

Identifying and explaining the components of university empowerment in the higher education system: a qualitative study

Shahram. Mehravar Giglou¹, Adel. Zahed Babelan^{1*}

¹ Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: zahed@uma.ac.ir

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ABSTRACT

The current research was conducted with the aim of explaining the components of university empowerment in the country's higher education system with a qualitative approach of thematic analysis. In terms of practical purpose, it has been done with a qualitative approach. The target group of the current research was experts and experts in the field of higher education. Using the purposeful sampling method, 16 experts in this field were selected as a sample, and research data was collected from them using a semi-structured interview, and thematic analysis method was used to analyze the data. After analyzing the collected data, the total number of free codes extracted from the content of the interviews was 139. became The categories of students, faculty members' empowerment, education, research, internationality, interaction with industry, entrepreneurship and culture were identified as the most important components of university empowerment from the point of view of experts in the field of higher education. The findings of this research can be used in the policies of the country's higher education system in order to empower the country's higher education system.

Keywords: higher education, university, empowerment, quality



Introduction

Empowerment in scientific environments is defined as a process by which academic members improve their competencies, enhance their professional growth, and solve their problems. Therefore, empowered academic environments are institutions that work to improve the competencies and opportunities for choice and independence and to stabilize the competencies of their members (Deja & Wójcik, 2021). On the other hand, today, university development requires university empowerment. The empowerment of the university causes the university to function successfully in a competitive environment and to be influenced by the environment as well (Dağgöl, 2020). Considering the importance of empowering the university, the review of previous studies indicates that specific and comprehensive research in the field of identifying the components of an empowering university has not been found at the time of conducting the present research, while the university as a social system needs empowerment. is a university, researchers believe (El-Zubair, Mohammed, Dafalla & Alqarni, 2021; Luhanga, 2009) that the university needs re-engineering and fundamental changes to change itself and respond to the changing challenges of the environment that surrounds it. It is for self-empowerment.

Considering the mentioned points, changing the approach of the country's higher education system towards an empowering university is considered a vital and inevitable necessity. Because the higher education system and universities of the country have not yet been able to prove their real position in the society. The current conditions of the country's higher education system indicate that the country's universities are in dire need of empowerment so that they can respond to environmental, regional and extra-regional needs and play an effective role in the development of the country as an effective and efficient scientific center. perform Therefore, taking into account the mentioned points, the current research was conducted with the aim of answering the following question: What are the components of university empowerment in the country's higher education system?

Methodology

The current research has been carried out in terms of practical purpose and using descriptive-exploratory qualitative research method. The target group of the current research was experts in the field of higher education. Due to the nature of the qualitative research, the purposeful sampling method was used. At first, the focus was on people who had more information about the research topic and had executive activities and research records in the field of university empowerment; In addition to this method, the interviewees were asked to introduce other experts who are experts in this field, which refers to snowball sampling in qualitative research. 16 experts in this field who have research experience related to the research topic were selected as samples. Exploratory semi-structured interview was also used to collect data. The reason for using a semi-structured interview in the present research is that, in addition to the possibility of exchanging opinions and thoughts, it is possible to guide the discussion and the topic of the interview in order to achieve the goals of the research. The interview questions consisted of issues that encouraged the participants to focus and describe their views on university empowerment. The interview started with an introduction question and then the following questions were asked. What is your definition of university empowerment? In your opinion, what are the components of empowering the university?

Thematic analysis method was also used to analyze the collected data. To check the validity of the data, the identified categories were first given to the participants to check the researcher's perception and analysis. Also, data analysis and results were given to two specialists to express their expert opinion regarding data analysis and results. The reliability code between two coders was 0.89 and in order to increase the verifiability of the findings, notes were taken from the interviews.

Findings

The participants in this study were 16 experts in the field of higher education, of which 5 of the participants had the rank of assistant professor, 7 had the rank of assistant professor, and 4 had the rank of full professor. After analyzing the data obtained from the interview, the total of free codes extracted from the content of the interviews was 139 cases, after merging the similar codes with each other, finally 115 codes were extracted and classified into 19 similar concepts and finally the components Empowering universities in the country's higher education system were categorized into 8 main categories: students, faculty

members empowerment, education, research, internationality, interaction with industry, entrepreneurship and culture. Which is explained in the following identified categories:

Student: The participants in the current research unanimously believed that strengthening students' leadership skills, ability to work as a team, holding skill-oriented courses for students, creating a job bank for students in the university, and strengthening problem solving skills are the most important features. They also considered strengthening technical and job skills and information technology skills necessary for students to be present in the labor market.

Empowerment of academic staff members: Another component that was identified in this research based on the views of the interviewees in the research was related to academic staff members. From the point of view of the participants of the university, in order to be empowered, it must also have capable faculty members, and they agree on things such as rewarding the innovative activities of faculty members in the university, involving faculty members in decision-making and Holding knowledge-enhancing courses for university faculty members is considered one of the most important ways to empower faculty members.

Education: The interviewees also introduced another component of university empowerment as university education. In university education, they include things such as creating an environment for students' intellectual creativity, pushing university education methods to be problem-oriented, using up-to-date educational aids, designing curricula compatible with the needs of industry and local society, increasing The number of skill training courses, compilation and revision of course headings according to the needs of the society, participation of everyone in content compilation and designing and editing of headings according to the daily needs of students have been emphasized in line with the development of the empowerment of the university.

Research: According to the interviewees, one of the main missions of the university is its research mission. Therefore, they unanimously believed that in order to become empowered, the university should use in its research mission to direct theses and theses towards problem-oriented and practical issues in the society, encourage them to carry out applied research activities, and commercialize academic research. Research results in the real environment and the establishment of reproductive research centers of small and medium reproductive companies should be emphasized.

Internationality: According to the interviewees, in the current context, any type of university needs to interact with the international environment for its development. The interviewees focused on providing educational and research services in the international arena to generate income, recognizing the international scientific language in the university, attracting international students to cover part of the costs, holding joint training courses with foreign universities and They emphasized the exchange of professors, students and researchers with prestigious universities in the world.

Interaction with the industry: The interviewees have unanimously pointed to the interaction with the industry as one of the most important methods for empowering academic staff members and the presence of students in the job market after graduation. They consider the conclusion of an agreement with the industry, the presence of professors and students in various sectors of the industry to undergo internships, and the holding of industry-related courses in the university by industry managers as the most important components for the development of the university's empowerment.

Entrepreneurship: Another component identified from the point of view of the interviewees in the current research was the component of entrepreneurship. that they unanimously believed that today the university should move towards an entrepreneurial university in order to actively participate in solving society's problems. and paying attention to entrepreneurship in the mission and missions of the university and the movement of the university towards the third and fourth generation universities are considered essential for the development of university empowerment.

Cultural: Another component that the interviewees in the current research have emphasized is related to the institutionalization of the culture of work and production in the university. They consider the promotion of work and production culture in the university, the dominance of skill-oriented culture in the structure of the university, the creation and development of a skill-oriented learning culture, and turning skill-oriented into a demand in the university culture as the most important components of university empowerment.



Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of explaining the components of university empowerment in the country's higher education system with a qualitative approach. The findings of the research showed that one of the main components of university empowerment is related to students. In explaining the findings of this part of the research, it can be said that the issue of empowering students is of great importance and in fact it should be considered a key priority for the country's higher education system, because the process of empowering students to improve the quality of personal life and It helps the students that the successful result of such a process can be a key to open the locked doors of employment in the midst of rapid and unpredictable changes in the economy and employment structures of the country. Based on the findings of the research, the empowerment of academic staff members was another component that was identified in the current research from the point of view of experts. In explaining the findings of this part of the research, it can be said that the quality of scientific work in the university, both research and teaching, depends more than anything on the dynamics and capabilities of academic staff members, and to a large extent, the effectiveness and efficiency of universities depends on the quality of staff members. Science is dependent. Therefore, the country's higher education system, according to its conditions and requirements, should use all its facilities to empower academic staff members, who are the foundation of the dynamics of scientific centers. Another important component that was identified in the current research was related to the education department of the university. In explaining the findings of this part of the research, it can be said that, unfortunately, today's education in the country's higher education system is not very practical and skill-oriented, and the content of the curriculum presented in universities is very practical and appropriate to the needs of society and It is not an industry, so revising the curriculum to make it practical is one of the necessities of the university system. Application of research was another component identified in this research. In explaining the findings of this part of the research, it can also be said that, unfortunately, nowadays, most of the research projects and articles that are carried out in the country's higher education system are very practical and ultimately do not lead to solving the problem, so the practical direction It is suggested that academic research, especially theses and student theses, should be directed and encouraged towards problem-oriented and practical issues of the society.

Another important component identified in the current research was the interaction with the industry. In explaining the findings of this section, it can be said that one of the main challenges faced by the country's universities is the lack of proper and optimal communication with the country's industry. One of the main ways to solve this challenge is to conclude agreements and pass protective laws and regulations from the government. Therefore, the presence of professors and students in different sectors of the industry to complete internships and to hold industry-related courses in the university by industry managers can be helpful in this field. Interaction with the international environment was another identified component. In explaining this part of the findings, it can be said that universities in today's world communicate with each other for various reasons, which include The most important reason can be to improve the ability to compete in global markets. Due to the asymmetric distribution of technological resources, knowledge, and activity requirements in the era of globalization, institutions inevitably turn to international scientific cooperation and a network of cooperation is formed to share resources and organizational knowledge. Therefore, the agreement between universities or experts on sharing their abilities to achieve the goals, empowering the university is necessary. Also, the findings of the research showed that the institutionalization of skill-oriented culture in universities is another category of empowering universities. In explaining the findings of this part of the research, it can be said that it is necessary to institutionalize a skill-oriented culture in all decision-making and executive levels of the university. Because with the rule of skill-oriented culture in the structure of the university, it becomes possible to realize skill-oriented activities, support skill-oriented and accept skill-oriented by managers, employees, students and professors. Another component identified in the current research was entrepreneurship. In explaining the findings of this part of the research, it can be said that today the university should move towards an entrepreneurial university in order to actively participate in solving society's problems. And paying attention to entrepreneurship in the mission and missions of the university and the movement of the university towards third and fourth generation universities is one of the necessities of the development of university empowerment.

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