

Investigation of Citizenship Scopes in All Islamic Azad Universities (Mazandaran Province of Iran)

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Abstract: Citizenship education has undergone deep transformation in the 21st century due to globalization, excellent relations between countries, increase in cultural, language and ethnic diversity. It necessitates educational systems, including higher education systems, to organize commensurate educational programs so as to meet the students' knowledge, attitude and skill requirements and to prepare them for interaction in local, national, regional and international dimensions in the political, economical, social and cultural areas. Considering the significance of citizenship education in higher education system, an attempt is made to investigate this subject in the units of Mazandaran Province Islamic Azad University in order to determine the performance of these academic centers in this region. Therefore, it was intended to analyze the citizenship knowledge, attitude and skills of the students of Mazandaran Province Islamic Azad University to determine the impact of higher education on these citizenship parameters. The research method is survey-based. The statistical society includes students of Mazandaran Province Azad University. The sampling was done by systematic random method; Kerjesi and Morgan tables were used to determine the sample range suggesting that 1200 persons participated in this research. The evaluation tool was a questionnaire containing 58 queries about citizenship parameters (citizenship knowledge, attitude and skill) based on the Likret scale. Face and content validities were applied in the design of questionnaire and its reliability was evaluated to be 0.764 using Kronbach alpha. The research data were analyzed by means of SPSS software comprising descriptive methods, "t" test and independent "t" test. As implied by the results, no significant difference was observed among the students except for citizenship skill. Thus, it can be stated that Mazandaran Province Islamic Azad University does not have considerable effect on the citizenship knowledge, attitude and skill of the studied society.

Key words: Investigation • Citizenship scopes • Islamic Azad University • Mazandaran Province • Iran

INTRODUCTION

Investigation of Different Aspects of the Research:

This research is a survey-based approach regarding the descriptive method; survey research is one of the operational methods of descriptive research, which incorporates observing phenomena in order to interpret the different aspects of the gathered data. Survey researches emphasize on determining the condition of a certain statistical population with respect to specific variables. These researches principally investigate the current situation (status quo) and in fact, they are aimed to evaluate the existing condition without questioning about its cause. This study is also a kind of scientific research regarding the objective. The scientific research

is the procedure in which one seeks neither for a theory nor wishes to test the theory but the intention is to resolve the observed problem via scientific considerations. The current research is thematically in the area of training and psychological sciences. The statistical society of this research comprises 73851 students of Mazandaran Province Islamic Azad University in four faculties, namely the Humanities, Medical Sciences, Technical and Engineering and Fundamental Sciences (Table 1).

Statistical sample and its range: various methods can be used for selection of sample range including the following formula:

$$N = Z^2 P (1 - D) / d^2 \quad (1)$$

Table 1: Frequency distribution of sample range considering the gender and studied faculties

Tonkabon	Sari	Ghaemshahr	Babol	Groups	Statistical Index	Total
8500	10023	12902	6137	Frequency of the sub-group		37562
0.23	0.27	0.34	0.16	Ratio of the sub-group to the society		1
276	324	408	192	Ration of sample to the society		1200

Having balancing variables such as gender and different sub-groups, the sample range was increased to 1200 persons. The following table shows the frequency distribution of the sample range with respect to the gender and constituent sub-groups as well as the ratios. Note that selecting $p=0.5$ in this formula indicates the maximal sample range.

Sampling Method: Following the selection of sample range in the respective variables of academic majors and gender, probable random systematic sampling (layered sampling) was used to fill the questionnaire. This method is applied when the statistical society includes sub-sets or sub-groups. The distinctive feature of this sampling method is in having random characteristic as well as selecting the sample from the statistical society.

Data Gathering Tools: The information for this research was acquired via two methods.

Studying the Documents, Credentials and Research Records: The intention was comprehending the extent and scope of the research and designing the research questions as well as becoming familiar with the research works of other researchers and relevant theories to the subject.

Questionnaire: Questionnaires are the main data-gathering tool in the field-case survey researches. For designing the questionnaire in this investigation, some researches were applied in three scopes of citizenship knowledge, attitude and skill [1-5].

It must be noted that since the research is not independently conducted for investigation of citizenship knowledge, attitude and skill of students thus, various researches in the area of the respective criteria were utilized for preparing the questionnaire. Opinions of political and social sciences professors as well as internet and newspapers were used for designing the questions concerning the evaluation of the awareness of society and world events criterion. In this way, the important society and world events in the recent months were extracted and two questions were included for evaluating this criterion. The respondents were asked to mention 5

instances of important world events and 5 instances of the society happenings. The grading was done in the following manner; the grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were assigned for mentioning the respective number of instances of events. Study questionnaire had been designed to investigate the level of tendency toward the national identity among the youth. For preparing the questions concerning the criterion of “interest in protection of the environment” (citizenship attitude aspect). The latter had been designed with the intention of evaluation of environmental behaviors of the teachers. Some theories concerning the types of citizenship rights were applied in order to prepare the questions for the “awareness of the rights” criterion (citizenship knowledge aspect) [4-6]. The other questions were also arranged based upon Likret spectrum; the grading system of the questions was as follows (Table 2):

- Grade 1 for very low level and “I completely disagree”.
- Grade 2 for low level and “I disagree”.
- Grade 3 for moderate level .
- Grade 4 for high level and “I agree”.
- Grade 5 for very high level and “I absolutely agree”.

Validity and Reliability of the Evaluation Tool: Validity and reliability are two main features in the design of questionnaire queries, which are taken into account in conducting researches.

Validity: Corrective comments of professors of training and psychological sciences have been used for evaluating the content and face validities of the questionnaire queries. Professors’ comments have been considered in the revision of some of the questions.

Reliability: A reliability coefficient equal to 0.805 was evaluated by experimental execution (before the final implementation) and using SPSS statistical software which indicates intrinsic homogeneity of the questionnaire queries. The reliability coefficient was calculated equal to 0.764 after the execution of all questionnaires; Kronbach alpha formula was applied for computation of reliability [7-8].

Table 2: Distribution of Questionnaire queries for the studied variables

Citizenship skill	Citizenship attitude	Citizenship knowledge	Scopes
Critical thought	Patriotism	Awareness of world and society events	Criteria
Accountability	Interest in protection of the environment	Awareness of political parties	
Participation	Acceptance of diversity and pluralism	Awareness of personal and international rights	
Decision-making			

Table 3: Correspondence of hypotheses with test of each hypothesis

Row	Test	Hypothesis
1	Single group t	Students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship parameters
2	Single group t	Students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship knowledge parameters
3	Single group t	Students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship skill parameters
4	Single group t	Students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship attitude parameters
5	2-group t	Male and female students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship parameters
6	2-group t	Male and female students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship knowledge parameters
7	2-group t	Male and female students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship skill parameters
8	2-group t	Male and female students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship attitude parameters

Table 4: Variance test of citizenship scopes

Variable	Variance Error	Variance	Average	Number
Citizenship knowledge	0.02076	0.70921	2.4327	1167
Awareness of the rights	0.02095	0.71431	2.5709	1163
Awareness of the society and world events	0.03900	1.33901	2.0577	1179
Knowledge about the political parties	0.02912	1.00005	2.3011	1179
Citizenship attitude	0.01223	0.41881	2.9445	1172
Patriotism	0.02066	0.70684	3.2733	1171
Interest in protection of the environment	0.02397	0.82061	2.4804	1172
Acceptance of diversity and pluralism	0.01609	0.54904	2.8446	1165
Citizenship skill	0.02002	0.68581	3.1697	1173
Accountability	0.02276	0.77940	2.5789	1173
Participation	0.02802	0.96093	2.5876	1176
Critical thought	0.01609	0.54904	2.3488	1161
Decision-making ability	0.02970	1.01709	3.4501	1173

Data Analysis Method: The gathered data were analyzed using the descriptive and deductive statistics with the aid of SPSS and mini-tab software. Descriptive statistics were applied for adjustment of tables, calculation of percentages, plotting diagrams and computation of central and scattering indices. Then, in order to extend the results of the sample to the society, deductive statistics of single-group “t” test, independent 2-group “t” test and single-factor variance analysis test were used. Single-sample “t” test was used for determining the level of students’ citizenship knowledge, attitude and skill. Independent “t” test was used for comparison of averages of citizenship parameters among the different genders and sub-groups and finally one-sided variance analysis test was applied for comparison of averages of faculties. It must be also noted that the grades have been assigned on the basis of 5, i.e. the grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 denote very low, low, moderate, high and very high levels respectively (Table 3).

Description and Analysis of the Questionnaire Data Are as Below:

- Description of context variables of the research.
- Human Rights and Citizenship Education in Elementary Education Curricula.
- Questionnaire distribution with respect to the gender.
- Questionnaire distribution with respect to the type of faculty.
- Questionnaire distribution with respect to the year the students were admitted into the University.
- Questionnaire distribution with respect to the place where the students permanently live.
- Questionnaire distribution with respect to the occupation.
- Questionnaire distribution with respect to the sub-group.

The pattern in this section for description and analysis of data was applied as, For verifying the research hypotheses, we first describe the data in terms of citizenship knowledge and its parameters (awareness of the world and society events, knowledge about the political parties and awareness of the rights), citizenship attitude and its parameters (patriotism, acceptance of diversity and pluralism and interest in protection of the environment) and citizenship skill and its parameters (accountability, decision-making, critical thought and participation); the statistical tests will be subsequently applied for analysis [7-8].

Variance Test of Citizenship Scopes: Variances of citizenship knowledge and its parameters, citizenship attitude and its parameters and citizenship skill and its parameters among the students have been displayed in Table 4.

As indicated by the data of the table, the average of students' citizenship knowledge (2.4327) is below the moderate level implying the students do not have the required citizenship knowledge. Awareness of the society and world's events has the lowest mean among the citizenship knowledge parameters. The average of citizenship attitude (2.9445) is below the moderate level indicating the fact that the students' citizenship attitude is below the moderate level. Patriotism has the highest average (3.1697) among the citizenship attitude parameters. The above data also shows that the average of citizenship skill is higher than the moderate level (3.1697). Therefore, it can be concluded that the students enjoy a relatively high citizenship skill. The smallest average among the citizenship skill parameters belongs to critical thought (2.3488).

Analysis and Discussion: Single-sample deductive 't' test and descriptive test statistics were used for verifying the first hypothesis, i.e. whether or not the students have citizenship knowledge, attitude and skill. The levels of students' citizenship knowledge, attitude and skill have been demonstrated in the table (2-4) of the deductive findings of the fourth chapter. According to the results in the aforementioned table, it can be deduced that the students in this research do not enjoy an acceptable level of citizenship knowledge, considering the average of the moderate level (3), because the average of students' citizenship knowledge (2.4327) is below the moderate level, as indicated in the data of the table. Among the citizenship knowledge parameters, awareness of the

society and world events (2.0527) assumes the lowest average while the average of students' citizenship attitude (2.9445) is also below the moderate level in this research and patriotism has the highest average (3.2733) among the citizenship attitude parameters. The above data also suggest that the average of citizenship skill (3.1697) is higher than the moderate level, signifying the fact that students enjoy citizenship skills. The smallest average belongs to critical thought (2.3488) among the citizenship skill parameters. Based on study, three interconnected parameters considered, namely, citizenship knowledge, citizenship skill and citizenship attitude, as the principal elements for explanation of the significance of citizenship concept and beliefs that citizenship training signifies development of citizenship knowledge, skill and attitude in the learners [9]. Other also mentioned citizenship knowledge, attitude and skill as important factors in citizenship training [10]. Kerr [7] supposes the citizenship training as preparation for playing citizenship roles and responsibilities in the general outline. That is, while amongst the respective citizenship scopes in this research, the students' citizenship knowledge was relatively weak, their citizenship attitude was barely moderate and the citizenship skill was higher than the moderate level. These findings are in accordance with those of research by some studies [9-10]. The results of the latter researches indicated that in the opinion of studied individuals, citizenship attitude is more significantly important as compared to citizenship knowledge and skill. This result might be because in society more propaganda is allocated for parameters of citizenship attitude (patriotism and protection of environment). The findings of research by other study implied that there is no considerable difference between the citizenship knowledge and awareness of 14-years old individuals of the studied countries, while there is more variation in the attitudes of the people in different countries. They also concluded that countries must make efforts to promote their citizenship training [10-11]. The findings of other investigation indicate that citizenship education should equip the learners with appropriate knowledge, attitudes, skills and behavioral states [12].

Single-variable "t" test was used to answer the second hypothesis; i.e. whether the students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship knowledge or not. Based on the calculated "t" value ($t = -27.324$) and its significance level ($p = 0.000$), it can be stated that there is no significant difference between the students with regard to citizenship knowledge level,

because the calculated “t” value is below 1.98 and its significance level is greater than 0.05. The findings of this research are in line with those of the others [5-8]. Among the citizenship knowledge parameters, awareness of the rights and awareness of the society and world events and knowledge about the political parties do not exhibit significant differences. While it was assumed that there is higher level of awareness of the society and world events as well as awareness of the rights, but the results of “t” test in relation with comparison of the citizenship knowledge average proved that attending university was not remarkably influential on the citizenship knowledge. It seems that the higher education system has not been very successful in the enhancement of students’ citizenship knowledge. In this regard, some works accentuate on the point that the universities should take into account the citizenship knowledge in their programs. The performance of higher education system seems unsuccessful in enhancement of citizenship knowledge in universities. Whilst training a good citizen is one of the objectives of higher education and political awareness and knowledge about the government performance and personal and international rights are parameters of citizenship knowledge [3,6,10]. Hence, the higher education as an academic institute should at least provide this knowledge. Accordingly, the universities should take the necessary measures for education of personal and international rights and enhancement of political awareness through proper investigations and planning. Including a program for education of the rights as a general course in the university curriculums can be a good solution for this problem. This question might occur in the minds of many people: “is it necessary to provide all the trainings in the university while students can achieve the required information in the area of citizenship knowledge in other ways?” The possible answer to this question is that many general courses are currently taught in the universities without having necessary efficiency for the students, whilst no attention is paid to the most vital requirement of people, which is acquaintance with personal and international rights.

Single-variable “t” test was applied for verifying the third hypothesis stating whether students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have a citizenship attitude. Based on the computed “t” value ($t=-4.533$) and its significance level ($p=0.000$), it can be inferred that there is no significant difference among the students with respect to citizenship attitude. There is agreement between these findings and those of the research by the others [7-9].

Among the citizenship attitude parameters, averages of “interest in protection of the environment” and “acceptance of diversity and pluralism” were insignificant while the “patriotism” parameter assumes a significant difference among the students. In other words, average of “patriotism” was greater than other parameters in this study. It seems that attending university has increased the patriotic sensations of students but two other important elements of citizenship attitude, namely protection of the environment and acceptance of diversity and pluralism, have been neglected. It is vivid that these two parameters can be reinforced using appropriate and effective training methods. The prerequisite is in creating a free atmosphere in the classrooms and an acceptance of such an attitude, by the professors. Due to the presence of people with various notions and an attendance of different social groups, a university atmosphere and the classrooms are suitable media for flourishing of diversity and pluralism and the respecting of different beliefs. The professors can teach the acceptance of diverse and occasionally opposite attitudes using different strategies. The students will not appreciate the value and complexity of different and diverse attitudes unless they experience them in the classes. Therefore, it is crucial to enable the students to talk and argue about the different subjects in the free atmosphere of the classroom; it is obvious that this is only possible when students have a positive impression of the class; an atmosphere in which the student feels relaxed and secure to express his/her attitudes and opinions. The students need to realize that the professors are willing to hear of and talk about, the different attitudes and the fact that their opinions are respected and if they continuously listen to different points of view, they will be more capable of accepting opposite opinions.

Single-variable “t” test was applied for verifying the fourth hypothesis questioning whether or not students of Mazandaran Islamic Azad University have citizenship skill. Based on the computed “t” value ($t=-8.427$) and its significance level ($p=0.000$), it can be inferred that there is no significant difference among the students with respect to citizenship attitude. There is agreement between these findings and those of the research by other works [12,14].

Among the citizenship skill parameters, averages of “critical thought”, “accountability,” and “participation” were not significant while the “decision-making” parameter had a significant difference among the students signifying that an average of decision-making is greater than other parameters in this research.

It seems that attending university has enhanced accurate decision-making but the higher education system has not been successful in some of the citizenship skill parameters. The findings for critical thought, accountability and participation are in accordance with the results of the researches by others [10-12]. These results indicate that the students do not have the necessary skills of critical thought and accountability. In fact, the higher education system does not practically have any program for bringing up the critical thought and accountability, which can be a worrying problem for the current generation and for the posterities. It seems that universities in consideration of citizenship skills originate from the governing attitude that believes the students are supposed to prepare merely for specializing and gaining professional skills and will be inhibited from reaching the main goal of universities - which is gaining the professional skills- if they devote their time learning citizenship skills. Nonetheless, if this attitude is rethought and corrected the conditions for the flourishing of citizenship skills will be provided.

For answering the fifth hypothesis that states whether there is any difference between citizenship parameters of female and male students; based on the computed "t" value ($t=-7.325$) and its significance level ($p=0.000$), it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between citizenship parameters of female and male students. Explicitly speaking, the average of parameters for male students is greater than that of female students. The citizenship knowledge of male students is greater than that of female students. There is agreement between these findings and those of the researches by other investigations [5,8,13].

For verification of the sixth hypothesis which speculates whether there is any difference between citizenship knowledge parameters of female and male students, based on the computed "t" value ($t=-6.184$) and its significance level ($p=0.000$), it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between citizenship parameters of female and male students. Explicitly speaking, the average of parameters for male students is greater than that of female students. Among the citizenship knowledge parameters, there exists a significant difference for the averages of awareness of the rights ($P=0.000$) and awareness of the society and world events ($P=0.000$) and knowledge about the political parties ($P=0.01$) between the female and male students. Higher citizenship knowledge of male students is due to their favorite fields of interest

and to their social position; men are more willing to have political knowledge, they consider themselves more influential because they will be given careers in the future, which are more likely to influence others. Society expects more from them and this leads to intending to fulfill the society's expectations and to achieving the citizenship knowledge. Political participation and knowledge are closely related to political development. The results of the research of some works concerning the political interest of men and women are suggestive of the fact that women as compared to the men feature lower level of interest in politics, political efficiency feeling and willingness to achieve political information [9-13]. The higher level of male students' citizenship knowledge might be attributed to reasons such as more presence in social environments, more access to political information and finally the prevalent social norms, which consider the politics a masculine affair. Women's political willingness is mostly formed inside the family and house depending on the social possibilities and circumstances. According to other works, the culture and sociability of people are related to the level of their political knowledge [14].

For verification of the seventh hypothesis speculating if there are differences between citizenship attitude parameters of female and male students; based on the computed "t" value ($t=-2.433$) and its significance level ($p=0.015$), it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between citizenship parameters of female and male students. Explicitly speaking, the averages of citizenship attitude parameters for male and female students were not significantly different ($p=0.015$). Among the citizenship attitude parameters, the largest differences belonged to the averages of "patriotism" ($P=0.000$) between the female and male students, i.e. average of patriotism of male students is greater than that of female students, while no significant difference was observed between the male and female students for the average of parameters of "acceptance of diversity and pluralism" and "interest in protection of the environment".

For verification of the 8th hypothesis which speculates whether or not there is any difference between citizenship skill parameters of female and male students; based on the computed "t" value ($t=-3.603$) and its significance level ($p=0.000$), it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between citizenship parameters of female and male students. In other words, the average of these parameters for male students is greater than that of female students.

Among the citizenship skill parameters, there is a significant difference for the accountability ($P=0.00$) parameter between male and female students. In other words, the average of accountability is greater for male students compared to that of female students in this research. Their different sociability and psychological aspects cause the contrast between men and women in the above findings. The study conducted by some works concerning the different characteristics of men and women indicates that women are more sensitive, more dependent, more emotional, relativistic and more accountable and more cautious [11]. The careful manner of women has been confirmed by psychologists like Glikian; influenced by this moral orientation, women are directed to maintain the personal relationships and undertake the responsibilities [12-13]. However, there is no significant difference between the averages of other parameters such as critical thought, participation and undertaking responsibilities. These parameters are poorly taken into account in the higher education system while development of critical thought capabilities and problem solving is not a new phenomenon among the male and female students in academic centers. Such willingness dates back to Plato's academy. Unfortunately, the educational system has deviated from its traditional course and is mainly aimed at transferring the scientific information and facts. These findings are in accordance with the results of the research of some studies [12-14]. Since the citizenship skills (accountability, critical thought, decision-making, participation and problem-solving) are obtained via involving the students in solving the problems, assigning responsibilities to students, using students' ideas in the decisions and planning, respecting their opinions and contending with the challenges; therefore, it is essentially required to have active teaching methods. As this research is the first investigation and is considered as a pioneer research in the field of analyzing the education of citizenship scopes, it has been able to investigate only a couple of the citizenship parameters. Thus, subsequent researches can investigate the other parameters to attain a clearer image of the citizenship education in the universities [14-18].

CONCLUSIONS

Citizenship education has been deeply transformed in the 21st century due to globalization, excellent relations between countries, increase in cultural, language and

ethnic diversity. It necessitates the educational systems- including the higher education systems- to organize commensurate educational programs so as to meet the students' knowledge, attitude and skill requirements and to prepare them for interaction in local, national, regional and international realms in the political, economical, social and cultural areas. Considering the significance of citizenship education in the higher education system, it is attempted to investigate this subject in the units of Mazandaran Province Islamic Azad Universities in order to determine the performance of these academic centers in this area. Face and content validity was applied in the design of questionnaires and its reliability was calculated through Kronbach alpha to be equal to 0.764. The research data were analyzed using SPSS software comprising descriptive methods and dependent "t" test and independent "t" test. As indicated by the results, no significant difference was observed among the students except for the parameter of citizenship skill. Therefore, it can be concluded that Mazandaran Province Islamic Azad University do not have considerable effects on the citizenship knowledge, attitude and skill.

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