The Futures of the Faculty Promotion Regulations in Iran: a scenario approach

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effects of drivers, macro trends and uncertainties related to them in the course of developing the future regulations for the promotion of university faculty members, and drawing alternative scenarios about the promotion regulations in the horizon of 2035. For this purpose, relying on qualitative methodology and using cross-effect analysis matrix tools and MicMac software, the main drivers of change in this field were identified and analyzed. Then, by using the Senario Wizard software and expert panel, the main uncertainties were determined and possible scenarios for the future of the regulations for the promotion of faculty members in the horizon of 2035 were explained and narrated. According to this, while analyzing the structural relationships of impact and effectiveness among key components, five dominant forces of discourse of higher education in Iran including society's expectation (industry, market and government) from higher education, economy of higher education, competitiveness and internationalization of higher education and emerging challenges and development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary sciences were considered as drivers of change. Finally, the three scenarios of "Wisdom and Knowledge Think Tank", "Science and Technology University" and "Logic and Value School" as alternative futures for the promotion system of academic faculty members were explained and the conditions of the regulations in each of the mentioned scenarios were described and compared with each other.

Keywords: Faculty promotion regulations, Higher education, scenario planning, future.

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Introduction

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the impact of various drivers, macro trends, and related uncertainties on the future faculty promotion regulations. The study aimed to develop alternative scenarios for the faculty promotion regulations on the horizon of 2014. By analyzing these drivers and uncertainties, the research sought to assess how they might influence and shape the evolution of faculty promotion policies in the future.

Methodology

For this research, a qualitative methodology was employed, and the cross-impact analysis matrix tools and Micmac software were utilized to identify and analyze the main drivers of change in the faculty promotion regulations. Subsequently, the scenario wizard software, along with an expert panel, was used to determine the primary uncertainties and develop consistent scenarios for the future of faculty promotion regulations on the horizon of 1414.

Through a structural analysis of the influence/dependence relationships between the key components, five driving forces of change were identified:

1. Dominant discourse on higher education in Iran
2. Society's (industry, market, and government) expectations from higher education
3. Economy of higher education
4. Competitiveness and internationalization of higher education
5. Emerging challenges and development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary sciences

Based on these findings, three alternative scenarios were developed, each representing potential futures for the promotion system of academic faculty members. The conditions and characteristics of the regulations in each scenario were described and compared with each other. These scenarios provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders to understand potential trajectories and make informed decisions in shaping the future of faculty promotion regulations in higher education.

The research has resulted in three distinct output scenarios, each with a unique title to describe its characteristics. The scenarios are named as follows:

1. Wisdom and Action Think Tank
2. Science and Technology Academy
3. Logic and Value Tradition School

In the explanation of these final scenarios, it becomes evident that the first and third scenarios represent two extremes of the scenario spectrum in the research topic. They embody contrasting visions and potential pathways for the future of faculty promotion regulations. On one hand, "Wisdom and Action Think Tank" scenario may propose innovative and forward-thinking

approaches to faculty promotion, while on the other hand, the "Logic and Value Tradition School" scenario could prioritize adherence to established traditions and values.

In contrast, the second scenario, "Science and Technology Academy," occupies the middle ground and suggests a relative continuity of the existing situation in faculty promotion regulations. It may encompass elements of progress and adaptation while retaining certain aspects of the current system.

Findings

The three output scenarios of the research have distinct values and characteristics, each representing a different vision for the future of faculty promotion regulations in the higher education system:

1. Scenario 1: Think Tank of Wisdom and Action In this scenario, values such as cooperation, inclusiveness, diversity, and scientific independence are emphasized in the higher education system. The faculty promotion regulations are designed to focus on the role of academics in fostering communication with various parts of civil society, promoting self-regulating governance, facilitating interdisciplinary networking, nurturing talent development, encouraging local management, and contributing to balanced and sustainable social, economic, and political development.

2. Scenario 2: Science and Technology Academy This scenario places more emphasis on values like competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and commercialization within the higher education system. The faculty promotion regulations in this scenario aim to highlight the role of academics in disseminating knowledge and technology, generating income, and aligning with the declared policies.

3. Scenario 3: School of Logic and Value In this scenario, values such as task orientation, localization, ideological commitment, centralism, and intellectual unity are prominent in the higher education system. The faculty promotion regulations focus on the role of academics in fostering commitment creation, setting norms, building internal capacity, promoting endogenous development, and aligning with the government's discourse.

Each scenario represents a different vision and approach to faculty promotion, with distinct sets of values and priorities. These scenarios serve as valuable tools for policymakers and stakeholders to explore various potential directions for the future of faculty promotion regulations in higher education.

Discussion and Conclusion

The scenarios presented in this research serve as a framework and foundation for the exploration, selection, design, and adoption of strategies, policies, and plans for the higher education promotion system. By considering each of the possible scenarios, policymakers and stakeholders can better prepare for the potential future directions of faculty promotion regulations in higher education. The fundamental proposal of this research is to encourage adaptation to the emerging trends in the global higher education landscape while also aligning with cultural values, addressing emerging social needs, bolstering the local economy, promoting academic independence and freedom, and fostering self-regulating management within universities.

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