A Study on the Experiences of Higher Education Good Governance in European and North America Countries; Some Lessons Gained for Higher Education in Iran

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Abstract

Higher education, in order to achieve its strategic goals in society, requires governance understanding in a sustainable trend so that it can correctly define and outline its mission and step towards it firmly.

 Research knowledge and experiences of the advanced countries in this field may certainly contain some considerable and –sometimes - valuable lessons gained in policies for higher education systems in other countries, especially for Iranian higher education system suffering from some ineffective traditional procedures and avoiding up-to-date governance methods. In this article, by applying the research method of document analysis and using the purposeful sampling method, the identification and qualitative analysis of good governance experiences in higher education of three selected countries - including Germany, England and Canada - has been addressed in the four measures of quality affairs, academic independence and financial management. Data gatherings were done by searching contents of universities' websites, published articles, essays, reports, governmental and academic manuscripts. Data was qualitatively analyzed at two levels of open and axial coding. From the study and analysis of the experiences of good governance in higher education of selected countries, in the dimension of quality measures, including evaluation and quality assurance in the context of agreed frameworks, multiple use of the evaluation system, validation and quality assurance, transparency and accountability, and improvement were identified as the logic of evaluation and quality assurance of higher education. Systematic synergetic management and planning, and network management based on scientific reference were experiences that were represented in the dimension of university management and planning. Morover, in the financial planning measures, experiences such as contingency budgeting based on scientific indicators, and diversity of

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support in providing financial resources were identified. In the end, the article, by enumerating the findings obtained from its research in the experiences of the governance of the selected countries, has recommended to all the policy makers and officials of the country's higher education to study and review them as lessons that can be learned for awareness and to create a well-considered platform in order to use them effectively, in the framework of appropriate and updated action plans in the field of governance of higher education.

Introduction

The importance of governance in the higher education system is evident worldwide as it plays a crucial role in achieving strategic and social goals. Currently, there are two main modes of governance in this field, namely "governmental control" and "governmental supervision." However, no comprehensive type of governance exists that can be universally applicable to all conditions, except for the concept of "good governance." Good governance aims to consider not only its established principles but also the contextual requirements relevant to each specific case.

   Given the significance of good governance in higher education, studying the experiences of good governance in advanced countries can be immensely valuable. Such studies can potentially lead to the identification of newer and more efficient modes of governance and offer valuable lessons for other higher education systems worldwide. The authors of the present article recently conducted an approved research project titled "good governance in higher education" at the institute (IRPHE). The article is based on the data and results obtained from that project, shedding light on the importance of good governance and its potential implications for improving higher education systems globally.

Methodology

Collecting correct and valid data is indeed a critical aspect of conducting sound research. In this article, the researchers utilized two primary methods for data collection: document analysis and purposive sampling. The objective was to identify and compare governance experiments in advanced countries outside of Europe and North America, focusing on four key dimensions of governance: assessment affairs and quality assurance,

academic autonomy, financial affairs, and management and planning in universities. To gather data, the researchers extensively searched materials from various sources, including university websites, published articles, essays, reports, governmental and academic manuscripts. These materials were carefully analyzed using qualified data analysis techniques, specifically two layers of axial and open coding.

The analysis process resulted in the identification and definition of a series of diverse experimental categories within the specified fields/dimensions, based on the selected countries. By juxtaposing and interpreting these experiences, the researchers were able to derive valuable lessons that are worth considering for the improvement and development of higher education in Iran. The comprehensive data collection and thorough analysis undertaken in this research contribute to its credibility and the potential impact of the findings on higher education governance practices in Iran. By learning from the experiences of advanced countries, higher education institutions in Iran can gain insights into more effective and efficient governance methods that align with global best practices.

Findings

From the study and analysis of good governance experiences in the higher education systems of selected countries, several notable findings were obtained for each of the four fields/dimensions mentioned in the research:

1. Assessment Affairs and Quality Assurance: In the field of assessment affairs and quality assurance, the research identified multiple processes in the assessment system, emphasizing the importance of validation and quality assurance. Transparency, responsibility, and continuous improvement were identified as the underlying principles for assessment and quality assurance in higher education.

2. University Autonomy: Regarding university autonomy, the experiences of academic freedom with a central focus on university autonomy were recognized. Additionally, the importance of facilitative interaction both within and outside the university was highlighted as a key aspect of governance in this dimension.

3. University Management and Planning: In the domain of university management and planning, the research identified experiences of systematic cooperative management and planning. The utilization of network management based on academic authority was also recognized as a valuable approach in this field.

4. Funding Affairs: For the field of university funding affairs, experiences such as contingency budgeting based on scientific indices were noted. Supporting diversity in funding sources was also identified as a

noteworthy practice in the governance of funding matters for higher education.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the extended abstract of this research article, some of the key findings have been summarized under the following categories:

1. Multiple processing of assessment system, validation, and quality assurance.
2. Transparency, responsibility, and continuous improvement.
3. Academic freedom with a focus on university autonomy and facilitative interaction for governance within and outside the university.
4. Systematic cooperative management and planning.
5. Network management based on academic authority.
6. Contingency budgeting using scientific indices.
7. Support for diversity in funding.

However, it is essential to note that the original article contains a much more comprehensive and detailed exploration of these topics. Therefore, readers are strongly encouraged to refer to the full text of the article for a deeper understanding of the research's complete findings and insights.