



A Comparative Study of Art Curriculum in Early Childhood Education of Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand and Iran

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 06 October 2021 Revised: 20 January 2022 Accepted: 15 April 2022 Online: 22 November 2022</p>	<p>The aim of research was to compare the art curriculum in early childhood education of Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand and Iran. The strategy of countries' selection was "different social systems, similar educational outputs". The data collection method was documentary and validity of data was determined through combination of concepts, researchers' self-review and consideration of comparative experts' opinions. The method of analyzing the data and presenting the results is the four-step Bereday method. The similarities are mostly in the educational ideals and evaluation methods and the differences are mainly in the curriculum content and strategies. All selected countries have their own cultural, native, local and national background, which is reflected in the art curriculum. In addition, selected countries are similar in goals such as development of aesthetic sense, identification of self-identity, learning & communication with other cultures, development of creative thinking & imagination, development of personality and creation of joy & pleasure. In the content component, teaching music and dance has little attention in Iran. In the strategy component, inviting artists to teach art is not very common in Iran, while it is popular as a practical solution in Finland and Australia. In the assessment component, although all countries pay attention to the process of learning and observing the child, documentation and holding art exhibitions are more prominent in Australia, Canada and Finland. According to the findings, it is recommended to Iran educational planners to pay more attention to the curriculum elements of the selected countries in order to be effective in the formation of a codified and practical program for early childhood art.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Art Art Exhibitions Curriculum Early Childhood National Identity</p>	

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1. Introduction

One of the missions of the educational system in any society is to provide the necessary platforms for the all-round growth and flourishing of children's talents. In order to achieve this goal - considering the multi-dimension of spiritual, psychological, mental, moral and social nature of learners and the necessity of using their maximum learning power, there is a need to design and formulate a diverse range of programs, processes and educational activities (Abedini & Rezaei, 2021). One areas of learning is the growth and flourishing of children's artistic and aesthetic talents, because art - in its most stable and original manifestations - refers to ideals, knowledge, skills, feelings and fundamental values that humans rely on for real self-transformation which is free and conscious acquisition of values (Kian & Mehr Mohammadi, 2012). Through learning art, children can play role as an active member in their environment (Anttila, 2018). Art education - meaning the use of various arts in educational activities - can provide different ways for the child to enter the surrounding world. The use of artistic tools is part of the methods of change in the preschool period (Karlsson, 2020). According to Camille & Steve (2020), artistic experiences - such as participating in theater, creating a mural, practicing a piece of music or learning to combine colors - can develop children's emotional and social well-being. Art fosters children's creative and critical thinking and reflection, builds positive relationships, and fosters empathy (Travis, Stokes, & Kin, 2020). Today, educators agree that art education should be included as part of the curriculum from the earliest stages of children's development. Art education in itself is important because they are an integral part of the cultural heritage of societies that play a central role in the growth and development of humans (Gadsden, 2008). Although art education is one of the most important aspects of school curriculum and its role and position is increasingly being restored, but in Iran, it is still considered as a marginal issue in schools.

Art education is usually not considered as a formal curriculum and is not considered a basic element for the preparation of a person's education (Zolfaqarian & Kian, 2013). According to Kian & Mehrmohammadi (2012), one of the reasons for arts being on the sidelines of Iran's education system is that it is considered a decorative lesson; people's performance in art is not measured in a formal and tangible way, and students' art performance in the curriculum assessment. Art is not a prerequisite for entering higher education levels. Also, in getting jobs, art is not considered as a valuable profession. According to Magsamen & Battro (2011), there is evidence that shows art has non-academic benefits such as improving motivation and self-esteem, gaining cultural awareness, increasing problem-solving or decision-making power, better emotional expression, and increasing

social harmony. Research shows that the quality of everyday experiences in early childhood environments - including art experience - has a great impact on children's learning and development (Hayes et al., 2021). Also, the deep impact of art on the growth and development of children and vital role of early childhood in preventing or reducing behavioral and developmental problems has made it necessary to provide effective methods for children's growth and development (Mahoney & Wiggers, 2007). In this sense, many researches reveal the benefits of art education on the development of children; i.e. development of aesthetic learning experiences (Danko-McGhee, 2000; Ewing, 2010), strengthening of positive attitudes, creativity and imagination (Alter et al., 2009; Eisner, 2002), development of tools for communication and meaning making (Christensen, 2012) , development of citizenship, social & emotional development competencies (Anttila, 2018; Holochwost, 2021; Romera, 2020), increasing the power of ideation & self-confidence (Newton & Donkin, 2011), guiding the path of creativity & innovation (Grierson, 2011), increasing children's awareness (Ward, J; Thompson-Lake, Ely, & Kaminski, 2008), enhancing self-expression (Kocer, 2012) and cognitive benefits (Efland, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Hetland, 2007). Therefore, arts help children to observe familiar things in unfamiliar ways and turn ordinary things into extraordinary matters so that they can rebuild their imaginations (Eisner, 2002).

Also, researches have been conducted in the field of art education in the primary school of Iran (Abedini & Rezaei, 2021; Fallahi, Safari & Youssef Farhank, 2011; Falah Tafti, Jafari Herandi & Tabatabaei, 2020; Kargez, Kabuk & Eldaghi, 2017; Kazempour, Rastgarpour, & Saif Naraghi, 2017; Khosravi Meshizi, Soltani & Alinejad, 2020; JavaheriPour, Abbasi, Kian & Hasanpour , 2021; Mehdizadeh Tehrani et al., 2018; Nabavi, 2012; Saberi et al., 2015; Tamnaifar, Amini, & Yazdani Kashani, 2009; Zulfaqarian & Kian, 2014). Perhaps there is less field of education that has received as much attention as art education. The reason for this is the uncertain position of the art education in general education system. Art enthusiasts are engaged in a constant battle to prevent this subject from being further marginalized or even removed from the formal school curriculum. In such a situation, there is a need to present arguments that show the importance of art education in schools (Upitis, 2011). In fact, although preschool curricula include aesthetic activities, these activities are still neglected in many ways. Based on this, in few studies, early childhood art curriculum has been comprehensively compared based on curriculum elements (educational-artistic ideals, creative educational activities and materials, creative teaching-learning strategies and creative evaluation). Therefore, the present study aims to obtain useful content for art education in Iran's preschool

curriculum by examining and analyzing the curriculum of art in selected countries. Therefore, the questions of the current research are:

- What are the characteristics of early childhood art curriculum in selected countries?
- What are the similarities and differences of early childhood art curriculum in selected countries?

2. Research Method

The present research method is qualitative comparative. The research sample includes the five countries of Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand and Iran and their selection strategy is "different social systems, similar educational outputs". The method of data collection is documentary and includes documents, research, the website of the Ministry of Education of selected countries, articles in publications and educational conferences, and national and international reports. Thus, using targeted sampling, 100 sources that were published in the period of 2000-2021 were examined by searching international databases such as ScienceDirect, Elsevier, ProQuest, Eric, Francis & Taylor, and UNESCO. The research tool was taking notes and using the content checklist, and Bereday's four-step method for analyzing and presenting the results.

3. Findings

This section describes and interprets the curriculum of art education (i.e. four elements of artistic-educational ideals, creative educational activities & materials, creative teaching-learning strategies and creative evaluation) in the early childhood period of Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand and Iran.

1. Description & Interpretation

1.1. Australia

1.1.1. Educational-artistic ideals

The arts have the ability to engage, inspire and create a rich experience for all children. They stimulate children's imagination and encourage them to develop their creativity and identity (Australian Curriculum, 2020). Arts provide a medium for children to explore the world around them, give meaning to it and communicate with it. The importance of art is beyond its instrumental advantage because it is a pleasant feeling that occurs as a result of any interaction with an artistic event (Roy & Watson, 2018). Through learning the arts, children not only understand what is

related to the present time and local environment, but also can gain wide and rich experiences historically and globally (Hamilton et al., 2019). A rich arts experience refers to a child's holistic development—intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development—in a supportive, challenging, and safe environment (Upitis, 2011).

1-1-2. Creative educational activities & materials

Art education (including rhythmic movement, drama, music, visual arts and media arts) is one of the most important aspects of early childhood education in Australia (Garvis, 2013). These five subjects in the Australian curriculum provide children with the opportunity to learn how to create and design their own creativity, feelings, observations and experiences and share them through communication (Roy & Watson, 2018).

1-1-3. Creative teaching-learning strategies

The teacher uses a room called "Singing Room" during teaching to better present the art lesson. The vision of "Singing Room" is that every Australian child should have the opportunity to participate in music and the arts. Art should help them learn, grow and become positive person in their community. Therefore, Australian schools get help from artists of various disciplines and from educational institutions and art organizations - as a complement to teaching arts. Activities such as visiting museums and art galleries or attending live shows, programs with artists and environmental education through art education are other invaluable educational opportunities provided for teachers and students. By inviting experienced and expert artists - in the field of movements, words, sound & rhythm, images, developing a project or participating in extracurricular programs of the school -, teachers can benefit from new experiences that can enrich their teaching (Australian Curriculum, 2020). Holding annual art exhibitions with the participation of families and community members will increase their awareness of children's ability - as artists - and a way to understand the educational value of children's arts. Also, the Australian art curriculum is affected by the use of information and communication technology in the education process (Boyd, & Cutcher, 2015).

1-1-4. Creative assessment

In the Australian preschool education system, teachers use various strategies (assignments, daily observations, discussions, demonstrations, projects, etc.) to collect, document, organize, synthesize, and interpret the information they collect to assess children's learning. Newer

approaches to assessing a child's artistic performance reflect ways in which learning occurs through interactions between the teacher and the child. In this way, creating and performing artworks and observing the child's performance are considered (Australian Curriculum, 2020). When children observe other people's artwork, they actually share or practice another person's idea, judge it, test it, and borrowing it (Boyd, & Cutcher, 2015). The Australian Curriculum clearly states that all children should value, understand, feel confident about and participate in the creative arts (Hamilton et al., 2019).

1.2. Canada

1-2-1. Educational-artistic ideals

In the documents of the education system of the province of Ontario, it is stated that art education strengthens the child's imagination and ability to solve problems and critical thinking. Art stimulates learning and plays an important role in developing communication skills. Art also helps develop decision-making skills and is a way for children to express their feelings (Ministry of Education Ontario, 2021). Fostering a love of art in children enriches their future experiences as an audience - even if they don't intend to become a professional artist. Children can empathize with characters in a play, rhythmic movements, a drama, a song, or a piece of visual art (Ontario Art Curriculum, 2009). As children engage in art, they design and solve problems and apply problem-solving processes to concrete experiences (British Columbia, 2010). In Canada, the use of the arts is important to children's understanding of society, culture, and history, and is essential to the development of individual capacities, social responsibility, and cultural awareness (Charleroy, & Thomas, 2013).

1-2-2. Creative educational activities & materials

In Ontario, Canada, art education includes four subjects of rhythmic movement, drama, music, and visual arts (Ministry of Education Ontario, 2009). During the school year, children participate in many artistic activities such as pencil drawing, watercolor painting, sewing fabric, cooking, crafts from natural materials, collage, crafts from recycled materials, carpentry, modeling and working with clay. Also, pupils participate in activities that help develop their ability in music, rhythm, and hand-eye coordination. Examples of these activities include making and playing homemade musical instruments, reading poetry, singing & playing with fingers, rhythmic movements, etc. (Charleroy, & Thomas, 2013).

1-2-3. Creative teaching-learning strategies

Educators use methods such as cooperative learning, experimentation, brainstorming, simulation, guided exploration, small group work, modeling in movements, and active participation to help children meet learning goals (Ontario Art Curriculum, 2009; British Columbia, 2010). Also, children can communicate with artistic subjects while learning new methods and present ideas and perspectives and challenge each other's perceptions (Ministry of Education Ontario, 2021).

1-2-4. Creative evaluation

Assessment of children's artistic activity in kindergarten is done through informal observation, creating a set of opportunities for children to work and end-of-year activities. Daily or weekly notes are also used to record the child's progress (Ministry of Education Ontario, 2021). As part of assessing a child's art performance, teachers provide descriptive feedback that guides the child to strive for further improvement (Ontario Art Curriculum Grades, 2009).

1-3. New Zealand

1-3-1. Educational-artistic ideals

Education system documents in New Zealand show that arts disciplines provide unique opportunities for children to think, imagine and create ideas, develop emotionally and gain a deeper understanding of cultural traditions and practices. Such opportunities help children discover their potential and contribute to their community (Charleroy, & Thomas, 2013). Arts education in New Zealand prepares children to be skilled in the arts so that they can apply their vision, abilities and creative energies and contribute to the realization of New Zealand's national identity. Art in the New Zealand curriculum provides an opportunity for children to express themselves through the creation and presentation of artwork (Ministry of Education, 2017).

1-3-2. Creative educational activities & materials

Arts learning include four disciplines: rhythmic movement, drama, music and visual arts (Ministry of Education, 2017). In each of these disciplines, children develop their abilities by strengthening skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Through artistic practices and the use of traditional and new technologies, children's artistic ideas are created and refined in cycles of action and reflection (Jenson, 2018).

1.3.3. Creative teaching-learning strategies

In New Zealand guided participation is essential to ensure children's interest in learning the arts is maintained (Jenson, 2018). Artistic creation is a way for children to make sense of the world, and children's guided participation in artistic activities gives them the opportunity to take the lead in artistic experimentation, although educators - if necessary - can actively encourage them to learn (McWilliams, Brailsford Vaughns, O'Hara, Novotny, & Kyle, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2000, 2017). In arts education, the cultural context of the child's living environment should be accepted because learning happens through social, cultural and historical influences (Plows, 2014).

1-3-4. Creative evaluation

Bhroin (2007) points out that art has a lot of meaning for children. Therefore, in early childhood, educators should encourage a sense of aesthetic appreciation in children's personal work and encourage them to examine and criticize their own art, critical thinking, and reflection skills. Educators play an important role in guiding a child's artistic opportunities—to find art that interests them, such as visiting and viewing artwork in a museum, finding pleasant pieces of music, or attending a class performance—(Plows, 2014; Novakovic, 2015; Duh, 2016). Through observing the child, the educator can reflect on the positive effects of the child's artistic journey (Jenson, 2018).

1.4. Finland

1-4-1. Educational-artistic ideals

Art education aims to provide holistic development and learning opportunities that strengthen children's identity through positive experiences (Nevanen, 2015). In Finland, the goals of art education seem to be related to the idea of creative self-expression. These goals include using different forms of art - as a means of artistic expression -, developing personal interest in an art field, gaining personal satisfaction, using the arts as a tool for learning and understanding Finnish and other cultures, developing attitudes and research skills and creative problem solving (Ministry of Education & Culture, 2021; Ramli, Rambeli, Rahmatullah, & Mustafa, 2021). Since the goal of Finnish education is to strengthen the knowledge of children's cultural heritage, encountering works of art, architecture or designing works of art enriches the daily life of children (Karlsson, 2020).

1-4-2. Creative educational activities and materials

Every kindergarten in Finland has to prepare its curriculum according to the national curriculum. At the same time, these curricula are broad and flexible, and there are no normative regulations governing the content of the subjects to be taught. Primary arts education in Finland includes music, rhythmic movements, visual arts and handicrafts (Onnismaa, 2010). Educators are allowed to make decisions about the quality and amount of arts instruction they choose to provide to children (Ramley et al., 2021).

1-4-3. Creative teaching-learning strategies

In art education, the teacher as a facilitator should provide learners with significant experiences of their art-exploratory and experimental activities (Ramli, et al., 2021). Also, the coach can collaborate with cultural and artistic experts to promote the cultural identity of children. In particular, the teacher should be able to direct the processes of social interaction. The teacher's role includes organizing learning situations, creating a suitable environment for learning arts, accompanying the child and strengthening her/his curiosity and self-exploration by using different methods - such as the project method - (Nevanen, 2015). Through project-based methods, educators can explore children's initiatives and opportunities to influence the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating their artistic activities (Weckström, 2021).

1-4-4. Creative evaluation

Assessment has to do with the appreciation of what is being evaluated. Children learn to appreciate the quality of their own and others' work and to take a critical stance towards their own choices and ideas (Nevanen, 2015). Documentation of performance, which can include photographs, video recordings, handwritten notes, transcribed interviews, drawings, reports, portfolios, and other forms, is used to describe and evaluate children's performance (Rintakorpi, 2016). Educational documentation helps children to see what is going on, what has happened and what is being done during the educational project (Alacam & Olgan, 2021).

5. Iran

1-5-1. Educational-artistic ideals

The art curriculum in early childhood is designed based on aesthetics and familiarity with the source of creation (God), familiarity with Iranian art history, creative artwork production and art criticism (Supreme Council of Education, 2013). In Iran educational system, beauty and art are the

supreme manifestation of human life and creativity, which has a significant impact on the evolutionary movement and the emergence of human artistic talents. These goals are prepared and set based on three cognitive, emotional and psycho-motor areas (Khosravi Meshizi, 2020).

1-5-2. Creative educational activities and materials

The content of the art education course includes subjects such as stories, poetry, painting, crafts, creative performances, hearing education and communication with nature (Organization of Educational Research & Planning 2018; Radpour, Shapourian, Sharifzadeh, et al, 2019). Teaching simple arts begins with the child's communication with nature and then leads to painting, drawing, crafts, listening training, storytelling and drama. Pupils also learn about Iran's cultural heritage through these artistic activities. These artistic activities aim to bring children to perfection through communication with nature and observation of natural phenomena.

1-5-3. Creative teaching-learning strategies

In art education, the teacher has a guiding and facilitating role. The diversity of learning environments and active role of children in the art curriculum through methods such as discussion about art topics, cooperative learning, question & answer method, scientific tour method, experiment & creative display and the use of new technologies (according to age, needs and child's capacity) has been taken into consideration (Organization of Educational Research & Planning, 2018). Attention to cultural-native contexts, process & product of artistic activity, visiting cultural & artistic centers to acquaint pupils with cultural heritage is also considered by the planners of art education in early childhood stage. Through active participation in artistic experiences, children get to know and learn many conceptual and skill areas (Radpour et al., 2013).

1-5-4. Creative evaluation

Evaluation of children is done by observing their performance in a continuous and activity-oriented manner. Children's evaluation is done during the learning process in order to measure their growth in all social, emotional, moral, cognitive and physical dimensions, and therefore the child's achievement is not expected to a certain level of learning (Textbook Planning and Authoring Office, 2018; Radpur et al., 2013).

2. Juxtaposition & Comparison

2-1. Juxtaposition Stage

In this stage, the results obtained from the description and interpretation stages are combined with the educational characteristics of the selected countries.

Table 1. Juxtaposition of art curriculum components in five selected countries

Country	Educational-artistic ideals	Creative educational activities and materials	Creative teaching and learning strategies	Creative Assessment
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of aesthetic sense - Exploring & communicating with the surrounding world - Strengthening risk taking and exploration - Development of creativity and imagination - Creating pleasure as a result of interacting with art - Development, expression and understanding of cultures and societies at the local, national and global levels - Development of critical understanding - Understanding Australian history and tradition through art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dance - Show - Music - Visual Arts - Media arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Encouragement, modeling, meaningful conversation with the coach - Use of art materials and facilities suitable for the child's age - Guiding the child with the participation of the teacher - Sharing artworks through performance, presentation and display - Visiting museums, galleries and artists' works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aesthetic appreciation through observation, description, reflection and analysis of works of art - Documentation - Holding annual art exhibitions - Evaluation, exploration and respect of artistic heritage - Construction, implementation and critical analysis - Creation and execution of works of art
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intellectual, social, physical and emotional development - Empathy with the characters of a work - Encouraging creative thinking, spontaneity, intuition, divergent thinking and improvisation - Familiarity with various artistic methods (traditional and contemporary) about different cultures - Cultivating responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dance - Show - Music - Visual Arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using creative and dynamic methods of thinking and knowledge - Using current and emerging technologies (film, multimedia) - Brainstorm - group learning - Experimental activities - Discovery - Group activity - Media analysis - simulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness and appreciation of different points of view - Holding an exhibition of graphic arts - Providing constant and brief feedback to evaluate children's creative works - Gathering information from different sources (assignments, daily observations,

	<p>and critical literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defining, renewing and shaping personal and national identity - Developing artistic skills and aesthetic judgment - Experience the feeling of pleasure and happiness - Using creative problem solving <p>Enriching future experiences</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visualization - Thinking out loud - Role-Playing 	<p>conversations or meetings, demonstrations, projects, shows and tests)</p>
New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing artistic abilities in line with the child's natural development - Development of aesthetic sense - Encouraging motivation and interest in art - Identifying one's identity and place in the world using positive artistic experiences - Gaining joy, pleasure and excitement from artistic processes - Development of creative thinking and imagination to face unexpected results and discover multiple solutions - Development of creative and intuitive thinking to see your world from new perspectives - The child's understanding of the environment, his world and finally himself - Increase personal well-being - Increasing self-confidence to take risks - Development of artistic literacy - Development of cultural identity in connection with local culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Music - Show - Dance - Visual Arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using traditional and new technologies - Participation or guided support of educators with children during the artistic journey - Exploring and experimenting with a variety of materials - Visiting and viewing museum artworks, attending shows and listening to pleasant music pieces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciation and aesthetic analysis of works of art - Using formative assessment - Evaluation of works - Critically examine your own art and that of others - Paying attention to the results of the work to encourage more aesthetic appreciation
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of aesthetic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation between 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciation of works

	<p>sense</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating joy and pleasure from artistic processes - Emphasis on socialization - Express yourself using different art forms - Identifying one's identity and one's place in the world using positive artistic experiences - Learning and communicating with local culture and other cultures using cultural entertainment - Development of creative problem solving skills - Development of creative thinking and imagination - Comprehensive development of personality, emotional well-being and well-being of the child - Strengthening curiosity and self-research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dance - Show - Visual Arts - Handicrafts 	<p>teachers and artists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using cultural entertainment and welfare with artistic experiences - Use of interactive learning environment - Teacher as a facilitator - Examining various phenomena in a thematic and project form 	<p>of art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observing the child and checking her/his performance in the work process - Presentation of artistic works such as music performance, drama, dance - Educational documents using portfolios including photos, video recordings, handwritten notes, interviews, drawings, reports, portfolios and other documents.
Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultivating artistic taste and aesthetics - Cultivating the emotional spirit - Cultivating national identity - Cultivating creativity and imagination - Getting pleasure from doing artistic works - Getting to know the history of Iranian art - Producing artwork and developing thinking skills - Artistic criticism and the desire to express thoughts and feelings - Curiosity and expansion of students' discoveries about nature and personal experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - story - Poetry and hymns - Painting - Manual work - Creative display - Hearing education - Communication with nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using active methods - Use of new technologies (according to the child's age, needs and capacity) - Using group activities - The teacher as a guide and facilitator - Discussion - Cooperative learning - question and answer - Visiting cultural and artistic centers to learn about cultural heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observing the child's behavior and performance - Attention to the learning process - Continuous and activity-oriented evaluation - Explanation about the activity, self and others - Making things and providing new solutions

As stated in the above table, all five countries in the dimension of educational ideals focus on development of aesthetic sense, self-identity, learning and communication with local culture and other cultures, development of creative thinking & imagination, all-round development of personality and creating happiness & joy and artistic processes. In terms of activities and creative educational materials, all five selected countries emphasize the visual arts. Also, in creative learning strategies, the use of interactive learning environment, use of child's full capacity by the teacher, collaborative learning, experimental activities, exploration & group activities are the most important elements of art education in all selected countries. In the dimension of creative evaluation, the educational system of selected countries emphasize more on the artistic learning process, observing the child and examining her/his performance in the work process and descriptive-qualitative evaluation.

Table 2. Criteria set in the neighborhood stage

Countries	Curriculum elements	juxtaposition criteria	Classification of juxtaposition criteria
Australia	Educational-artistic ideals	Artistic knowledge	- Increasing awareness of children's ability as artists
		Artistic understanding	- Creating pleasure as a result of interacting with art - Understanding the educational value of children's art - Critical understanding - Understanding Australian history and tradition through art
		Artistic skill	- Exploring and communicating with the surrounding world - Strengthening risk taking and exploration
		Cultural literacy	- Developing, expressing and understanding the culture of communities at the local, national and global levels
		Self-cultivation	- Development of aesthetic sense - Development of creativity and imagination
	Creative educational activities and materials	Dance	
		drama	
		Music	
		Media Arts	
		Visual Arts	
	Creative teaching and learning strategies	Collaborative method	- Encouragement, modeling, meaningful conversation with the coach - Use of art materials and facilities suitable for the

			child's age - Guiding the child with the participation of the teacher	
		Exploratory method (project)	-	
		Experimental method	- Sharing artworks through performance, presentation and display	
		Field trip	- Visiting museums, galleries and artists' works	
	Creative Assessment	Educational documents	- Documentation - Holding an annual art exhibition	
		Artistic creation	- Creation and execution of works of art	
		Art appreciation and appreciation	- Aesthetic appreciation by observing, describing, reflecting and analyzing works of art	
		Art critic	- Evaluation, exploration and respect of artistic heritage - Creation, implementation and critical analysis	
	Canada	Educational-artistic ideals	Artistic knowledge	- Discovering and expressing yourself and others and discovering and interpreting the world - Developing the ability to communicate and represent your thoughts, feelings and ideas in different ways
			Artistic understanding	- Empathy with the characters of a work - Experience the feeling of pleasure and happiness
Artistic skill			- Developing artistic skills and aesthetic judgment	
Cultural literacy			- Familiarity with various artistic methods (traditional and contemporary) about various cultures - Defining, renewing and shaping personal and national identity	
Self-cultivation			- Intellectual, social, physical and emotional development - Encouraging creative thinking, spontaneity, intuition, divergent thinking and improvisation - Cultivating responsibility and critical literacy - Using creative problem solving Enriching future experiences	
Creative educational activities and materials		Dance	-	
		Drama	-	
		Music	-	
		Visual Arts	-	
Creative teaching and learning strategies		Collaborative method	- Brainstorming, cooperative learning	
		Exploratory method (project)	- Using current and emerging technologies (film, multimedia) - Using creative and dynamic methods of thinking and knowledge	
		Experimental method	- Material testing, simulation, modeling	

	Creative Assessment	Field trip	- Guided exploration
		Educational documents	- Holding an exhibition of graphic arts - Gathering information from various sources (assignments, daily observations, conversations or meetings, demonstrations, projects, shows and tests)
		Artistic creation	- Generating ideas in different arts
		Art appreciation and appreciation	- Awareness and appreciation of different points of view
		Art critic	- Constant and brief feedback to evaluate children's creative works
New Zealand	Educational-artistic ideals	Artistic knowledge	- Identifying one's identity and place in the world using positive artistic experiences - Development of artistic literacy
		Artistic understanding	- Encouraging motivation and interest in art - Creating joy, pleasure and excitement from artistic processes - The child's understanding of the environment, his world and finally himself
		Artistic skill	- Improving meaningful learning skills - Increasing artistic abilities in the direction of the child's natural development
		Cultural literacy	- Development of cultural identity in connection with local culture
		Self-cultivation	- Development of aesthetic sense - The development of independence in artistic works - Development of creative thinking and imagination to engage with unexpected results and discover multiple solutions - Comprehensive personality development in a sensitive and culturally exploratory environment - Increase personal well-being - Increasing self-confidence to take risks
	Creative educational activities and materials	Dance	-
		Drama	-
		Music	-
		Media Arts	-
		Visual Arts	-
	Creative teaching and learning strategies	Collaborative method	- Participation or guided support of educators with children during the artistic journey
		Exploratory method (project)	- Using traditional and new technologies
		Experimental method	- Exploring and experimenting with a variety of materials
		Field trip	- Visiting and viewing works of art in a museum - Attending the show and listening to pleasant music pieces

	Creative Assessment	Educational documents	- Using formative assessment
		Artistic creation	- Attention to work results in directing artistic opportunities to further encourage aesthetic appreciation
		Art appreciation and appreciation	- Appreciation and aesthetic appreciation of works of art - Valuing works
		Art critic	- Responding to ideas, works and contributions of others - Critically examine your own art and that of others
Finland	Educational-artistic ideals	Artistic knowledge	- A means of self-expression using different forms of art - Identifying one's identity and place in the world using positive artistic experiences - Teaching artistic techniques and artistic expression
		Artistic understanding	- Creating joy and pleasure from artistic processes
		Artistic skill	- Development of artistic learning environments
		Cultural literacy	- Emphasis on socialization - Learning and communicating with local culture and other cultures using cultural entertainment
		Self-cultivation	- Development of aesthetic sense - Development of creative problem solving skills - Development of creative thinking and imagination - Comprehensive development of personality, emotional well-being and well-being of the child - Strengthening curiosity and self-research
		Creative educational activities and materials	Dance
	Drama		-
	Music		-
	Media Arts		-
	Visual Arts		-
	Creative teaching and learning strategies	Collaborative method	- Collaboration between teachers and artists
		Exploratory method (project)	- Interaction between teacher and child - Teacher as a facilitator
		Experimental method	- Examining various phenomena in a thematic and project form
		Field trip	- Using cultural entertainment and welfare with artistic experiences
	Creative Assessment	Educational documents	- Attention to the artistic learning process - Educational documentation using portfolios including photos, video recordings, handwritten notes, interviews, drawings, reports and portfolios and other forms.
		Artistic creation	- Presentation of artistic works such as: music

			performance, drama, dance
		Art appreciation and appreciation	- Appreciation of works of art
		Art critic	- Observing the child and checking the child's performance in the work process
Iran	Educational-artistic ideals	Artistic knowledge	- Artistic criticism and the desire to express thoughts and feelings
		Artistic understanding	- Enjoy doing artistic work
		Artistic skill	Artistic skill - producing artwork and developing thinking skills Cultural literacy
		Cultural literacy	- Getting to know the history of Iranian art
		Self-cultivation	Cultivating oneself - Cultivating artistic and aesthetic taste - Cultivating the emotional spirit - Cultivating national identity - Cultivating creativity and imagination - Curiosity and expansion of students' discoveries about connection with nature and personal experiences
	Creative educational activities and materials	Dance	-
		Drama	-
		Hearing training	-
		Visual Arts	-
	Creative teaching and learning strategies	Collaborative method	- Using group activities - Teacher as a facilitator - Discussion - Cooperative learning - question and answer
		Exploratory method (project)	- Using active methods - Use of new technologies (according to the child's age, needs and capacity)
		Experimental method	- Material testing
		Field trip	- Visiting cultural and artistic centers to learn about cultural heritage
	Creative Assessment	Educational documents	- Observing the child's behavior and performance - Attention to the learning process - Continuous and activity-oriented evaluation
		Artistic creation	- Building things and providing new solutions
		Art appreciation and appreciation	-----
		Art critic	- Explanation about the activity, work and others

2.2. Comparison Stage

In the comparison stage, the information examined in the previous stages is classified and similarities and differences are grouped based on four elements of educational-artistic ideals, creative educational activities & materials, creative teaching-learning strategies and creative evaluation.

Table 3. Comparison of early childhood art curriculum elements in five countries

Curriculum elements	Comparison criteria	Classification of criteria	Australia	Canada	New Zealand	Finland	Iran
Educational-artistic ideals	Artistic knowledge	Developing creative problem solving skills		*		*	
		Enriching future experiences				*	
	Artistic understanding	Creating joy and pleasure from artistic processes	*	*	*	*	*
		Empathy with characters in works of art		*			
		Increasing Self-confidence to take risks	*		*		
	Artistic skill	Strengthening curiosity and self-research				*	*
		Improving meaningful learning skills and abilities			*	*	
	Cultural literacy	Identification of your identity	*	*	*	*	*
		Learning and communication with local culture and other cultures	*	*	*	*	*
		Emphasis on socialization				*	
		Understanding artistic traditions, through interaction with the world of artists, artworks, audiences and artistic businesses	*			*	
	Self-cultivation	Development of aesthetic sense	*	*	*	*	*
		Development of creative thinking and imagination	*	*	*	*	*
		Comprehensive character	*	*	*	*	*

		development					
		Development of emotional well-being and well-being of the child			*	*	
Creative educational activities and materials		Visual Arts	*	*	*	*	*
		Drama	*	*	*	*	*
		Music	*	*	*	*	
		Dance	*	*	*	*	
		Media arts	*				
		Handicrafts				*	
Creative teaching and learning strategies	Collaborative method	- Use of interactive learning environment	*	*	*	*	*
		Interaction between the teacher and the child and accompanying the teacher in using the full capacity of the child	*	*	*	*	*
		Group learning	*	*	*	*	*
		Teacher as a facilitator	*	*	*	*	*
		Participation or guided support of educators with children during the artistic journey			*		
		Exploratory method (project)	Discovery	*	*	*	*
		Examining various phenomena in a thematic and project form				*	
		Use of traditional and new technologies		*	*		*
	Experimental method	Testing	*	*	*	*	*
	Field trip	Group activity	*	*	*	*	*
		Using cultural entertainment and welfare with artistic experiences				*	
		Visiting and viewing works of art in a museum	*		*		*
		Collaboration between teachers and artists	*			*	
	Creative exchange	Attention to the artistic learning process	*	*	*	*	*

Creative Assessment	Educational documents	Observing the child and checking the child's performance in the work process	*	*	*	*	*
		Descriptive and qualitative evaluation	*	*	*	*	*
		Documentation	*	*	*	*	*
		Creation and execution of works of art	*	*	*	*	*
	Artistic creation	Holding an annual art exhibition	*	*			
	Art appreciation and appreciation	Appreciation of works of art	*	*	*	*	
	Art critic	Interpretation and response to artistic ideas			*		
		Critical analysis and explanation and feedback to the work of others	*	*	*	*	*

Considering data available at Table 3, the elements of the early childhood art curriculum in the studied countries were compared in a more detailed:

A) Similarities

- Educational-artistic ideals: out of the fifteen components of educational ideals, there are similarities between countries in six components: development of aesthetic sense, identification of self-identity, learning & communication with local culture & other cultures, development of creative thinking & imagination, development of personality and creating happiness & enjoyment. Also, the educational systems of New Zealand and Finland are similar in the two components of improving the skills and abilities of meaningful learning and development of the emotional and well-being of the child; Canada and Finland in the creative problem solving skill development component; New Zealand and Australia in the component of increasing self-confidence to take risks, and Finland and Iran in the component of strengthening curiosity and self-exploration.

- Activities and creative educational materials: out of the six components of activities and materials, all the studied countries share the two components of drama and visual arts. The countries of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Finland are similar to each other in the two components of rhythmic movements and music, while Iran is similar to the other four countries in the two components of drama and visual arts.
- Creative teaching and learning strategies: out of the fourteen components of the strategies, there are similarities between all countries in seven components of using an interactive learning environment, interaction between teacher and child and accompanying the teacher in using the full capacity of child, teacher as a facilitator, cooperative learning, experimenting, exploration and activity. Also New Zealand and Australia are similar in the two components of visiting and viewing works of art in museums and attending shows and listening to pleasant music pieces; New Zealand, Canada and Iran in the component of using traditional and new technologies; New Zealand, Australia and Iran in the component of visiting and observing works of art; and Finland and Australia in the component of cooperation between teachers and artists.
- Creative evaluation: among the nine components of evaluation, there are similarities between countries in five components of attention to the artistic learning process, criticism of artworks, observation of the child and examination of the child's performance in the work process and descriptive-qualitative evaluation. Also, Canada, Finland and Australia are similar in the documentation component; New Zealand, Canada, Finland and Australia in the component of appreciation of works of art; and Canada and Australia in the component of holding an annual art exhibition.

B) Differences

- Educational-artistic ideals: In terms of educational and artistic ideals of art education, the selected countries have a lot in common. For example, goals such as emotional well-being and coexistence, sociability, valuing artistic jobs and interaction with artists have been given special attention in the educational system of Australia, New Zealand, Finland and Canada. In Iran's educational system, attention and strengthening of faith, religious

knowledge, acquisition of moral virtues and human perfection are among the main goals of art education, which have not received much attention in other countries.

- Creative educational activities and materials: In Iran's early childhood art education, dance education is not included in the curriculum. Also, music education is not given much value and it is only mentioned in the form of listening. Also, visual arts have been presented in the form of separate subjects such as painting and handicrafts, while in selected countries the contents of the visual arts curriculum include subjects such as drawing, painting, sculpture, printing, architecture, photography, commercial arts, handicrafts, industrial design and electronic and media arts. Communication with nature as a separate subject in Iran has received the attention of early childhood education planners, while in other countries it has been proposed by combining it with other subjects. In Finland, handicraft training has been proposed as a separate activity. Also, in Iran, a "Teacher's Guidance Book" has been prepared for the training of art teachers, which briefly mentions each of these subjects, while in selected countries, more information and training has been given to teachers.
- Creative teaching-learning strategies: The use of professional artists in art education in Iran's early childhood schools is not very common, while in Finland and Australia, professional artists are invited to teach art. Also, in Finland, the project method and cultural entertainment and welfare related to art are used by teachers.
- Creative evaluation: compared to Canadian, Australian, and Finnish teachers, Iranian teachers use fewer activities such as documenting, holding art exhibitions, and interpreting and analyzing works of art.

4. Conclusion

The aim of research was comparative study of early childhood art curriculum in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Finland and Iran. The first finding of the research regarding the description of the current state in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Finland and Iran showed that there is not much data about the art education curriculum. The findings of Fallah et al. (2020); Kargozar, Kabuk, & Eldaghi (2018), Kian & Mehrmohammadi (2020), Khosravi Meshizi et al. (2020) and Javaheripour (2020) also emphasize this problem. The second finding of the research shows that the emphasis of these five countries in early childhood art education is on the basics such as teaching the concept of aesthetics, all-round development of the child, understanding artistic creations and familiarity with history and culture. The third finding of the research shows that all the selected countries have prioritized the education of aesthetic concepts, all-round development of personality, creating

happiness and enjoyment from artistic processes, and familiarizing children with the history and culture of the society in their early childhood programs. This finding supports the results of the researches of Kargozar, Kabuk, & Eldaghi (2018), Kian & Mehrmohammadi (2020), Fallah et al. (2020), Khosravi Meshizi, et al. (2020) and Javaheripour (2020). It seems that in terms of the goals of the art education curriculum in early childhood, the emphasis on the national and cultural background has influenced other aspects of the art curriculum. The findings of the research in the two stages of proximity and comparison of educational content also revealed that all the selected countries have taken into consideration the familiarity with drama and visual arts. Also, dance education as an artistic subject is not included in Iran's curriculum - which is heavily influenced by political and religious institutions. In addition, the content of audio-visual education does not lead to the performance of music and the production of musical works, and the implementation of artistic programs using musical instruments and the learning of musical elements have no place in Iran's educational system. The lack of music education in the curriculum is also affected by the political-religious system's involvement in art education activities; although from a historical perspective, music and the use of musical instruments have had a special place in Iran culture. This finding supports the research of Khosravi Meshizi (2020) and Saberi & Mehram (2011). It seems that neglecting music education can deprive Iranian students of an important part of the art of music and its high capacities for cultivating emotional and personal aspects. The finding also reveals the facilitating role of teachers and their attention to collaborative, exploratory and experimental activities in all selected countries. In addition, the research findings indicated that Australia and Finland, in addition to art teachers, use artists and art specialists to teach children. Another finding of the research according to the analysis of the sources indicates attention to the learning process and review of portfolios and the use of qualitative-descriptive evaluation in the process of teaching/learning art. Considering the findings of the current research, it is suggested that the following issues should be considered by the curriculum planners of the early childhood education system of Iran:

- Development of educational facilities for teaching art to children (such as visiting art places outside of school, workshops and art exhibitions)
- Improving the quality of methods and tools for creating works of art (use of new technologies, media arts, etc.)
- Communicating with cultural and artistic associations and inviting art experts to collaborate with teachers
- Taking advantage of the experiences of selected countries in the field of dance and music education

- Utilizing the method of documenting children's artworks and holding art exhibitions at the national and regional level
- Designing books with diverse and rich artistic content according to the native culture and art of the country

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