

The skills and effective factors on improvement of university educational departments performance in the network community

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand and explain the competencies affecting the performance of university departments in the age of networking, which was done from the perspective of department chairs and with an interdisciplinary approach in the field of educational management and communication sciences. The research method was qualitative and a case study type. The department chairs of Allameh Tabataba'i University of Tehran are the research field of this study to collect information. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used in sample selection. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with 10 department chairs was used to collect the required data. Data were analyzed through open and axial coding, which identified a total of 5 themes to improve the performance of the departments: "Leadership skills, information literacy, media literacy, digital intelligence and factors related to university strategy of universities and existing socio-cultural platforms in higher education" regarding the qualifications and factors needed to improve the quality of management and performance of the educational departments in the information society were identified. Presence and effective performance of academic elites in media educational environments has created the need for attention and acquisition of competencies related to the age of communication by the leaders of educational institutions. Therefore, higher education and university support programs and futurology studies will be effective to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of educational departments. The findings of this study can be the basis for the development of higher education future programs.

Keywords: educational departments, media literacy, digital intelligence, information Society, higher education, network community.



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Introduction

Improving quality and improving performance in different parts of the organization is directly and indirectly related to the efficient management of that section. With the change and development of communication, changes were made in the classroom and management methods of different levels of education. Because the directors and faculty members of the departments, in addition to their professional duties, are in a position of authority and role model for students, their purposeful step in the world of communication and information technology is very important. In summary, many authors have summarized the main features of the age of globalization in concepts such as the emergence of the global electronic village, the information revolution, the compactness of time and space, the global expansion of consciousness, the end of geography, and the cybernetic age (Sarukhani, Shokrbeigi & Aghaei, 2018: 68). A network society is a community whose social structure consists of networks that work with information and communication based on microelectronics (Castells, 2004: 3). With these changes, concepts such as organization, management, leadership, and related processes are evolving dramatically. Issues such as the emergence of the digital generation, rising expectations of higher education, the gap between expectations and ideals, etc. have made it inevitable that university management and leadership should look at human beings, society and the world through a different lens (Shah Talabi, 2008: 101). A study entitled "Educational Leadership and Globalization", (Brooks, & Normore, 2010) suggests that leaders in the contemporary world should develop their literacy not only in their area of expertise but also develop their literacy in other areas such as political literacy, economic literacy, cultural literacy, moral literacy, educational literacy, information literacy, organizational literacy, material and spiritual literacy. The purpose of this study is to answer this question: What skills or factors will lead to improved performance and quality of educational departments in the network community?

Methodology

This study is qualitative in terms of data collection method and is a case study. To gather information, data were collected through interviews with the chairs of the departments of Allameh Tabatabaei University in Tehran. The method is to select a snowball sample. Interview data were stored and recorded via audio file and note-taking. The file of each interview was entered into Maxqda 10 software to be coded. Finally, the results of analyzing the answers and creating a link between the codes were presented in the form of text, table and figure.

Findings

To answer the research question, chairs of the departments were asked to express the most important skills or factors affecting the improvement of educational administration quality and performance of the department in the present era based on the explanations provided about the purpose and problem statement. Based on the coding and qualitative analysis of the data, the findings were classified into the following five topics:

Skills and factors affecting the performance of the educational department		
1	Leadership & team work skills	Charismatic personality, collective wisdom in teamwork, public relations, dialogue skills and participatory management
2	Digital intelligence	Technical and metacognitive skills in the use of information and communication technology tools, software, apps and other computer skills
3	Information literacy	Identification of appropriate sources and databases, selection between data sets, analysis and application of information
4	media literacy	Access, use and produce a variety of messages and media content along with promoting creative and critical thinking
5	Other factors	University policies and strategies, changing the attitudes of managers and staff, cultural and psychological factors, etc.

Discussion and Conclusion

Improving the quality of vocational education systems has become one of the main challenges for all countries in the world. For the dynamism of higher education and the proper implementation of innovative projects, first the human skills and training required along with the acquisition of individual and group competencies to achieve organizational goals must be strengthened. Today, individuals and organizations are faced with more complex communication systems than in the past and are constantly interacting with various sources and databases to advance various aspects of social, professional and educational life. According to the research findings, strengthening leadership and public relations skills for chairs of the departments along with general training of other professors on teamwork to exchange new ideas is of particular importance. Besides strengthening literacy in the proposed meanings of information literacy, media literacy and digital literacy, the acquisition of which together will create a technologically literate person. Therefore, in order to avoid creating a conflict between modern methods and tools of communication against traditional teachings, as well as the adaptation and flourishing of digital natives in the scientific environment, the continuous preparation and acquisition of knowledge is essential.

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