

**Investigating the Quality and Quantity of Life Skills
Incorporated in the Most-Read Books of the Institute for
Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents (from 2006
to 2016)**

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Introduction

Every social human being must acquire the ten life skills to an acceptable extent. If these skills are properly learned from childhood, they can lead to adaptable behavior towards others and the world around in adulthood. These skills can be taught to and institutionalized I children by the use of children's books, especially fiction books, which are powerful tools in this regard. This study aims at investigating the quantity and quality of life skills incorporated in the most-read books of children. The researchers seek the answer to this question: to what extent are life skills incorporated in children's books and how each skill is presented in the story?

Methodology, Literature Review and Purpose

This study was conducted with a descriptive-analytical approach. The statistical population consists of popular books of children while the statistical samples are the most-read children's books which have been selected by purposive sampling method. It is a theoretical study for which data is collected through library research. First, the countrywide list of the most-read works of children in age group B and C was extracted from 2006 to 2016 by referring to the libraries of the Institutes for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents in Fars province. Then, the books were analyzed to see how and to what extent they include life skills.

Content analysis is qualitative since the books were analyzed based on the way they cover life-skills; it is also quantitative because the frequency of skills in statistical samples was investigated. Therefore, the present study is qualitative-quantitative in terms of data. Data was collected through libraries and analyzed in a qualitative-quantitative content analysis method.

After investigating the most-read books, it was concluded that children's choices can be trusted because children, like adults, prefer to read something that teaches them a point. Among the most-read books, translated books (15) are more than books originally written in Persian (13). Interestingly, three skills of “critical thinking”, “empathy” and “communication skills” have the most frequency whether in books written in Persian or translated books.

There are a number of articles dealing with life-skills in children’s works. Some have examined life-skills in textbooks for children and adolescents, and some have considered them in non-textbooks. A

number of these studies, which have criticized the works written about life-skills, examine all kinds of skills, and the others have analyzed one type of skills in specific works. The two skills of critical thinking and creative thinking have a special place in studies which deal with a specific skill.

The conducted studies indicate that all kinds of skills have been presented in children's books. Some skills have been more frequent in works related to children and some of them have been mentioned with less frequency. No research has investigated life-skills in children's most-read and favorite books in order to determine the extent and frequency of these skills in these books. The present study analyzed all kinds of life-skills in the most-read books available to children from different aspects.

Discussion

Critical thinking skill is presented in two ways in the stories under study. In some stories, the protagonists are victorious due to the benefit of critical thinking; in some stories, the main or secondary characters are defeated due to the lack of this skill; and finally, in some other stories, the character becomes aware of his mistake and the story ends happily. In these stories, three components of “not commenting without any research”, “not trusting others too soon” and “examining all aspects of the issues” have the most frequency, respectively.

Communication is the second most frequent skill in the most-read stories. It is discussed in several ways in these books, with components such as “paying attention to people's positive points for better communication”, “friendship skill”, “the importance of empathy with

others in relationships”, “anger and rage which undermine relationships”, and “confidence”.

Empathy is the third most frequent skill in the selected books. The components of “kindness”, “the ability to understand other people's problems”, “knowing other people's needs”, “understanding other people's characteristics” and “looking at the world like others” are seen in these stories.

Decision-making and problem solving skills are presented equally in the stories. Three components of “the decision to make a change”, “benevolent decision-making” and “the decision to take risks” are seen in stories in which decision-making skill exist. Two components of “problem solving by wisdom and logic”, and “problem solving by creative thinking” are seen in the stories which include problem solving skill. Most characters use wisdom and logic to solve their problems.

Three skills of “self-awareness”, “controlling negative emotions”, and “creative thinking” are discussed in the stories with the lowest frequency.

Conclusion

After comparing the findings of this study with the findings of previous ones, it was concluded that all life skills are discussed in different ways in children's and adolescents' books, except that some skills are more paid attention to and some skills less.

The results show that children are competent in choosing their own books. It is necessary to provide children with libraries with appropriate literature books which can have desirable educational

effects on them, and also to introduce and recommend proper books based on the needs of children.

Keywords

Life skills, Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents, most-read children's books, critical thinking, communication skills

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