



Validation of the School-Society Connection Model in Iran

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Abstract: The aim of the present study was to validate the model of connecting schools and society in Iran. The research method used was a quantitative survey. The statistical population consisted of professors and experts in the fields of sociology of education, educational managers, and school principals with a minimum of 12 years of experience in Tehran in 2022. Among them, 40 professors and experts were selected using a purposive sampling method. The data collection tools included two researcher-made questionnaires, which were assessed for reliability and validity in the present study. To analyze the data, a t-test was used in the SPSS-22 software. The results indicated that the mentioned model has desirable credibility from the perspective of professors and experts in the fields of 1) conformity with global design principles, 2) acceptability, 3) credibility and compliance with documents, 4) usability, 5) comprehensiveness, 6) credibility, 7) attention to the pragmatism approach, and 8) attention to one of the challenges of education. Additionally, the results revealed that the mentioned model provides an accurate description and explanation of the status of the relationship between schools and society, and provides appropriate strategies for connecting schools and society. Therefore, given the deficiency of models in this area, it is suggested that educational planners pay attention to this model for connecting schools with society and designing goals and content in this regard. This model can be useful as a guide for designing educational goals, content, teaching and presentation methods, and ultimately evaluating program and learners' status.

Keywords: School-Society Connection Model, Iranian Society, Validation Study

Introduction

Social and technological developments have brought about new needs for contemporary societies. Globalization and fundamental changes in all aspects of life necessitate that individuals adapt their biological, psychological, and educational traits to these transformations ([Stromquist & Monkman, 2014](#)). Thus, changes in these traits have compelled human societies to consider measures to address new needs, challenges, and adaptations ([Waks, 2003](#)). Education plays a crucial and foundational role in the social, political, and cultural destiny of any country. Strengthening the scientific and educational foundation of a nation, transmitting culture to future generations, preserving the heritage of the past, enhancing national will, establishing sound political insight, fostering social relationships, and strengthening economic foundations are all functions of the educational system that can be significantly influenced by schools ([Rezaei Gazki et al., 2019](#)). Schools are among the most important and fundamental social institutions in any country, with an essential role in guiding, educating, and controlling individuals in various social, economic, cultural, and other functions ([Parsons, 2008](#)).

Besides academic learning, schools have other functions, such as promoting collaboration and cooperation, maintaining order, fostering healthy competition, fostering identity, teaching ethical principles etc. ([Chu et al., 2017](#)).

In the past half-century, the Iranian society has rapidly experienced numerous changes from various aspects, influenced by factors such as communication, urbanization, industrialization, and expansion of education ([Ghafari Esmaili et al., 2022](#)). While these changes have brought advantages in economic development, welfare levels, healthcare, and education, they have also introduced various challenges, including family instability, divorce, moral degradation, social vices, health problems, illiteracy, child labor, academic decline etc. ([Ghafari Esmaili et al., 2022](#)). Moreover, in the context of increasing unemployment in society, a portion of this problem can be attributed to the educational programs and curriculum of students. Curriculum can be revised to move from pure theory towards practicality and utilize students' free time for vocational training, enhancing their practical experiences to succeed in the job market ([Manouchehri & Burns, 2023](#)).

Overall, providing a platform for schools to connect with society and meet its needs has numerous benefits for the development of communities and their movement towards sustainable development ([Ballantine & Spade, 2011](#); [Widiatsih et al.](#)).

The connection between schools and society is a critical aspect of the education system that influences the overall development and progress of a nation. This interconnectedness reflects the dynamic relationship between educational institutions and the broader social context in which they operate. A robust school-society connection has been acknowledged as a vital factor in enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of education and fostering a cohesive and prosperous society ([Epstein, 2018](#)).

The concept of school-society connection encompasses various dimensions, including community engagement, parental involvement, societal values and norms, and the alignment of educational goals with the needs and aspirations of the society. This relationship is mutually beneficial, as schools play a crucial role in shaping the future of society through nurturing well-rounded, knowledgeable, and socially responsible citizens, while society, in turn, influences the direction and priorities of education ([Ball, 2012](#)).

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on strengthening the bond between schools and society, with policymakers, educators, and researchers recognizing the profound impact of this connection on educational outcomes and social development. Through effective strategies and policies, educational institutions can become vibrant hubs of community engagement, fostering partnerships with various stakeholders, including parents, local organizations, and businesses ([Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009](#)). Therefore, conducting research in this area, given the existing research gaps, can lead to better

understanding of the solutions. Based on recent considerations and focusing on higher-level documents of the education system, such as the Fundamental Transformation Document, reviewing related research and studies, and analyzing the opinions of experts, stakeholders, and educational system authorities, no research has yet addressed the design of a school-society connection model in Iran. Hence, this research aims to innovate and validate the proposed model called "School-Society Connection in Iran," which was designed by authors of current paper (figure 1). Accordingly, this paper aims to explore the multifaceted nature of the school-society connection, examining the role of effective policy-making, community involvement, and societal values in shaping educational practices. Drawing on relevant research and empirical evidence, this study seeks to shed light on the implications of a robust school-society connection for the quality of teaching and learning processes, as well as for the holistic development of students.

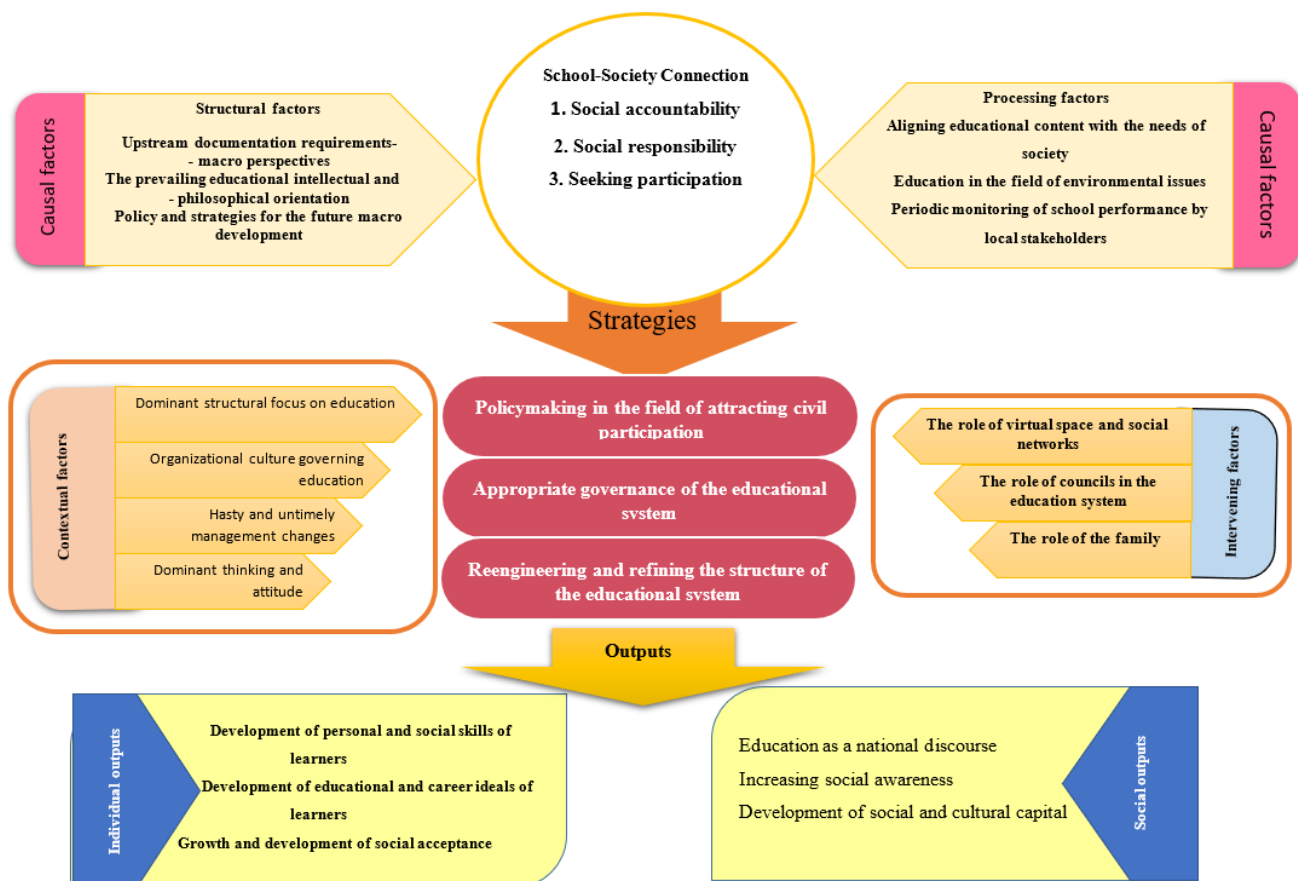


Figure 1. Process model of School-Society Connection

Material and Methods

The present research utilized a quantitative survey method, a data collection technique used to gather information about opinions, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, motivations, or characteristics of a group of individuals in a society. Survey is a scientific method used in social research, encompassing systematic and standardized approaches for collecting data about individuals, families, or larger groups within a community ([Leavy, 2022](#); [Moser & Kalton, 2017](#)). Survey can be both a tool for data collection and the processes involved in using that tool. In this study, a survey was conducted using questionnaires on a sample of individuals, selected from the population, including professors, experts in the fields of sociology of education, educational administrators, and school managers with a minimum of 12 years of experience in Tehran in 2022. The sample size consisted of 40 individuals, including professors, doctoral graduates, administrators, and teachers with more than 12 years of experience in schools selected through purposive sampling.

For data collection in this study, the researcher designed two researcher-developed questionnaires. The first questionnaire consisted of 8 Likert-scale items, designed to assess various aspects, including adherence to global design principles, acceptability, validity, alignment with documents, usability, comprehensiveness, credibility, and attention to pragmatism's approach and addressing one of the challenges in education ([Mohajan, 2020](#)). In the research process, the questionnaire was first developed based on relevant texts and successful models and patterns in the field of education. Then, with the guidance and assistance of the supervisor and consultant, it was refined and revised, and its final version was approved by the experts.

The second questionnaire also consisted of 6 open-ended items, designed to assess the unique characteristics of the proposed model. Similar to the first questionnaire, the second one was developed and refined through expert opinions and revised accordingly. To estimate the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha was used, and the internal reliability coefficient for the 'School-Society Connection Model' questionnaire was found to be 0.79, indicating a high level of reliability. Therefore, it can be concluded that the questionnaire items were consistent with each other and had high reliability. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS-22 software, employing descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics such as one-sample t-test for data analysis.

Results

Is the School-Society Connection Model in Iran internally valid?

The internal validity of the model refers to the reflection of experts' opinions and the improvement of the model. In the current research, a panel of experts was utilized. Initially, the formal validity of the

proposed model was examined in terms of global design principles, model perceptibility, coherence and consistency of components, ambiguities in expressions, and the presence of inadequacies in word meanings, based on the opinions of the supervisor and advisor professors. The model was revised accordingly. Then, the initial version of the model along with the first and second questionnaires was sent to professors and specialists for evaluation.

Findings from the first questionnaire indicate that this questionnaire measures the criteria of global design principles, usability, credibility, coherence, comprehensiveness, innovation, and acceptability of this model. These criteria are observable in Table 1. Additionally, to examine the qualitative content validity, experts were requested to provide their corrective opinions in the form of open-ended responses.

Table 1. Internal validation criteria of the model

Criterion	Item
Compliance with universal design principles	1. How complete are the dimensions of the proposed model?
Acceptability	2. To what extent are the categories of the proposed model related to the subject of the research?
Validity and compliance with documents	3. How appropriate do you consider the layout and elements of the proposed model?
Applicability	4. How appropriate do you consider the relationships between these elements?
Comprehensiveness	5. How comprehensive are these categories for connecting school and society?
Validity	6. To what extent do you suggest the use of this model for educational designers?
Attention to the approach of pragmatism	7. To what extent can training based on this model be used as an effective operational plan?
Attention to one of the challenges of education	8. To what extent can education based on this model improve the connection between school and society in students?

In order to respond to the research question, model diagrams along with explanations of their constituent elements were provided to relevant experts. The questionnaire related to internal validation was completed by these experts. The results obtained from this questionnaire, along with the statistical analysis, are presented in Table 2.

As evident from Table 2, the mean scores given by the experts and relevant professors for the evaluation of the internal validity of the designed model range from 4.15 to 4.51, indicating a positive evaluation of the model in all dimensions. To answer the question of whether the mean responses of the experts to each question are significantly higher than the average scores for each question or not, a one-sample t-test was conducted, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the school-society connection model characteristics

Question	Frequency	Mean	SD	Std. error of mean
How complete are the dimensions of the proposed model?	36	4.35	0.72	0.12
To what extent are the categories of the proposed model related to the research topic?	36	4.30	0.75	0.12
How appropriate do you consider the layout and elements of the proposed model?	36	4.51	0.64	0.11
How appropriate do you consider the relationships between these elements?	36	4.23	0.81	0.12
How comprehensive are these categories for connecting school and society?	36	4.15	0.83	0.14
To what extent do you suggest the use of this model for educational designers?	36	4.21	0.74	0.12
To what extent can training based on this model be used as an effective operational program?	36	4.28	0.94	0.16
To what extent can education based on this model improve the connection between school and society in students?	36	4.32	0.97	0.16
Total questions	324	4.29	0.81	0.04

Table 3. Results of one-sample t-test for evaluating the internal validity of the school-society connection model

Question	Mean	Mean difference	T value	DF	CI (99 %)	
					Low limit	High limit
1	4.35	1.24	9.75	35	0.93	1.57
2	4.30	1.19	9.01	35	0.87	1.53
3	4.51	1.40	12.25	35	1.12	1.70
4	4.23	1.12	8.91	35	0.81	1.45
5	4.15	1.04	7.15	35	0.68	1.42
6	4.21	1.10	8.33	35	0.78	1.44
7	4.28	1.17	7.14	35	0.76	1.60
8	4.32	1.21	7.17	35	0.79	1.65
Total	4.19	1.19	24.91	323	1.08	1.30

The results obtained from the questionnaire responses and their statistical analysis can be observed in Table 3. The findings indicate that the mean of each question is higher than the hypothetical mean (3), and the one-sample t-test value for each question with the hypothesis mean (3) and degrees of freedom (35) is significant ($p < 0.01$). Additionally, considering all responses (324 responses), the mean obtained is 4.19, which is higher than the hypothetical mean (3), and the one-sample t-test value for this mean (91.24) is significant as well ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, these results indicate that the model's internal validity is confirmed from the experts' perspective, indicating a high level of credibility.

Results related to second questionnaire

This questionnaire, consisting of 6 open-ended questions, was provided to 18 experts and professionals in the relevant field. After receiving and analyzing the data through coding processes, the following results were obtained:

Question 1: The central phenomenon of the school-society connection in the Iran, according to the model, is the central phenomenon of the school-society connection model. The results show that the central phenomenon includes essential components such as social responsiveness, social responsibility, and school participation.

Question 2: The main causal factors influencing the central phenomenon in this study are identified in three major categories: 1. Society; 2. Targeted organizational planning; 3. Motivation and will for structural and infrastructural transformation in all educational system components.

Question 3: The main contextual conditions influencing the central phenomenon in this study are identified in three major categories: external organizational factors, family, and individual factors.

Question 4: The main intervening factors influencing the school-society connection in Iran, according to the model, are identified in three major categories: 1. Educational factors; 2. Social and interpersonal skills; 3. Individual and psychological factors.

Question 5: The main strategies for the school-society connection, according to the model, are identified in five major categories: biological skills, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, educational skills, organizational and extramural strategies, scientific and technological skills.

Question 6: The main consequences of implementing the strategies in this study, which are extracted from qualitative data, are identified in three major categories: consequences at the community level, consequences at the family level, and consequences at the student level, each including their respective sub-categories.

Discussion

The aim of internally validating the school-society connection model is to gather feedback from experts and specialists to enhance and refine the model. In this study, a panel of specialists was involved in the validation process. The formal validity of the proposed model was carefully assessed and improved, taking into account global design principles, coherence and consistency of its components, model clarity, clarifying any ambiguous expressions, and addressing word meaning deficiencies, all based on the insights and recommendations provided by supervisors and advisors. Essentially, the internal validation of the proposed model involved evaluating its compliance with global design principles, its acceptability and credibility in line with existing documents, its usability and comprehensiveness, as well as its practical and action-oriented nature. Furthermore, the feasibility of implementing the model and its response to one of the challenges in education, as perceived by the surveyed experts, were also thoroughly examined.

Subsequently, the initial version of the model, along with the validation questionnaire, was sent to relevant experts to assess the adequacy of the components and the organization of the processes. The questionnaire was scored using a Likert scale, with a minimum score of 1 and a maximum score of 4. The results in Table 2 show that the mean scores for all criteria are higher than the average (3).

Based on the mean of the components related to compliance with global design principles, acceptability, credibility and conformity with documents, usability, comprehensiveness, credibility, consideration of a combined approach, and attention to one of the challenges in education, it can be concluded that the proposed model has been well evaluated and accepted by experts and specialists.

Furthermore, to investigate whether the mean responses of the respondents to each question are significantly higher than the mean scores in each question, a one-sample t-test was used. The results of this test are presented in Table 3. Internal validity findings from the experts' point of view indicate that the school-society connection model in the mentioned research has the features of compliance with global design principles, acceptability, conformity with higher-level documents, usability, comprehensiveness, credibility, consideration of an action-oriented approach, and attention to one of the challenges in education.

The findings from the second questionnaire also suggest that the model in question, from the perspective of experts in this field, includes important aspects such as the central phenomenon of school-society connection, causal conditions for school-society connection, contextual conditions for school-society connection, intervening conditions for school-society connection, strategies for school-society connection, and consequences of school-society connection in Iran. It depicts a relatively clear picture of the current state of cooperation and separation between school and community in Iran and provides appropriate strategies for school-society connection in the country. The findings of research conducted in this domain demonstrate coherence. Although there has not been an exact study on this particular topic, the results of previous studies partially align with the findings of the current study ([Bouillion & Gomez, 2001](#); [Lemos, 2017](#); [Lewallen et al., 2015](#); [Moreland & Kammer, 2020](#); [Sherman et al., 2022](#); [Wilkinson et al., 2020](#)).

Based on the above results, it can be said that the most important factor in initiating any change and transformation is to create a discourse that conforms to the dominant public thinking towards more coherence and harmony between the educational system and society, as a key requirement for development, on the one hand, and changing the policy and planning perspective of the country towards the centrality of education and development in its future vision, on the other hand. Therefore, studying the experiences related to policymaking and the role of the governance system in the education system of various countries, with an emphasis on the experiences of developed countries, supports the coherence

and harmony of all the structures and resources of the country in development, strengthening and promoting the educational system of the country within the current needs and capitalizing for the future. It is considered as a dominant and undeniable discourse, presented and directed in the direction of the country's major programs and policies, to strengthen and deepen the thinking related to the importance of investment in this sector, as one of the components of the country's strategic body, in line with the development of the economic system and other development-related infrastructures. These are among the requirements of this subject ([Green, 2018](#)).

Undoubtedly, achieving such matters is dependent on effective and principled policy-making in the direction of developing community engagement in all areas and aspects related to the education and training of learners through specific reflective strategies. On one hand, these strategies serve as a foundation for the structural and infrastructural development of the educational system, and on the other hand, they create conditions for the growth and development of the personal and social capabilities of learners, as well as the actualization of their talents and inherent interests through organizational and extra-organizational capacities. Additionally, realizing effective and proportional governance of the educational system in the country, in harmony with the reengineering and refinement of the current centralized educational structures, requires a careful consideration of factors such as the dominating structural concentration prevailing in the extensive educational system, the organizational culture governing the educational system, unforeseen and sometimes hasty changes and reorganizations in decision-making and management levels across all levels of the education and training system. All these considerations should be accompanied by the prevailing thoughts and attitudes within civil society, which advocate entrusting the entire responsibility of education and learning to the educational system without any external interference.

The role of virtual spaces and social media, the role and position of councils and the council system, along with the role and position of families in the education and training system of the country, play an important part in this regard. In this context, amending or even strengthening certain environmental conditions (the governing framework) and intervening factors in this model, and ultimately implementing the proposed strategies to achieve the desired and appropriate link between schools and society, will lead to desirable consequences. These consequences include individual outcomes, such as developing the personal and social skills of learners, developing their educational and vocational aspirations, and fostering social acceptance. Furthermore, they encompass social outcomes, such as viewing education and training as a national discourse, promoting social vigilance, and enhancing social and cultural capital.

By establishing, developing, and reinforcing the three fundamental pillars of social accountability, social responsibility, and participatory approach, the successful implementation of these strategies can be achieved, and they can be considered a necessary prerequisite for linking schools and the structures of the educational system with civil society. In light of the aforementioned content, utilizing and paying attention to this model can aid in the development of new learning strategies and improve the quality of teaching and learning processes for students at the national level.

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