



A Comparative Study of Arts Education Curriculum of Primary Schools in Iran and Canada

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 19 September 2019 Revised: 19 December 2019 Accepted: 01 January 2020 Online: 09 January 2020</p>	<p>The rationale for conducting this study was based on an interdisciplinary approach between art and curriculum. The main purpose of this study is to examine Iranian and Canadian primary arts education curricula based on four components: Goals, content, teaching methods and evaluation methods. The research method was comparative, using Bereday's four-step approach. The strategy of sample selection is "different systems, different results". Data were collected using information in official government databases, books, and publications, that were analyzed based on John Stuart Mill's agreement/difference method. The findings revealed significant similarities and differences between the primary schools' arts education curricula in Iran and Canada. The similarities were found to be based on the goals and the differences mainly in the content of curriculum. Regarding the goals, although both countries have used their national cultural backgrounds in formulating the goals, Canada also has considered the native and folk culture in development of the curriculum. Furthermore, in Canada, the emphasis is on awareness of inner emotions as a prerequisite for the production of art. From content aspect, dance and music education is not included in the Iran's arts education curriculum, and in Canada, the storytelling falls under the category of drama. As to the teaching methods, inviting artists to teach art is not conventional in Iran's education, but in Canada, artists teach art alongside teachers. Moreover, the purpose of arts education evaluation in Canada is to "improve learning", while in Iran, the measure of "learning ability" is generally considered.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Arts education Curriculum Primary education Canada Iran</p>	

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1. Introduction

Modern societies are increasingly demanding human resources that are flexible, adaptable, creative, and innovative and education systems need to adapt to these changing conditions. Arts education provides learners with these skills, allowing them to express themselves, critically assess the world around them, and get actively involved in different features of human existence (UNESCO, 2006a). As much as art has influenced human life, it also plays a key role in children development. Art allows children to build, design and express themselves which is essential for their cognitive and emotional development. Accordingly, arts education curriculum has a constructive role in students' cognitive, emotional and skill capabilities (Amini, 2005). As Fowler (1989, p. 62) argued, "We do not need more and better arts education to develop more and better artist. We need more and better arts education to produce better educated human beings, citizens who will value and evolve a worthy civilization."

Considering art through curricula and arts education can increase students' shared competencies and learning and teach them to have good life skills. Because of the need for these life skills, art has turned into one of the crucial educational subjects in all educational systems and is intended to be an important part of the primary school curriculum (Radpour et al., 2012). Herbert Read, one the most famous scholars that has considered the place of art in society and arts education, argues that art should include not only the visual arts but also drama, music, dance, and literature as areas of artistic creation. He also contends that the "whole development of a child might be built on sequences of aesthetic and creative experiences" (Keel, 1969, p. 48) and therefore children should not just be limited to academic subjects. Reform policies in curriculum have increased the need to utilize arts education capacities and the importance of art courses in primary education. One of the current shortcomings of arts education in the Iran's educational system is failure to draw on the latent abilities in primary school children (Mehr-Mohammadi & Kian, 2014).

The compilation of Iran arts education textbooks is influenced by educational philosophy, upstream documents in the field of education and the National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2012). For example, art and aesthetic education is one of the six areas of education that are considered in The Document of Fundamental Transformation of Iran's Education (2011). Moreover, in the National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2012), one of the areas of education and learning is dedicated to culture and art. This area of learning seeks to understand the meaning and relationships between phenomena, aesthetics, and appreciation of the signs of divine beauty and aesthetics in the cultural background of society (including symbols, customs, values, and myths), and its preservation and transcendence.

In this document on arts education, it is pointed out that the overall orientation of culture and art in organizing content and education is "arts education" with emphasis on the acquisition of cultural insights. It is noted that organizing the activities within the arts education approach helps to understand the beauties of nature, the living and artistic cultural environments, to enhance the senses, imagination, thinking, the ability to understand explicit and hidden meanings, and to enrich sensory and emotional perception. In the early years of education, culture and arts education was offered as indirect education and gradually, in accordance with the curriculum and the arts, direct teaching methods were used.

The pre-university education system in Iran is 6-3-3, including a six-year compulsory primary education. Although arts education in Iran mainly begins in pre-primary schools, formal arts education starts from the first year of primary education in the form of weekly 2-hour arts education classes for each of the six grades. However, arts education in Iran's primary education begins with no official and formal textbooks for students and the only materials are arts education handbooks - including two separate handbooks for the first to sixth grades. The Art Teachers

Handbook for the first year of the three-year primary education consists of three sections and ten chapters. Each chapter deals with topics such as the place and role of art in primary curriculum, familiarity with primary arts education curriculum, communication with nature, painting, handicrafts, audiovisuals, storytelling, acting, educational design and evaluating students' artistic activities (Radpour et al., 2017). Furthermore, The Art Teachers Handbook for the second year consists of three sections and eleven chapters. The titles of the chapters are similar to those of the first year, with the exception of a chapter on the introduction of Iranian cultural heritage (Ibid, p. 2).

Differently, Canadian primary arts education curriculum varies based on the different provinces of the country such as Quebec, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. Quebec has an organizational structure applied to the four arts of drama, dance, visual arts, and music. Each art is organized under three processes of perceiving, doing, and reacting. The greatest emphasis is on doing, as seen in the number of objectives devoted to this aspect of the curriculum. In its curriculum document, the arts are declared to be for all children and at least three of the four arts are to be provided in every school (Hanley, 1994).

In British Columbia, the fine arts (dance, drama, music, and visual arts), are designated as one of the strands of art curriculum. The aesthetic and artistic development goals are to enable students to discover and respond to creative and imaginative expression, create, experience a sense of wonder, explore and express their human spirit, value the expressions of cultures, and be aware of and appreciate design (Ibid, p. 203).

Arts curriculum document of Saskatchewan identifies arts education as one of seven areas of study in the primary school curriculum, with 200 minutes allotted per week for the arts and all four arts required for all children (Saskatchewan Education, 1991). This curriculum focuses on aesthetic

benefits of the arts, by which is meant the unique value of the arts as ways of “knowing about the world and human experience” (p. 5). Also, Students “should gain a lasting appreciation of arts forms experienced as an audience” (p. 147).

In Manitoba, arts education is compulsory for grades 1 to 8 and offers a distinct framework for each of the four arts education disciplines of visual arts, dance, drama, and music and it encompasses a variety of recognized strands or options possible for each arts discipline and a variety of arts and designs from different times, places, social groups, and cultures. Accordingly, arts education teachers also can use a wide variety of approaches and resources for implementing arts education (Manitoba Education, 2011).

The arts education curriculum of Ontario includes dance, drama, music, and visual arts that are divided into four broad topics of understanding form, exploring meaning, understanding function, and communicating through the arts. A crucial goal is “to develop an understanding and appreciation of the creative process and of the principles and techniques that serve the creative purpose in individual disciplines” (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993, p. 18). Also, the arts are influenced by and illuminate the cultural and social mores of the times in which they were created (Hanley, 1994).

Moreover, the Canadian Society for Education through Art (CSEA) has influenced the decisions that have shaped the development of arts education policy in Canada. This society has addressed issues facing arts educators such as arts education for special needs, art teacher education, assessment in arts education, curriculum development in arts education, early childhood arts education, first nation’s art curriculum development, multiculturalism and arts education, and sexuality issues in arts education (Irwin et al., 1996).

A review of Iranian studies on arts education curriculum shows that most of these studies have focused on the instrumental role of art and have measured the impact of art on other variables. For example, Yousefi-Afarasht et al. (2012) have examined the role of arts education on students' creativity. Bozorgmanesh and Abdollahi (2011) have investigated the effect of subjective imagery on students' visual and verbal memory performance. Also, a number of other studies have examined other approaches to arts education, including arts education and integrated arts education approaches. For example, Sharafi (2011) has examined the feasibility of integrating artistic production approach and the concepts of empirical sciences in arts education, and Mohammadian Dastenaie (2011) has dealt with the degree of consistency of a newly implemented arts education curriculum in primary schools. Nevertheless, the lack of comparative research in the field of arts education curriculum is quite noticeable. Hence, the present study was a step towards filling the knowledge gap in this field.

Given the scarcity of comparative studies on primary arts education curriculum, this question arises that what are the similarities and differences between the goals, content, teaching methods and evaluation methods of Iran's primary arts education curriculum and the elements of arts education curriculum of Canada as a leading country in the field of primary education (UNESCO, 2006b). Accordingly, the research questions raised in this study are:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the goals of Iran and Canada's primary arts education curriculum?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the content of Iran and Canada's primary arts education curriculum?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the teaching methods of Iran and Canada's primary arts education curriculum?
4. What are the similarities and differences between the evaluation methods of Iran and Canada's primary arts education curriculum?

2. Research Method

The present study is a comparative research that uses the four-step approach of description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison introduced by Bereday (1964). The research sample was selected based on the strategy of “different systems, different results”. Data were collected using documents in official government databases, books, and publications. The National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2012), The Document of Fundamental Transformation of Iran's Education (2011), and Art Teachers Handbook were used to examine the Iranian primary arts education curriculum. Also, four documents were used for analysis of the Canadian primary arts education curriculum i.e. Elementary Art: A curriculum guide (2006), The Arts: The Ontario Curriculum (Grades 1-8) (2009), K-12 arts education curriculum consultation report (2009), and International arts education standards: A survey of the arts education standards and practices of fifteen countries and regions (2011). External and internal reviews were used to examine the validity of the documents. During the external review, the authenticity of documents was assessed, and in the internal review the importance and accuracy of documents' content were taken into account. The data were analyzed based on John Stuart Mill's agreement/difference method (Finn, 2010).

3. Results

Using Bereday's four-step approach (1964), in the first step, the arts education curricula of Iran and Canada were described. In this section the goals, content, teaching methods and evaluation methods described in both countries. Then, during the two steps of interpretation and juxtaposition, the two countries were compared in terms of their curriculum elements and finally in the comparison step, the similarities and differences were analyzed in terms of curriculum element.

A) Description

According to Bereday's approach, the step of description includes taking notes and providing enough information to examine the subject of the research. Accordingly, through examining the documents of Iran and Canada related to the primary arts education curriculum, the information about the characteristics of the four elements of the curriculum was separately collected and presented.

1. Goals

- Iran: Given the highly centralized educational system of Iran, the textbooks are produced by the Ministry of Education. During the compilation of textbooks, upstream documents are usually considered. As such, the goals of primary arts education curriculum were derived from the examination of upstream documents such as the National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2012) and The Document of Fundamental Transformation of Iran's Education (2011). Moreover, the goals were derived also from The Art Teachers Handbooks of primary education, which in fact are the primary curriculum documents in Iranian primary arts education and also are used as guidebooks for art teachers. Accordingly, the goals of the Iranian primary arts education curriculum were categorized into ultimate goals, purposes, aims, and objectives in three areas of knowledge, skill, and attitude:

- The ultimate goals: The ultimate goals of arts education are derived from the Islamic view of the philosophy of life that is in line with the National Curriculum, namely the attainment of the position of God's successor on earth (National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2012).

- The purposes: The purposes of arts education are presented in four domains of relationship with self, relationship with God, relationship with Creation, and relationship with people and they

include five elements of thought, faith, science, practice and ethics (National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2012).

- The aims: The aims of arts education are ability to relate with Creation, fostering aesthetic spirit, ability to produce artistic product, familiarity with cultural heritage, and ability to criticize art (National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2012).

- The Objectives: These objectives are formulated in three areas: knowledge, skills and attitudes:

- Knowledge: Creation as a source of inspiration for artistic products, familiarity with art fields, introductory tools and materials in each field, and familiarity with Iranian cultural and artistic heritage.
- Skills: Developing sensory skills, developing language skills, developing motor skills for applying simple art materials, tools, and techniques, developing thinking abilities, ability to express thoughts and feelings in artistic language, and developing social skills.
- Attitudes: Attention to beauties and fostering aesthetic sense and creativity of beauties, tendency to express thoughts and feelings through artistic expression (National Curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2012).

Other goals of Iranian primary arts education curriculum are to focus on self-esteem, interest in exploration and experience in various fields of art, attention to preserving artwork and cultural heritage, and a desire to communicate and participate in team works (Ayatollahi et al., 2012).

- Canada: The overall goal of primary arts education is to empower students to understand and value art throughout their lives. This overall goal includes other specific goals of being creative, respecting oneself and others, enhancing oneself and expressing themselves through the language of art, assisting artists in societies and cultures, understanding past and present, achieving a lasting understanding of different forms of art, gaining experience as a participator and audience in the arts, and recognizing the relationships between art and everyday life (Elementary art: A Curriculum Guide, 2006). In Canadian primary arts education curriculum, the use of music to help students improve their understanding and appreciation of music, and to develop their ability to create and

perform it is envisaged. As a result, students will be able to achieve a permanent source of personal enjoyment and satisfaction with music (Ontario Curriculum (grades 1-8), 2009).

2. Content

- Iran: The content of Iranian primary arts education curriculum includes the following topics: Relationship with creation, in which students become familiar with the concept of point, line, surface, volume, color, texture, shadow, motion, symmetry, rhythm and harmony. Painting art is foreseen in the content and includes freelance and specific subject painting, design and craftsmanship (including two-dimensional (level) and three-dimensional (volume)). This content also includes audiovisual training, storytelling, drama, and familiarity with Iranian cultural heritage (Radpour et al., 2012).

- Canada: The content of arts education curriculum in Canada includes subjects such as dance, drama, music and the visual arts (Arts Education: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level; International Arts Education Standards, 2011; Hanley, 1994).

3. Teaching Methods

- Iran: Teaching methods in the arts education activities of Iranian primary schools include: explanatory method, question and answer method, dramatic method, role-playing method, project method and scientific field study method. In general, all of the teaching methods which are based on student activity and participation are applicable to curriculum implementation. The teacher applies the best teaching-learning methods for designing each activity and its implementation according to the class conditions and the subject of activity (Radpour et al., 2012).

- Canada: The art teacher plays an important role in applying the different teaching methods in Canadian primary arts education classes. This role provides a positive work environment, facilitates the development of students' technical and observation skills, and helps them turn their mistakes

into creative opportunities. The teachers analyze the students' artworks using the knowledge and principles of designing. They help students develop their own visual ideas and lead them to use imagination and observation to combine them with their own artistic ideas. It also helps students discover and interpret artistic ideas about their work and other artists which enables students to not view them merely as a work of art. As art analysis and evaluation is one of the main goals of art teaching in the Canadian curriculum, the teacher not only encourages students to analyze artworks but the students also should analyze and describe how artistic processes are performed. The teacher should empower students in this field and develop their analytical and evaluation skills by enabling them to discover the importance of objects, images and artworks in the past and present culture (International Arts Education Standards, 2011).

4. Evaluation methods

- Iran: The Evaluation Approaches in primary Iranian arts education curriculum include a dynamic assessment approach with the participation of the teacher, learner (self-assessment), and other classmates (other-assessment), which takes place in two forms of process and summative evaluation (Ayatollahi et al., 2012). The learners' artistic activities are assessed through qualitative and descriptive methods.

- Canada: Evaluation of student achievement in primary arts education is done in two stages: 1) measuring phase, which involves gathering information about student learning from a variety of sources, including homework, daily observations, conversations and conferences, projects, performances, and quizzes, and 2) assessment phase which involves using the information gathered to judge the extent to which students are achieving learning goals. (Elementary art: A Curriculum Guide, 2006).

B) Interpretation

The step of interpretation involves the evaluation and interpretation of the findings obtained during the description step. Accordingly, each of the four elements of the arts education curriculum in both Iran and Canada was individually evaluated and interpreted by the researchers.

1. Goals

- Iran: According to the description step of the goals of Iran's primary arts education curriculum, it is concluded that the goals of artistic activities in this country are religious, moral, scientific, educational, cultural, and artistic and so on. In the educational system of Iran, beauty and art are exalted manifestations of human life and the manifestation of his creations which have a profound effect on the evolutionary movement and the emergence of human artistic talent. These goals are expressed on the basis of three cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains (knowledge, attitude, and skills) and all three domains are included.

In terms of cognitive goals, four categories are outlined that consist of the lower levels of the cognitive domain and include goals that require simple mental work. These categories are to the extent of information and knowledge and do not consider applying knowledge in specific situations. In the domain of skill or psychomotor, the goals are not clearly stated. These goals are ideally stated and do not represent different levels (observation, imitation, practice and accuracy, adaptation and mastery). In the emotional domain, the goals tend to be more imitative and the higher levels of this domain have received little attention.

Moreover, the goals of arts education curriculum in Iran are to provide students with the following characteristics: focusing on faith, religious knowledge and acquiring moral virtues and human perfection in students, fostering spirit of research, thinking, and problem solving, creating a

ground for the growth and flourishing of students' individual talents, areas for acquaintance, nurturing and applying life skills, fostering a cooperative spirit among students, promoting the country's culture and civilization, and an interest in self-culture and nurturing students' creativity. It seems that these goals are well integrated in terms of some of the leading goals in the field of arts education. Also, with regard to the characteristics of top education goals in Iran, which are derived from religious teachings, it seems that this problem is well reflected in the goals set.

- Canada: The overarching goal of arts education in Canada is to help students understand and value art during their lives. It is considered the main goal of the arts education curriculum for all students and includes different ethical, scientific and educational, cultural, artistic, biological, social and economic aspects. Through arts education curriculum, students gain ethical virtues in interpersonal relationships and respect for themselves and others, fostering creative thinking, and providing the ground for creativity and application of life skills. Students are expected to gain creative process and critical analysis in all aspects of arts education curriculum. Increasing the capacity of children to express their art and to learn about their inner feelings and thoughts is also a prerequisite for producing art. Canada's arts education goals include both emotional and psychomotor domains, but less attention is given to the cognitive domain; nevertheless, the curriculum encompasses the social and individual needs of students. Its goals are also somewhat ambitious and less operational (International Arts Education Standards, 2011).

2. Content

- Iran: The content of Iranian arts education curriculum is implemented in one topic of art lesson. However, there is no student' specific textbooks for primary education art and teachers only use art teacher handbooks. The content of the primary arts education begins with communication with nature and then deals with the fields of painting, design, craftsmanship, audiology, storytelling

and drama. Students are also introduced to cultural heritage alongside these fields. This content seeks to bring students to perfection in relation to the nature and observation of natural phenomena so as to guide them into the unity of goodness and perfection while observing plurality. It is also consistent with the goals chosen in the faith dimension. Another feature of this content is its comprehensiveness in that it encompasses a wide range of art forms. However, in this context, the technology (digital media) has not been addressed. Also, dance as an artistic content is not included in the content that seems to have been influenced by the country's religious doctrines. In addition, the content of audiovisual education does not lead to perform music and music production. Performing the program using musical instruments and learning the elements of music have no place in the content of Iranian arts education curriculum. The lack of music education in the curriculum is also based on the religious doctrines of Iranian society, although from a historical perspective, music and the use of musical instruments have had a special place in Iranian culture. What is particularly important in the content of this curriculum is the inclusion of cultural heritage content presented in a separate section.

- Canada: The visual arts in the arts education curriculum content of Canada include a wide range of art forms that meet the goals of the curriculum and are incorporated into two separate programs namely art and design and music within the curriculum. The content of music education involves not only developing students' practical artistic skills, but also developing their critical thinking skills and discovering their emotional responses and expanding their musical literacy through singing, playing, moving, producing and listening. Hence, a complete balanced music program is presented that includes listening and responding, performing, interpreting, and producing (The arts: The Ontario curriculum (grades 1-8), 2009). Therefore, students experience and discover music elements through singing, listening to a variety of songs, poems and chants. They must grow their experiences in a wide range of music and a variety of live and recorded

sounds (International Arts Education Standards, 2011). In this respect, among the various contents and forms of art, music is more important in the arts education curriculum of this country.

3. Teaching methods

- Iran: In Iranian arts education curriculum, active methods have been taken into consideration along with passive methods. The teacher uses direct teaching methods to familiarize students with the tools and materials and how to use them, and applies active and participatory learning methods for performing artistic activities. Primary art teacher handbooks also point out that the teacher can choose the appropriate teaching method based on the type of content and topic. Primary arts education curriculum does not predict artist collaboration in schools and the teacher teaches alone. The content of the arts education curriculum deals with, and therefore should be mastered in, almost all different forms of art. In primary education of Iran, there is no dedicated teacher to teach art, and in addition to art, teachers also teach other courses included in the national curriculum.

- Canada: The Canadian arts education uses active teaching methods. The teachers have the necessary training to teach art and facilitate learning. The teaching methods include problem solving and discovery, and the teacher creates a positive atmosphere for the students to face a question or problem. If the question is interesting, it will encourage the students to find an answer or solution. A question or problem that is new to the students engages their minds and drives them to think in order to find the answer. It is noteworthy that in artistic activities, unlike other courses, there are numerous but correct answers. In other words, the answers are divergent, as artistic activities provide more growth and creativity than any other subject, so choosing this teaching method will foster students' creativity and ideas. To enrich education in Canada, trained professional artists are used to train and teach art. This will help improve students' learning of art, and both teachers and students benefit from it.

4. Evaluation methods

- Iran: The application of the dynamic assessment approach instead of traditional one, which focuses more on outcomes, is emphasized in ways of evaluating the primary arts education in Iran. The dynamic assessment approach focuses on psychological processes and its main purpose is to improve the ability to learn art rather than the amount of learned material. The curriculum also recommends the use of portfolios, exhibitions, handicrafts, checklists, and student performance appraisals as arts education curriculum evaluation tools.

- Canada: The methods for measuring students' artistic learning in Canada emphasize their art learning outcomes. In the Canadian primary arts education curriculum, the primary goal of assessment is to improve student learning. The process of evaluating students' artistic learning involves gathering information from a variety of sources, including assignments, daily observations, conversations and conferences, projects, and exams that reflect how the students' expectations of curriculum are met. Teachers also use performance appraisals, portfolios, daily logbooks, checklists, video and film in evaluating art curricula. Therefore, the process of evaluating students' learning in primary arts education classes is mainly based on evaluating their practical activities. For example, one of the most effective methods used in evaluating dance, theater, music, and visual arts is to evaluate students' portfolios. Portfolio, in many cases, is a good forum for dialogue between teacher and student, and between teacher and parents (Elementary art: A Curriculum Guide, 2006).

C) Juxtaposition

During the step of juxtaposition, the reviewed information in the previous steps is categorized and grouped together in terms of the similarities and differences based on the four elements of

goals, content, teaching methods, and evaluation methods. This process provides a framework for comparing information in the next step.

1. Goals

- Similarities

1. Both countries emphasize the development of critical and creative thinking in setting the goals.
2. Both countries emphasize the development of sensory and motor skills in working with different forms of art.
3. Both countries emphasize the production, implementation and acquisition of experience in various forms of art.
4. In both countries, the recognition of culture, art, customs, and community traditions is considered a key goal.
5. The curriculum of both countries focuses on self-confidence and self-expression through art.
6. In both countries the goals are stated in an ideal form.

- Differences

1. In Iran, paying attention to and reinforcing faith, religious knowledge, and acquisition of moral virtues and human perfection in students is one of the key goals of arts education, while not being considered in Canada.
2. The goals of arts education curriculum in Iran are to pay particular attention to the religious and spiritual aspects that also have influenced the content curriculum.
3. In Canada, emphasis has been placed on awareness of emotions and inner thoughts as a prerequisite for the production of art, while this issue has not been addressed in Iran.
4. In Canada, the recognition of relationship between art and everyday life has been identified as an objective in the arts education curriculum, whereas in the Iranian curriculum it has not been mentioned.
5. Music education has no place in the curriculum goals of Iranian primary arts education, while in Canadian curriculum the goals of music education are set out separately, and criticism and evaluation of one's own and others', beside music performance are among the most important goals emphasized.

Table 1. Juxtaposition of the goals in Iranian and Canadian primary arts education curricula

Goals	Canada	Iran
Emphasis on critical and creative thinking	*	*
Emphasis on developing sensory and motor skills in working with different forms of art	*	*
Emphasis on the production, performance and experience of the various forms of art	*	*
Attention to culture, art, customs and traditions of society as a key goal	*	*
Paying attention to self-confidence and self-expression through art	*	*
Expressing the goals in an ideal form	*	*
Paying attention to strengthening religious knowledge and acquiring ethical and human virtues through arts education	-	*
Paying attention to the religious and spiritual aspects of the arts education curriculum goals	-	*
Emphasis on awareness of inner feelings and thoughts as a prerequisite for art production	*	-
Recognizing the relationship between art and everyday life as a goal in arts education curriculum	*	-
Paying attention to music education as a goal in arts education curriculum	*	-

2. Content

- Similarities

1. Both countries pursue a specific content in their arts education curriculum. In both countries, content is selected, organized, and edited based on pre-defined educational goals.
2. The arts education curriculum of both countries includes drama, design and painting.

- Differences

1. The arts education curriculum of Iran refers to the Creation. Attention has also been paid to the nature and accuracy of observing it and seeing what is around the students and its impact on their learning and experiences.

2. In Canada, in addition to national culture, there has been a focus on familiarizing native and folk culture in content.
3. In primary arts education of Iran, the content related to dance is not included in the curriculum.
4. In Iranian arts education curriculum, the visual arts of interest include handicrafts, design and painting that are discussed separately.
5. In Canadian arts education curriculum, visual arts include a wide range of art forms such as print, collage, use of digital media, textiles, sculpture, handicrafts, visits of museums and websites, and more. It is generally referred to as the visual arts.
6. Storytelling in Canada is a part of drama content, but in Iran it has been discussed separately.

Table 2. Juxtaposition of the content in Iranian and Canadian primary arts education curricula

Content	Canada	Iran
Selecting and organizing the content based on predetermined educational goals	*	*
Selecting the play, designing and drawing as curriculum content	*	*
Paying attention to the relationship with Creation in the curriculum content	-	*
Pay attention to the content of native and folk culture	*	-
Pay attention to the content related to the dance in the curriculum	*	-
Attention to the visual arts including handicrafts, designing and painting	-	*
Attention to the visual arts encompasses a wide range of art forms	*	-
Attention to storytelling in drama	*	-

3. Teaching methods

- Similarities

1. Both countries use active teaching methods (However, due to the lack of some basic conditions or unskilled art teachers and the like, the active practices mentioned in the content of Iranian primary arts education curriculum may be less applicable).
2. In both countries, learning is not limited to the classroom environment and teachers also take advantage of other ways of teaching art outside the classroom.

- Differences

1. In Iran, traditional teaching methods are used, but active methods are also considered. The teacher has total freedom in choosing the appropriate method depending on the topic and educational content.
2. In Canada, the teacher uses problem solving and discovery methods in teaching art.
3. The use of professional artists in art teaching is not conventional in teaching methods of Iran, but as a practical solution in Canada, it is used by professional artists in teaching.

Table 3. Juxtaposition of the teaching methods in Iranian and Canadian primary arts education curricula

Teaching methods	Canada	Iran
Using active teaching methods	*	*
Art teaching is not limited to the classroom and school	*	*
Simultaneous use of traditional teaching methods along with active methods	-	*
Using problem solving and discovery methods	*	-
Using professional artists to teach art in primary schools	*	-

4. Evaluation methods

- Similarities

1. In both countries, process assessment is particularly emphasized.
2. In both countries, summative assessment is also used to evaluate students' learning.

- Differences

1. Applying the dynamic assessment approach in two forms of self-assessment and other-assessment in Iran's evaluation methods.
2. The main purpose of evaluation in Canadian arts education curriculum is to improve students' learning.
3. The purpose of evaluation in Iran is to measure the level of "learning ability".
4. In Iran, evaluation is performed qualitatively and descriptively.

Table 4. Juxtaposition of the evaluation methods in Iranian and Canadian primary arts education curricula

Teaching methods	Canada	Iran
Emphasis on process evaluation	*	*
Applying summative evaluation alongside process evaluation	*	*
Use of self-assessment and other-assessment methods	-	*
Goal of evaluation: to improve learning	*	-
Goal of evaluation: to measure learning ability	-	*
Descriptive and qualitative evaluation	-	*

D) Comparison

In this step, the elements of primary arts education curriculum are examined and compared in detail in relation to the differences and similarities. The design of this comparison is based on John Stuart Mill's agreement/difference method.

According to Table 5, Iranian and Canadian primary arts education curricula have the most similarities in the element of goals. These two kinds of curricula also show the least similarities in the other elements, namely content, teaching methods and evaluation methods. In terms of differences, the biggest difference is between the content element. Although both countries share many similarities in predicted goals for their primary arts education curriculum, the differences in the content of the two curricula can be attributed to non-translation of goals into curriculum content, and at the same time to a relatively high number of differences in the goals (5 items). The least differences between these two curricula is found in the element of teaching methods followed by the evaluation methods.

Table 5. The number of similarities and differences in terms of elements of the primary arts education curricula in Iran and Canada

Curriculum element	Similarities	differences
Goals	6	5
Content	2	6
Teaching methods	2	3
Evaluation methods	2	4

4. Conclusion

Arts education is recognized as a framework for the comprehensive development of children's abilities in primary schools and has great potentials to foster students' high-level thinking and empower their emotional and psychological traits. One way to develop and rebuild curriculum is to utilize successful experiences of educational systems in producing and implementing leading curricula. Although educational systems vary in different countries, attention to the similarities and differences of curricular structures is considered a basis for education development.

In the present study, by comparing the similarities and differences in goals, content, teaching methods and evaluation methods of primary arts education curriculum in Iran and Canada, some important lessons and implications for the primary arts education emerged. In terms of curriculum goals, one of the important similarities between the two countries' curricula is that national and cultural contexts have influenced different aspects of art curriculum. In addition, in the Canadian curriculum, the native and folk culture of the country is also incorporated in arts education curriculum goals. On the other hand, in Iran (at least theoretically) and Canada, curriculum is not just a tool for artistic development, but, beyond that, art curriculum is considered an effective tool that can lead to personal and social development. Interestingly, the goals of the Iranian arts education curriculum have been formulated to be approximately similar to that of Canada, yet not

much attention has been paid to high levels of different cognitive, emotional, and psychological domains. This is while the attention to high levels of cognitive, emotional and psychomotor in education is one of the main goals of arts education, along with the development of learners' artistic abilities.

The comparison of the elements of Iranian and Canadian primary art curricula showed that despite the many similarities in goals, most of the differences were found in the curriculum content of the two countries. Evidence from examining the content of the Canadian arts education curriculum indicates that the visual arts and music that form the compulsory parts of the arts education have a special place in the curriculum. However, in the arts education curriculum of Iran, only the visual arts (painting, calligraphy, and craftsmanship) are important. In Canada, the content of music is taught in a balanced way, and all aspects of its arts education curriculum have been taken into consideration. However, in Iran, this form of art has been ignored. It seems that neglecting this aspect of art can deprive Iranian students of an important part of the art of music and its high potential in nurturing their emotional and personal aspects.

In the third element of primary arts education curriculum (i.e. teaching methods), active methods are recommended for art teaching in both countries. However, in the field of Iranian arts education, it seems that passive teaching methods still play a major role in practice, mainly due to the lack of necessary infrastructure or lack of implementation-related issues such as teachers' unpreparedness and other context-specific issues in the educational system. However, since art is a category that requires individual student activity and teamwork, passive methods are not in keeping with the spirit of the field. It is important to consider that Canadian arts education uses the artists as teaching assistants in art classes, which could be seen as an important model for Iranian arts education that has overlooked this approach to arts education.

The comparison of Iranian and Canadian primary arts education curricula in the fourth element, namely the evaluation methods, revealed that selecting the appropriate criteria and standards for evaluating arts education curriculum is a concern and challenge for arts education practitioners of both countries to achieve a valuable and fair evaluation of students' art leanings. This is partly due to the unique features of the art category (having both objective and subjective aesthetic criteria) that distinguishes its evaluation methods from other primary courses. Accordingly, the most important issue in evaluating arts education curriculum is the inclusion of appropriate and consistent standards that can assist teachers in evaluating student activities.

In addition to neglecting music and dance in Iranian primary arts education curriculum due to some religious limitations, another important point in Iranian primary arts curriculum is that although many components related to curriculum standards have been under consideration in primary arts education curriculum, due to the vast distance between the intended and implemented curricula in the Iranian education system, there are many obstacles in practice to achieving the goals in arts education (HajiTabar Firouzajai et al., 2016; Mohammadian Dastenaie, 2011). It seems that applying the strategies to reduce the gap between curriculum theory and practice (Klein, 1992 as cited by Soltani, 2014) and efforts to reduce the gap between the intended, implemented and experienced curricula could be especially helpful.

In general, based on the results of this comparative study of two Iranian and Canadian primary arts education curricula, the Iranian educational system can learn important lessons from the Canadian educational system. Given the successful experience of Canadian primary arts education in hiring professional artists as instructors or as teacher assistants in the field of arts education, and in view of some of the financial constraints of the Iranian educational system on teacher recruitment, it is recommended that artists in various art disciplines to be used in arts education

classrooms to support teachers and to ensure that students receive qualitative arts education. The use of professional artists can be achieved through the formation of an artist council consisting of artists and teachers. In Canadian schools, a council has been set up with the same title to help art teaching. This kind of council would assist in matters such as organizing art exhibitions, selecting teaching and evaluation standards, and assisting in arts education. It is also recommended that primary schools share their artistic experiences through performing arts groups in different fields and visiting one another's schools. In addition, it is necessary to provide opportunities for establishing arts student groups and practicing with other school art teachers to better implement art teaching. Since music forms an important part of Canadian primary arts education curriculum and plays a major role in cultivating students' emotional abilities, and given the richness of Iranian traditional music and the presence of numerous and sometimes unique musical instruments in Iranian music, the use of this content in the curriculum of primary arts education should be considered in order to familiarize the children with the national culture and transfer it to the next generations.

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