

Designing and validating the model of attracting foreign students in the 7th five-year development plan with the aim of strengthening curriculum exchange

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to design and validate a model for attracting foreign students in the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the aim of strengthening the exchangeability of university curricula. The research method was a mixed exploratory(qualitative-quantitative)method. Participants in the qualitative section were selected using purposive sampling,12 scientific experts including managers and deans of the faculties of the International Branch, and data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached. The statistical population in the quantitative section included all faculty members and foreign students of Razi University, International Branch, Kermanshah. The sampling method was based on the Morgan table, using simple random sampling method, and 427 people were selected as a sample, proportional to the size of the population. The research measurement tool in the quantitative section was a researcher-made questionnaire with18 variables and 60 items. Data analysis in the qualitative section was performed using the Grand Theory method using SPSS software, and in the quantitative section, confirmatory factor analysis was performed using SmartPLS software. The findings in the qualitative section confirmed the six dimensions of the basic theory. The categories that shape the attraction of foreign students included causal factors, strategies, contextual factors, intervening factors, and consequences. In the quantitative section, using confirmatory factor analysis, the correlations between the data were appropriately evaluated and had the necessary and sufficient coherence to explain the components and indicators of attraction. Overall, the examination of the fit indices showed that the empirical model has an almost appropriate and approved fit, and the data and information obtained confirmed the suitability of the model. The findings of this study can help planners and policymakers to identify changes, developments, and challenges affecting the attraction of foreign students and use them to improve and promote the attraction of foreign students and increase and benefit from the exchange of curricula between domestic and foreign universities.

Keywords: Curriculum, Seventh Development Program, Interchangeability, Foreign Student

Introduction

Higher education in the 21st century is considered an important and influential factor in society. Today, the importance and benefits of international communication in the fields of education and research in the country's universities are not hidden from anyone, and strengthening the policy of accepting international students has become one of the main priorities of universities and higher education institutions. Student mobility in the global geography has provided the grounds for facilitating technology transfer and the emergence of radical innovations, and has also strengthened the science market and the supply and demand system of higher education. In addition, the position of each country's universities in global rankings will also affect these student mobility. This can have a significant impact on attracting international students to countries. Therefore, the present study was conducted with the aim of designing and validating the model of attracting foreign students in the Seventh Five-Year Plan of Progress with the aim of strengthening curriculum exchange.

Methodology

The present study is exploratory (qualitative-quantitative) in terms of applied purpose and mixed data collection. Therefore, the methodology of this research has been organized into two qualitative and quantitative sections. Qualitative Section: Participants in the qualitative section: will include experts from the scientific community and academic specialists who have executive backgrounds at decision-making levels and are called informed experts. Which included: managers and deans of international faculties at Razi University of Kermanshah. Which was using the purposive sampling method and the theoretical saturation criterion, based on which 12 professors and specialists were selected. Data collection tool in the qualitative section: Semi-structured interview. Interviewing and initial coding continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Validity and reliability of the tool in the qualitative section: To ensure the validity of the research, it was reviewed by members (interviewees). At the end of each interview, the interpretation and results obtained by the researcher were given feedback to the participant, and misunderstood items were corrected. To calculate the reliability of the codings, the test-retest reliability method and the intra-subject agreement method between the two coders were used. The method of analyzing and analyzing the data in the qualitative section, by combining information from different sources, led to identifying dimensions, components, and indicators, and ultimately to accurately drawing the student attraction through curriculum exchange. The research was conducted through grand theory to analyze the qualitative data. The analysis of the collected qualitative data was carried out in three stages: coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Quantitative section: The statistical population in the quantitative section: included faculty members and international students at Razi University of Kermanshah. Sample size and sampling method in the quantitative section: In this study, considering the statistical population, the sample was academic professors and all foreign students of the international units of Razi University of Kermanshah, which numbered 960 people. The sample size was determined as 427 people using Morgan's table. The data collection tool in the quantitative section was a researcher-made questionnaire. Validity and reliability of the tool in the quantitative section: To examine the content validity quantitatively, two relative coefficients of content validity (CVR) and content validity index (CVI) were used. Based on the findings for each variable, the value of the CVR index was calculated to be above 0.62 and for the CVI index to be above 0.79. As a result, it can be claimed that the questions of each variable have high content validity and reliability from the perspective of 10 interviewees. Reliability: In this study, reliability was calculated through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The values of this coefficient for all research constructs were above 80%, indicating the reliability of the measurement tool. Data analysis method in the quantitative section, descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used according to the research questions. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic characteristics whose data was obtained from the questionnaire, using percentages, frequencies, tables, shapes, and graphs. It should be noted that descriptive statistics operations were performed using SPSS software. In the inferential statistics section, structural equations were used using Smart PLS software to answer the research questions.

Findings

In the qualitative section, the components identified from interviews with experts and specialists were: causal factors, background conditions, interfering conditions, strategies, and outcomes. After analyzing and summarizing the results, the final

conceptual model in this study was presented in the form of 6 main dimensions, 18 measurable variables, and 60 indicators, which included: causal factors (3 components and 11 indicators), strategies (4 components and 15 indicators), background factors (4 components and 11 indicators), interfering factors (3 components and 8 indicators), and outcomes (4 components and 15 indicators). The findings in the quantitative section showed that a significant relationship was observed between all variables, namely causal conditions, pivotal phenomenon, background conditions, interfering conditions, and strategies, with the dependent variable of outcomes ($p < 0.05$). The direction of the relationships was positive, indicating that an increase in each of the variables of causal conditions, pivotal phenomenon, background conditions, interfering conditions, and strategies was associated with an increase in the level of outcomes. The intensity of the correlations showed that the strongest correlation with the outcomes was related to the causal conditions variable with a coefficient of 0.61, the strategies variable with a coefficient of 0.57, the intervening conditions variable with a coefficient of 0.38, the background conditions variable with a coefficient of 0.36, and the pivotal phenomenon variable with a coefficient of 0.28. The findings also showed that there was a significant relationship between causal conditions, pivotal phenomenon, background conditions, and intervening conditions with the strategies variable ($p < 0.05$). The direction of all relationships was positive, indicating that an increase in the amount of each of the causal conditions variables, pivotal phenomenon, background conditions, and intervening conditions was associated with an increase in the amount of strategies. The strongest correlation with strategies was related to causal conditions with a coefficient of 0.62 and background conditions with a coefficient of 0.55.

Conclusion

In this study, qualitative information was extracted from various data to determine the components of foreign student recruitment. Finally, data analysis led to the design of a model for attracting foreign students in the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan with the aim of strengthening curriculum exchange. The results of the quantitative part of the study also showed that, from the perspective of faculty members and foreign students, the status of foreign student recruitment indicators with a curriculum approach is at a desirable level. Therefore, close ties with international communities have promoted the reputation of universities and the country as a whole in the world's scientific system, and with the implementation of international agreements, we will witness the growth and expansion of educational centers and, consequently, the country and will become more aware of the importance of attracting international students. This research can also be useful and constructive because, in today's turbulent environment, managers need certain characteristics and capabilities. These characteristics help educational organizations to identify changes, developments, and challenges affecting foreign student recruitment and use them to improve and promote the attraction of foreign students.

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