

An Assessment of the National Strategic Curriculum Using a SWOT Analytical Approach, First Stage of Primary School at Marivan Town

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ABSTRACT

The present study is conducted to investigate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to implement the IRI's Education National Strategic Curriculum Plan at the first stage of Marivan Town's primary schools in 2025. It is a descriptive-survey analysis, and its statistical community includes the whole first-stage teachers, instructors, and managers of the Marivan Town's primary schools in a number of 192 people who are sampled. The variable of this research is adopted from the Document for IRI's Education National Strategic Curriculum Plan including four indices: parental acquaintance with descriptive evaluation, proportionality of implementation of performance tests with learning levels of students, attention to individual differences, and executive supervision adopted from the IRI's Education National Strategic Curriculum Plan. According to the results obtained from statistical tests among indices under investigation, parental acquaintance with descriptive evaluation, executive supervision with personal weaknesses and differences, and proportionality of implementation of performance tests with learning levels of students were found to be powerful and significant. In addition, suggestions were presented using SWOT analysis regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

KEYWORDS: Executive supervision; individual differences; descriptive evaluation; performance test

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Strategic Curriculum needs to evaluate its plans in order to achieve its objectives and check congruence of performed actions with provided criteria. Presently, evaluation is a powerful arm for managers and teachers in educational organizations, helping them to decide about cancelation, continuation, modification, development, or escalation of educational plans. The spinal cord of IRI's educational problems and issues is weakness or absence of desirable evaluation and inattention to evaluation principles. Evaluations most often fail to be set as the source of decision-makings, and the concept of evaluation has not achieved its real scientific position. Due to its historical and cultural background, evaluation is regarded to be an equivalent of surveillance, shakedown, and hair-splitting. There are, unfortunately, multiple factors including unsuitable operative methods and absence of experienced instructors which have strengthened this false implication so that fearing from and resistance against evaluation has become to be a constant ingredient in this regard.

On the other hand, evaluation demonstrates the extent up to which purposes are met, thereby if strategic plans fail to constitute a part of a National Strategic Curriculum and learning process is not subject to constant assessments, education would lose its dynamicity and slope down to statically as its advantages and disadvantages are not specified.

Generally speaking, an evaluation means to demonstrate the proximity to an intended objective, shedding light on the issue how implementation-caused changes have provoked an achievement of purposes. In other words, evaluation intends to illustrate whether a task is performed according to its intended plan. In case operation results are diverged from the intended plan, actions are required to be taken to prevent repetition of such digressions. Simply put, evaluation wishes to determine where we are, what our intentions are, how much we have passed, and what more effective tools and instruments are.

2. Theoretical Basics of the Research

Ralph Tyler was the first author who officially defined evaluation as: "An instrument to determine how far a plan is successful in achieving its intended educational objectives" (Kia Manesh, 1994).

Cronbach regards evaluation as collection and utilization of information to make decisions on an educational plan. He believes that successfulness or unsuccessfulness of educational plans is determined only through data collecting in real instruction/instructing situations. And, any decision should be made based on collected data.

Beeby authors on definition of evaluation: "Evaluation is the process for systematic collection and interpretation of evidence that leads to value judgment with having a certain action in mind." In this definition, Beeby, by a certain action, meant a suitable decision made to improve the plan (Ali Shirazi: p. 236).

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Stuffle Beam defines evaluation as a process to determine, achieve, and provide required information to make judgments about decisions: (Ali Shirazi: p. 236). Defining educational evaluation, Abbas Bazargan regards it as a reflection of activities undertaken by an educational unit to make improvements in plans and activities in order to reach at intended outputs and results, providing replies to four questions:

1. How much is desirability of the educational plan?
2. How much is desirability of the plans which are to actualize purposes?
3. How much is desirability of the executive mechanisms for each intended plan?
4. How much is desirability of performance of plans? (Bazargan, 2001)

Ali Akbar Seif defines evaluation of educational advances as including assessment of learners’ performance and comparison of gained results with intended pre-defined purposes in order to make decisions on whether educational activities of teachers and attempts made by students have reached desirable results (Seif, 2000). In this definition, following points are worthwhile:

Direct and indirect evaluation is pointed to in all definitions. In other words, Bazargan defines it as a reflection of activities undertaken by an educational unit to make improvements in plans and activities in order to reach at intended outputs and results, providing replies to four questions.

At the end of each evaluation initiative, we should make a decision to improve our program, since our tasks will result in nothing if our evaluation-obtained data are not applied. Put it differently, the main objective of evaluation is making decisions to improve plans. This, although, does not mean that teachers or managers are permitted to make personal settlements with their students, in which case evaluation would be undesirably changed into an instrument to reprimand students and stick tags on them.

Evaluation serves as means, not a goal; it is an instrument to complete educational plans and eliminate defects therein to reach at intended purposes.

Evaluation is a feedback in reflecting a plan’s defects onto the plan itself in order to enter it into the modification cycle.

Evaluation is a continuous rather than a fragmentary initiative; that is, instructing/learning process should not be evaluated only in certain times. Rather, it should be continuously assessed.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present research is practical in its purpose. Since it describes the status quo, it is a descriptive analysis, too. In addition, it is a survey study as it makes use of questionnaires to collect data. It is important to note that the present research has been performed in a certain time; therefore, it is a segmental research as its name indicates. On the other hand, since this research utilizes quantitative data, it can be known to be quantitative study.

4. Findings of the Research

4.1. Goodness of fit test on samples

To test for normality of a distribution is one of the most common applications off it distribution tests. Kolmogorov–Smirnov test is most suitable for this purpose (Bayazidi et al., 2011: 84). This test is designed to examine above claim about distribution of data of a qualitative variable (Momemni and FaalGhayoomi, 2010: 188). Hypotheses of this test are as follows:

H_0 : distribution of the sample under study is normal.

H_1 : distribution of the sample under study is not normal.

Results of above hypothesis are shown in the following table:

Table 1. values of significance test for the variable under study in Kolmogorov–Smirnov test

Variable	Criterion	K-S test level of significance
Opportunities and threats	assessment	0.134
Strengths and weaknesses	assessment	0.846

According to above table, since the level of significance of the variable is higher than 0.05, there is no evidence rejecting the hypothesis H_0 and, therefore, normality of sample distribution is accepted.

4.2. Testing the research’s question

Research’s question: as viewed by first-stage elementary school teachers as well as managers and assistants of the educational units, what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats confronted by the National Strategic Curriculum?

With regard to the distribution value of the sample under investigation and normal distribution, average comparison test, i.e., T-test is applied. In statistical terms, hypotheses of this test are shown as:

$H_0: \mu \leq 3$

$H_1: \mu > 3$

The following table exhibits the output of descriptive statistics of assessment regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Table 2. average values of evaluability assessment indices

	assessment indices	Average
Opportunities and threats	Executive supervision	2.84
Strengths and weaknesses	proportionality of implementation of performance tests with learning levels of students	3.5
	attention to individual differences	3.48
	parental acquaintance with descriptive evaluation	2.94

Above table indicates that among assessment indices, parental acquaintance with descriptive evaluation serves as a weakness and executive supervision as a threat, since their average is lower than 3.

According to the results of this test, this can be asserted that average indices of proportionality of implementation of performance tests with learning levels of students and attention to individual differences of students are higher than the tested amount, i.e., 3. They're thus strengths as verified by the following table.

Table 3. Compare test average values of assessment

Confidence distance (95 percent)		Difference of sample average with tested amount	Level of significance	Degree of freedom	t-statistic	Criterion	
Upper limit	Lower limit						
-0.3480	-0.0219	0.06304	0.083	191	1.751	parental acquaintance with descriptive evaluation	Opportunities and weaknesses
0.6510	0.3480	0.50	0.000	191	6.536	proportionality of implementation of performance tests with learning levels of students	
0.4677	0.976	0.48256	0.023	191	1.880	attention to individual differences	
-0.4459	-0.323	-0.16321	0.084	191	6.197	Executive supervision	

According to results of above table, as viewed by first-stage elementary school teachers as well as managers and assistants of the educational units, the National Strategic Curriculum is confronted with weaknesses in terms of parental acquaintance with descriptive evaluation and executive supervision and with strengths in terms of attention to individual differences and proportionality of implementation of performance tests with learning levels of students.

First minor question: What are the solutions and strategies appropriate for improvement of the National Strategic Curriculum as per the SWOT analysis arising from this research's findings?

SWOT analysis was used by the researcher to find the answers to above question. As alluded to in the previous section, eight stages are to be passed in order to construct a SWOT matrix:

1. Develop a list of major opportunities which are outside the organization.
2. Develop a list of major threats which are outside the organization.
3. Develop a list of major strengths within the organization.
4. Develop a list of major weaknesses within the organization.
5. Compare internal strengths and external opportunities and insert the results in SO cell.
6. Compare internal weaknesses and external opportunities and insert the results in WO cell.
7. Compare internal strengths and external threats and insert the results in ST cell.
8. Compare internal weaknesses and external threats and insert the results in WT cell.

So far, stages 1 to 4 are completed a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the National Strategic Curriculum are provided as viewed by first-stage elementary school teachers as well as managers and assistants of the educational units. Now, this is to insert above items into the SWOT pattern, as follows:

Table 4. SWOT analysis

	Strengths	Weaknesses:
	S1:proportionality of implementation of performance tests with learning levels of students S2:attention to individual differences of students	W1: lack of sufficient parental acquaintance with descriptive evaluation
Opportunities	SO Strategies	WO Strategies
Threats	ST Strategies	WT Strategies
T4: lack of executive supervisions	ST1: proportionality of implementation of performance tests with physical and mental abilities of students increases their learning levels and minimizes the lack of supervision. ST2: proportionality of implementation of performance tests with mental abilities of students provokes actualization of educational objectives and minimizes the internal supervision threat in practice. ST3: relying on personal differences among students, self-esteem levels increase and lack of supervision is decreased through implementation of self-assessment applications.	WT1: increased parental awareness from descriptive evaluation prevents the threat lack of executive supervision. WT2: compatible educational packages in the teaching process reduce the lack of internet supporting.

The second minor question is as follows:

As viewed by first-stage elementary school teachers as well as managers and assistants of the educational units, what is the current status of the National Strategic Curriculum regarding its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats?

Due to normality of the assessment variable, above question was examined using comparison of average of a community under investigation. Evidence shows that two strengths and one threat are involved. The threat lack of sufficient supervision in evaluation only exacerbates the supervision process. And, not acquaintance of parents with complementary educational plans aimed at evaluation using National Curriculum Plans highlights the threat lack of supervision. Thus, findings suggest that weaknesses are to be strengthened to eliminate other parameters and threats therein. For instance, despite the strength personal differences regarding the assessment variable, the threat lack of supervision can be reduced. Applying the same strategy and using the strength proportionality of implementation of performance tests with self-assessment, students are endowed with higher responsibility levels, provoking higher supervisions and less threat in the lack of supervision index.

Table 5. opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses obtained from the research process

Criterion	Indices
opportunities	
threats	1. Insufficiency of supervision in evaluation
strengths	1. proportionality of implementation of performance tests with learning levels of students 2. attention to personal differences
weaknesses	Unawareness of parents about descriptive evaluation process

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion of social research usually is composed of three sections. Firstly, allusion to main lines of scientific methodology; secondly, introduction of new achievements arising from the research; and, finally, provision of practical suggestions. The researcher, thus, intends to present the topics under the following rubrics:

1. Allusion to main lines of scientific methodology;
2. Introduction of new achievements arising from the research;
3. Provision of practical suggestions (Kivi and Comphood, 2010: 251).

The present research was an attempt to offer a new recognition out of identification of strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities in the National Strategic Curriculum respecting assessment in the first-stage primary school, in which statistical tests showed that which indices are identified by teachers at Marivan Town primary schools as opportunities and threats and which are known to be strengths and weaknesses.

On the other hand, as per the same results obtained from statistical tests regarding the National Strategic Curriculum, two strengths, one weakness, no opportunities, and one threat were identified by teachers, managers, and assistants at Marivan Town primary schools. In addition, suggestions were offered regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats using SWOT analysis.

What are the solutions and strategies appropriate for improvement of the National Strategic Curriculum as per the SWOT analysis arising from this research's findings? The researcher used SWOT analysis to provide replies for above question. He extracted two states of weaknesses, threats (WT), and strengths, and threats (ST) from among four states of strategies, according to which following suggestions are made:

5.1. Suggestions regarding weaknesses and threats, i.e., WT strategies:

- WT1: Increased levels of parental awareness from descriptive evaluation prevent lack of executive supervision;
- WT2: Compatible educational packages in the teaching process reduce the lack of internet supporting.

5.2. Suggestions regarding strengths and threats, i.e., ST strategies:

- ST1: Proportionality of implementation of performance tests with physical and mental abilities of students increases their learning levels and minimizes the lack of supervision.
- ST2: Proportionality of implementation of performance tests with mental abilities of students provokes actualization of educational objectives and minimizes the internal supervision threat in practice.
- ST3: Relying on personal differences among students, self-esteem levels increase and lack of supervision is decreased through implementation of self-assessment applications.

6. Suggestions for Future Research

Though deep and broad, a research initiative is expansible. Therefore, authors are to suppose themselves as working on a path which would be completed by others. This is important to note that continuation of an original work will be original, since continuation is not a synonym of repetition, but an incomplete path which is to be continued (Mansourian, 2010: 128). Thus, the author makes the following suggestions for future researchers:

- I. SWOT analysis was set by the author as basis of the present study. This is proposed to make use of other models including SPACE and QSPM models to present appropriate solutions and more efficient strategies.
- II. The present study set its analytical eyes only on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as viewed by first-stage elementary school teachers as well as managers and assistants of the educational units. Above items are proposed to be investigated as viewed by students and their parents, too.

- III. A limited statistical population including around 190 people was selected in this research. The research is proposed to grow larger in its scope in order to enable better identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the National Strategic Curriculum Plan.
- IV. The strategies suggested by the author are proposed to be examined, evaluated, and prioritized using multi-index decision-making methods such as AHP and TOPSIS.

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