2. Research Method

The present research method is qualitative with content analysis approach. The research population and sample includes all the textbooks that have been used by teachers in Iran's primary schools in the academic year of 2019-2020. Method of data collection was documentary through search in the international information databases such as ERIC; Google Scholar and Iranian websites such as ISC and SID. For the analysis of textbooks, the model proposed by Fathi Vajargah (2004) including four elements of goal, content, teaching method and evaluation method was used. By determining these components and according to the teacher's guide books, the text and images of the "Qur'an" and "Heaven's Gifts" textbooks of Grades 1-6 (11 books) were examined and analyzed. The reason for choosing these textbooks was the compatibility of their content with the research's goal. Also, in the content analysis, all parts of these books - including text and visual materials - were considered in the analysis process. To determine the credibility of data, the results of the thematic analysis were provided to four primary school teachers and three faculty members of the curriculum in Islamic Azad University (Tehran Research Branch) and their opinions were applied.

3. Findings

The research findings are presented in two general parts: First, the present condition of the primary school textbooks is described with respect to the four components of the curriculum. Then the findings related to the data analysis of each component are presented.

1) Description

A) Goals

According to the book of "Curriculum Guide of Religious Education", the goals of religious courses have been determined according to the levels of three cognitive, affective, and sensory/psychomotor domains, and students must reach certain cognitions, tendencies and behaviors at the end of primary stage (Etsami & Rased, 2011). Determining goals in these three domains helps curriculum planners and teachers not focus solely on cognitive goals; rather, adjust the curriculum content, teaching and evaluation methods in such a way that the student reaches all three goals. According to these points, the goals of religious education are as below (Table 1):

Table 1: Objectives of religious education in the primary stage of Iran's educational system

Cognitive	Affective	Sensory/psychomotor
• Acquaintance with the attributes of God • Familiarity with concept of prophethood & *imamate* • Familiarity with concept of resurrection • Familiarity with concept of self-knowledge • Familiarity with most important moral matters and Islamic manners • Knowledge about important social ceremonies of Islam and Islamic Revolution • Knowledge about some of the religious rules required for children and adolescents	▪ Love and affection for God ▪ Love and respect for prophets, infallibles and religious leaders ▪ Tendency to do good deeds and avoid bad deeds ▪ Interest and desire to know oneself ▪ Willingness to do Islamic rituals ▪ Tendency and interest to participate in religious ceremonies and Islamic revolution ▪ Interested in reciting and understanding verses and chapters of the Holy Quran ▪ Willingness to follow Sharia rules	○ Communication with God through prayer ○ Imitating the life of prophets and imams ○ Trying to know self ○ Trying to perform religious rituals ○ Cooperation and participation in religious ceremonies & Islamic revolution ○ Trying to read and understand the Quran ○ Trying to follow Sharia rules

B) Content

Educational content is a set of concepts, skills and tendencies that are selected and organized by religious education planners and presented to students in the subject of teaching-learning activities (Etsami & Rased, 2013, 70). According to this definition, the first step to realize religious goals is to choose appropriate and desirable educational content. To teach complex religious concepts, teachers should pay attention to the psychological characteristics of pupils. For example, in teaching the concept of God to children, the authors of "Teacher's Guide" book write:

Children's idea about God is a mixture of imagination and visualization, but in any case, these ideas make the child able to establish a relationship with God. Since the child in this period cannot have a completely immaterial concept of God, you should not try to teach her/him this concept. We don't talk to them about the truth of God, and if a child asks what God is, answer her/him with a special tone of voice, "I can't know what He is" (Etsami & Rased, 2011, 73).

After giving these explanations, the authors mention the following example, which is a conversation between a child and her/his mother:

Child: Where does God live?
Mother: He is everywhere.
Child: Is He in my room too?
Mother: Yes
Child: Is He in the wardrobe, the toy box and in our fridge too?
Mother: Yes
Child: How can such a thing happen?
Mother: No one knows
Child: Why?
Mother: Because He is God. He is not weak like us. He does not have our limitations. He is with us wherever we are (Etsami & Rased, 2011, 74).

For example, the authors of the "Gifts of Heaven" textbook of Grade 3 in 124 pages and 20 lessons (using 5 poems, 9 photos and 69 drawings) have tried to teach children the following concepts: Gratitude for God's blessings, Abraham's story and breaking Idols, *Ashura* day, Celebrating the beginning of puberty for girls, *Eid al-Fitr* and *hijab* (pictures 1-4)

Table 2: Content of religious education in different grades of primary schools

Grade/Subject	2	3	4	5	6
Monotheism	•God's kindness • Divine blessings • Prayer	• God's mercy • Human need and gratitude	• God's wisdom and ability	• Unity of God • Prayers of the innocent	• Unity of God
Prophecy	• Divine prophets • Prophet of Islam's kindness to children	• Ibrahim, the great prophet • Prophet of Islam as a child • Asia, a believing woman	• Moses, the great prophet • Morals and behavior of the Prophet of Islam with his relatives • Khadijah, a believing	• Jesus, the great prophet • The effect of behavior of Prophet of Islam on people • Maryam, a believing woman	• Prophets, the best guides

			woman		
Pontificate (Imamat)	• Imams of Athar • Prophet's family • First, second & third imams •The twelfth Imam	• The fourth, fifth & sixth imams • Imam Zaman • Her Holiness Zahra • Hazrat Zainab	• The seventh, eighth and ninth imams • The kindness of Imam Zaman to the Shiites	• 10th and 11th and twelfth imams • Duties of Shiites • The meaning of Imamat • Imam Khomeini	• Imam Hossein, Leader of freedom seekers • Toli and Tabri • Ahl al-Bayt in the Qur'an • Period of Absence
World hereafter	-	•Proportion of action and result in life • Hereafter, the place of reward and punishment •Heaven and hell	• God's knowledge of human actions •Recording our actions in the world	• More effort today, better result tomorrow •Resurrection, one of the principles of religion	•Repentance •Resurrection •to become martyr
Quran	• Quranic messages	• Quranic messages	• Quranic messages	• Quran, the religious book of Muslims	• Quranic messages
Ethics	• Etiquette of greeting, •Cleanliness etiquette • Eating habits • Drinking manners	• Hijab • Order • Respect parents and teachers •Preservation and care of nature	•Appropriate behavior with Relatives, friends and neighbors • Being a good friend • Help others	• Speaking manners • Planning • Saving	• Visiting customs in Islam • Compliance with health
Rulings	• Ablution • Two-rakat prayer • Azan times	• Sharia assignment • Three and four-rakat prayers • Fasting • Purity • Hijab • Imitation	• Ayat Prayer • Teyammom •Congregational Prayer • Remembering the	• Order to do good work and avoid doing bad work • Friday bath and Friday prayer • Haram and Halal	• Rules of Teyammom • Rules of prayer while traveling

|			second and third command ments	property	
Islamic ceremonies	•celebration of Prophet of Islam birth • Birthday celebration of the twelfth Imam • Celebration of prayer	• Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr • Celebration of girls coming of age and adulthood • Hazrat Zahra's birthday • Ashura	•Celebrati on of the Prophet's birthday • Pilgrimage •Congrega tional Prayer •Attending the mosque	•Commemor ating the Islamic Revolution • Friday prayer • Eid Ghadir	• Eid al-Fitr • Visiting graves of the martyrs • Pilgrimage customs
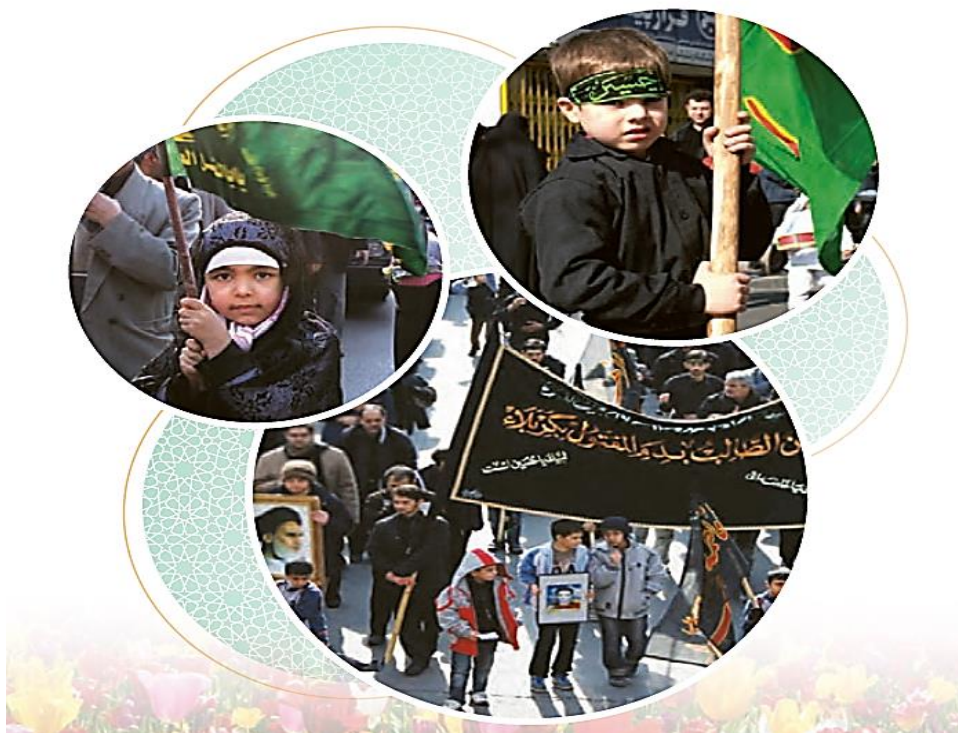
Figure 1: Presence of children in the religious ceremony of *Ashura*

Figure 2: Celebrating the beginning of puberty for girls

Figure 3: Participation of teenage girls in communal prayer

Figure 4: Teaching hijab to teenage girls

C) Teaching Method

The meaning of teaching method is mechanisms and instructions that the teacher adopts to convey content of textbook to the pupils. According to the "Teacher's Guide" book, to teach religious rules to students, the teacher must observe the following principles: a) choosing and selecting rules according to students' age needs ; b) paying attention to gender differences and different needs of boys & girls; c) observance of moderation in teaching rules and avoiding extremes; d) using attractive methods in teaching Islamic rules and e) observing practice and repetition in teaching rules (Etsami & Rased, 2011, 85-84). Also, in this book, it is emphasized on the use of various teaching methods to convey religious concepts to primary schools' pupils. At the same time, the Supreme Council of Education has declared the general method of teaching religious subjects to be the "discussion & dialogue" method. In this method, the role of the teacher is to explain the concept with the help of images, and the role of the student is to observe the images and participate in the discussion (Sharkai Ardakani, Riahinejad & Razzaghi, 2013). Considering these points, the authors have emphasized the use of following methods in addition to using discussion & dialogue methods:

participation in religious ceremonies inside and outside the school - such as congregational prayers and Friday prayers- , preparation of hymns, pantomime shows, use of the Internet and magazines , choosing beautiful photos and pictures, activities outside of school, visiting mosques, places of pilgrimage, parks, scientific excursions, role-playing and storytelling.

D) Evaluation Method

After choosing the appropriate goal and preparing content of books and presenting it with the appropriate methods to learners, the fourth important element in curriculum planning is evaluation. In Iran's educational system, there is no formal evaluation process of primary school students. In fact, the teacher determines academic progress of learners through various methods - such as written and oral exams - as well as the expected behavior. Anyway, according to the authors of the "Teacher Guide" book, evaluating religious education is more difficult than evaluation of other subjects that teachers do; because in religious topics and categories, you cannot allocate separate time for teaching and time for evaluation. The student's questions to the teacher, her/his oral answers to the teacher's questions, the way of doing classroom activities and activities outside the classroom and school can be considered as criteria for comprehensive evaluation. Indeed, affective and sensory/psychomotor aspects of religious lessons are more important than cognitive aspects; because religious practices are valuable when they are based on the faith and inner desire of people (Etsami & Rased, 2011, 98). Therefore, the purpose of evaluation is to determine to what extent a positive attitude and interest in religious teachings has been created in the student.

2) Data Analysis and Interpretation

a) Goals

The analysis of the data related to the goals of religious education shows that according to three cognitive, emotional and sensory/psychomotor domains, 22 goals should be realized in a five-year period (Grades 1 to 6). This issue reveals a wide range of goals that the preparation and compilation of appropriate content for each of them should be done - considering the complex religious concepts such as God, resurrection, heaven and hell, and numerous commandments -. Also, these goals show that the authors of religious books of primary schools mainly paid attention to the low levels of learning and knowledge areas. For example, the use of words such as "familiarity", "tendency" and "communication" in the definition of each goal shows that these authors are not very concerned about students' achievement of deep cognitive levels. At the same time, they have not provided a precise definition of these concepts in the book "Teacher's Guide" to

help teachers. For example, it is not clear how the teacher should find out that the pupil has found "interest and desire to know herself/himself". This ambiguity shows itself especially in goals related to emotional and sensory/psychomotor domains.

b) Content

In analyzing the religious content of primary school books, several points can be deduced: First, the content of these books shows the wide range of religious topics that Iranian children are forced to learn. This wide range is divided into 8 general areas; while at the same time other topics - such as teaching ethics and values - have been considered by the authors. In fact, the analysis of the selected books reveals that the authors did not distinguish between religious education and moral education or considered all values as religious values. For this reason, they have used stories and religious figures to teach many values - such as sacrifice, humility, order, kindness. The second noteworthy point is the difference between the subjects in terms of the degree of complexity and simplicity, in such a way that the teaching of complex concepts - such as God, resurrection, martyrdom, and enjoining good and forbidding evil - is given in the books at the same time as simpler subjects - such as kindness to neighbors . Although it is emphasized in the "Teacher Guide" book that children should be taught simple things first, but in practice, the teaching of many complex religious concepts has started from the Grade 2 of primary schools, which shows that the authors do not pay attention to the stages of development and ability of pupils. The third point is the authors' lack of attention to various interpretations of historical events and religious rulings. For example, the interpretation and analysis of the two main branches of Muslims, Shiites and Sunnis, are not the same about the "*Ghadir Kham* Event" or the rituals of prayer and ablution. The fourth point is that social reforms and life in the new millennium have changed the attitude of many people towards life and its dimensions, which results in the need to provide a new interpretation of some religious concepts; for example, concepts such as enjoining good and forbidding evil, martyrdom, and *Tuli & Tabari*. Failure to pay attention to this issue causes a gap between school education and family beliefs. The fifth point is that there seems to be a mental and real distance for the students regarding religious heroes - such as Ammar Yasser, Bilal Habashi, Yacoub, and Salman Farsi - who are introduced to them in textbooks and heroes who are introduced through modern mass communication at home and society. In fact, in this case, we are facing a cultural gap - between religious culture and common culture. The last point is the skill of the authors in using poetry, paintings and photos to convey religious concepts in such a way that their charm (especially the use of happy and diverse colors in the paintings) has created a fun atmosphere in the books.

Also, the authors have been able to use simple tables and short questions well and make parents and students cooperate with each other.

c) Teaching Method

The analysis of the content of primary school textbooks and also teacher's manuals (Anoushepour et al., 2012 a,b,c) indicated that teachers are advised to use two direct and indirect approaches in the teaching method to convey religious concepts. In the direct method, pupils are asked to do activities such as individual reading, group reading, answering the teacher's questions, and discussion in the class. While the use of the indirect method is generally related to themes that are implied in the text and figures - in the form of stories or poems - but are not seriously focused on or the teacher is not asked to explain them ; discuss them; or make students engage in cognitive way with them. Also, activities outside the classroom have been considered as a practical part of teaching. These activities include the following: participation in religious ceremonies inside and outside the school - such as participation in congregational prayers in the school assembly hall -, attendance at Friday prayers, traveling to religious places and *Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha* and mourning on Muharram. The analysis of the data also indicates that: First, the lecture method is the most common method of teaching used by the majority of teachers and therefor use of other method of teaching is not very popular; Secondly, due to the lack of variety and repetition of ceremonies (such as holding congregational prayers every day), most of the pupils and their parent do not welcome these methods. Thirdly, teaching methods mainly encourage the passive role of learners in the cognitive domain and their active role in the emotional and sensory/psychomotor aspects. In other words, while the authors as well as the teachers do not welcome the critical, questioning and searching methods of the learners in the cognitive fields, but at the same time they want the active role of the students in the emotional and sensory/psychomotor domains. Of course, it should not be forgotten that the authors also insist on using methods such as repetition and practice - which lead to the creation of behavioral habits in learners - (Rahmanpour, 2019).

d) Evaluation Method

The analysis of the content of primary school textbooks shows the variety of methods proposed by the authors for the evaluation of learners. These evaluations can be divided into two general groups: Theoretical evaluations - such as memorizing stories, poems and words - and practical evaluations - such as performing ablution, *teyammom* (ablution without water) , and praying. Regarding the evaluation related to cognitive domain, what is mainly observed in practice

is the emphasis of teachers on evaluation by measuring the information that the learners have memorized. It is very difficult for the teacher to evaluate the levels of the emotional domain because it mainly depends on teacher's personal judgment and experience of the student's behavior. It is easier for the teacher to evaluate the students' learning related to sensory/psychomotor domain because she/he can easily - and practically and objectively - observe and evaluate the degree of mastery of the pupil in performing religious activities - such as praying.

4. Conclusion

The educational system of Iran has defined one of its most important goals as the religious education of children, teenagers and youth. Based on this goal, this system seeks to educate people who are "believers" and "committed" to the principles of Islamic education and display it in their behavior. A brief review of the contents of the primary school textbooks showed that part of the contents of non-religious books - such as Farsi, social studies and even sciences - is also devoted to the teaching of religious beliefs. In fact, from the Grade 2 of primary school, on average, every pupil should learn the contents of two religious books. This finding has not been considered in previous research. The second finding indicates that the goals of religious education are very diverse and wide, so that this issue comes to mind, the authors of religious books were in a hurry to be able to teach most of the religious subjects to Iranian children from the beginning years of general education. This finding has been emphasized by other researchers as well (Ajam & Saeedi Rizvani 2011; Amiri & Fatemeh 2018; Kolbali, 2014; Sajdi, 2016). Another finding reveals that there is no definite boundary between religious values and moral values in the text of primary school textbooks and these two are considered synonymous. A few researchers in Iran have paid attention to this distinction (Abedi, Manadi, Khademi Ashkezari & Kiyamanesh, 2017; Afshar Menesh, 2017; Azarbaijani, 2017). Another finding of the research highlighted that the contents of religious books were written without considering the intellectual characteristics of the learners - ignoring the principle that the subjects should be prepared from simple to complex. This finding is in line with the findings of Jafari Harandi, Najafi & Omidi (2018) and Samadi & Mehr Mohammadi, (2003).

Another finding of the research shows that the authors have tried to make content of the textbooks interesting and diverse by using poetry, photos and paintings to increase

students' learning & interest in religious subjects. This issue has not been considered in previous research. The present researchers also found that in various sections of religious textbooks, the authors have repeatedly tried to force teachers and pupils to use different teaching methods and perform religious activities - inside and outside the classroom and school. To what extent these activities and teaching methods have increased the learning of students in the research of Danai Fard, Bagheri Keni & Khani, (2014); Dramami, (2015); Hosni & Vojdani (2015) and Faramarzi & Abedini, (2013) has been taken into consideration. The researchers show that the lecture method was most common method of teaching. The last finding indicated that the methods suggested by the authors for evaluating the learners include memorizing the contents of the books as well as practical implementation of some Islamic customs. According to these findings, future researchers are suggested to pay attention to the alignment or conflict of the content of religious textbooks of the primary schools of Iran with topics such as modern culture, inter-religious relations, cultural relations and non-religious identities.

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