A Study on the Feasibility of Promoting the Functions of Traditional Schools in Line With the Implementation of Smart Schools in Iran

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ABSTRACT

This article describes how today’s traditional Iranian schools need to be reorganized to comply with the requirements established in the knowledge and communication fields, based on modern societies, because they are part of an increasingly globalised and complex world. Since 2010, this has been important because the Iranian Government required schools to become “smart,” with particular attention given to the knowledge and the skills that come from using modern technology, such as computers and the internet. Because of this there has been a large research effort promoting and monitoring the approach of schools to ICT. In this article, the results of one of the researches carried out in Karaj (the second biggest city in Iran) are reported. This research investigated the availability of ICT structures through a survey on the point of view of teachers and headmasters. The random sampling method regarded 300 teachers and 20 headmasters to whom two sets of questionnaires were given in order to verify and collect their opinions on the different aspects of ICT implementation. The reliability of these questionnaires has been evaluated by Cronbach’s alpha (0.87). The research findings have clearly shown that in Karaj the teachers’ knowledge and skills of integrating information technology in everyday teaching are at intermediate level, while infrastructures and equipment considered essential for the implementation of smart schools are at a low level.

KEYWORDS
Development, Feasibility, Making Smart Schools, Regular Schools, Smart Schools

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INTRODUCTION

In Iran, basic traditional education, called Darolfonoon, was established 170 years ago. A century ago, on the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Culture, different types of schools were established: a) primary school for rural areas; b) religious primary schools for urban areas; c) secondary schools; d) high schools.

In this context, in 2010, a reform in the educational system took place: schools were authorized to establish new training approaches with “smart” structures and equipment. Schools were named “semi-smart”.

Thus, a process of renovation in the educational system began. This has led to the establishment of secondary schools called “smart”.

The most important aspect of these schools is that teaching and learning are based on the use of modern technology, so that students are educated and trained by efficient and expert staff able to guarantee well planned curricula and appropriate support (Asemi, 2006). These schools encourage active thinking, and the environment itself persuades students to use personal computers. The Internet and the intranet are considered efficient research and communication tools. They allow students to access online libraries and facilities such as e-mail, video conferencing, and discussion rooms for their educational tasks and school homework (Kousha & Abdoli, 2004).

The Importance of Knowledge and Teaching Skills if Smart Schools

In smart schools, teachers have a leading role. Their training is, therefore, a very important activity in order to succeed in their teaching (Davies, 1993). Teachers are the first providers of knowledge and they have to promote and support a continuous learning process for all members of a smart society, so that they can act in the best of ways, improving their professional performance and using technology efficiently. (Sang, Valcke, van Braak & Tondeur, 2010).

A Study on the Feasibility of the Promotion of Functions in Standard Schools According to the Implementation of Smart Schools

Research findings have shown how some factors such as IT skills, personality traits, the ability to use information and communication technology, institutional support and other factors can affect the readiness of teachers and distance learning students. The key to a correct use of information and communication technologies is therefore to be researched in teaching and learning, in the ICT qualifications of the teachers and in their experiences.

Necessary Equipment and Infrastructures for Smart Schools

First of all, to create smart schools, a long-term program must be considered. So that a school can become a smart one, more than ten years may be necessary, in the course of which adequate equipment, communication infrastructure, and appropriate cultural contents must be provided. Furthermore, teacher training courses and new teaching methods are needed; and also, action on parents’ culture (Mahmoudi et al., 2008).
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