

## Knowledge flow analysis in research and planning quarterly in higher education

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study, was to investigate the flow of knowledge in *the research and planning quarterly in higher education*. In this research, 102 issues of this quarterly published in the period of 1993-2022 were reviewed. By choosing the strategy of content analysis and choosing famous criteria in this field, the quarterly magazine and its articles were checked from both structural and content aspects. In order to be able to analyze the flow of changes in the quarterly, all criteria were separated into three time periods: 1993-2002, 2003-2012, and 2013-2022. In the structural part, the movement of editors and responsible managers who were legally affiliated to the institution, as well as the evolution of topics and goals, the frameworks accepted by the quarterly magazine for publication, and the order of publishing articles were analyzed. In terms of content, 1- Demographic characteristics including: participation of universities and other institutions and centers in writing articles, scientific rank of authors, academic field and gender of specialists, group or individual writing of articles and the source of extracting articles, 2- Methodology including: research approach, data collection tools, data analysis method and strategy, the society and sample of the research, 3- The topics of interest of the authors of the articles were analyzed in relation to the topics of the quarterly magazine. Qualitative growth is observed in most of the criteria in three periods. This qualitative growth in the scientific rank of authors, more participation of women in articles, more attention to group writing, more attention to qualitative approaches and methods of combined and interpretive analysis shows itself over three decades. The focus of this quarterly magazine on planning, management and policy making is one of the distinctive features of the magazine, which has chosen its audience well. Also, the findings show that the articles of this quarterly magazine are a mirror of the social events of the higher education community; With the expansion of higher education and the emphasis on post-graduate studies, the participation of students and postgraduates in articles has increased. Considering that most of the contributors in this quarterly are humanities and social science experts, the interpretive and critical paradigm and interdisciplinary approach needs to be strengthened by the authors of the articles.

**Keywords:** *Research and Planning Quarterly in Higher Education, Content Analysis, Sciencemetric*

## Introduction

Scientific journals are considered to be one of the stable institutions that can create a network of experts in the direction of proper problem-solving while giving identity to scientific disciplines and by presenting the research results to the stakeholders, they can accompany them in reasonable and low-cost decision making.

For this reason, Sciencemetric has received the attention of researchers; Sciencemetric is a part of the logic of science (science of science) that reviews scientific articles and citations in a selected sample of scientific journals in an analytical process using a descriptive method (Masic, 2022). This research deals with the systematic review of research and planning quarterly in higher education. According to the information contained in the quarterly website, which is officially supported by the Institute of Research and Planning of Higher Education, it received its publishing license from 1992 with a scientific-research method in Persian and English. Since the spring of 1993 until now, it has been producing content in the field of higher education, especially in the field of policy making and planning. It has been indexed in SID and Magiran database since 2012 and in ISC in 2016, it has Q1 quality and high impact factor of 0.4 and in higher education topics (higher education management, higher education planning, higher education evaluation, higher education and labor market), curricula, economics and financial affairs of higher education, faculty members, students and graduates, quality, education and research, development planning, expansion of higher education, etc.) publishes articles.

## Methodology

The purpose of the research was to investigate the flow of knowledge and its management in the quarterly research and planning in higher education in 102 issues, from the beginning of its establishment in 2002 to 1400. Therefore, with the strategy of content analysis with two quantitative (counting frequency and percentage) and qualitative (content analysis of articles), first, the paper versions of the quarterly magazine were analyzed from two aspects: first, the general flow of the quarterly magazine which showed many changes, such as The presence of the editor, responsible manager, defined topics and goals, types of published articles (editorial, article, translation, report and introduction), second, the information in the articles from the selected topics to the characteristics of the authors (academic rank, organizational affiliation, gender, etc.) and methodological framework. The information was entered into the Excel software and the frequency, percentage and, if necessary, graphs were prepared. The findings and recommendations were also examined, and at the end, due to the limitations of the standard volume of the articles, it was left to present its results in another article. According to the review of research literature and similar Sciencemetric articles about quarterly journals, the most frequent criteria were selected, but this was not enough. A short and historical review in higher education was seen as necessary to be the basis for answering the quarterly magazine. With the question, to what extent have the issues published in the quarterly addressed the social and cultural currents related to higher education? In this section, by reviewing the documents, history and authentic articles related to the historical process of higher education corresponding to the three periods of the quarterly, the ratio of the scientific productions of the quarterly was compared with the social and cultural currents in each period and presented in four sections. The first part is devoted to the structural and content changes of the quarterly, the second part to the demographic characteristics, the third part to the research methods, and the fourth part to the topics of the articles according to the declared positions of the quarterly. All cases were reviewed over three decades.

## Findings

The influence of the social conditions of higher education in each course in different ways is noticeable in this quarterly. If in the first period, promoting the knowledge of higher education to inform about this literature is the dominant approach, it shows the state of higher education in Iran. In the middle of the 80s, the field of higher education accepted graduate students for the first time in Shahid Beheshti University. Before that, there was no specialized and scientific look at this field. It is after this time that the articles with the orientation of higher education also gradually appear in the quarterly, which are the strength of the knowledge section of higher education, especially in planning and policy making.

In content reviews, the rank of faculty members has gradually been reduced from instructor and assistant professor and the number of assistant professor and professor has been increased. These changes indicate changes in higher education that are consistent with statistics; In this sense, with the expansion of higher education, many teaching faculty members also continued their education. This change can also be observed by examining some authors of articles in different periods. Also, attention to research and scientific growth has led to the promotion of the scientific rank from assistant professor to assistant professor and from assistant professor to professor. These items are an indication of the quality that appears in the articles and other scientific achievements of the participants of higher education. In the future, the number of students and graduates with master's and doctorate degrees has always increased. By referring to the table of articles extracted from the thesis and dissertation, it is clear that this phenomenon is another manifestation of the developments of higher education in Iran. But the presence of researchers and research assistants is an important indicator for scientific development. In these statistics, the presence of such people is less noticeable, although their growth in the third period is noticeable. Overall, the presence of women, although small compared to men, shows a good growth in three decades.

In the review of the research methodology, it shows that the qualitative and survey-based approaches are still ahead. However, comparing the three periods, the relative reduction of the quantitative approach and attention to the qualitative method is evident. Questionnaire is a popular tool that is often unavoidable in the field of policy and planning. In the conducted surveys, many mixed researches have been designed and implemented with questionnaires with open-ended questions. Of course, over time, attention has been paid to the interview as a humane and soft tool for the participation of participants in the research. In the third period of the quarterly, the interview has been good. However, in the review of articles, observation has never been the focus of attention, and qualitative researchers have rarely mentioned field notes and its use. Documents and databases have also been a good place for research. In the verification of the selected strategies in quantitative approaches, it has been gradually reduced from simple survey and descriptive analysis, and especially in the third period, it has moved towards inferential statistical analysis (examination of relationships such as correlation, causal comparison, and structural equations).

## Conclusion

In general, it seems that Research and Planning Quarterly in Higher Education has been able to take steps in line with the policies of the Quarterly while observing the scientific and executive discipline and guide the flow of knowledge in the field of higher education, especially in the matter of planning, policy making and management. With all the ups and downs, this quarterly has moved towards more qualitative content and topics that are consistent with social developments in the educational community and has provided a valuable source for the study of policy makers and decision makers, managers and planners at different levels of higher education.

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