

The Study of Crisis Dimensions and Components in Higher Education and Providing Suitable Strategies for Iran's Higher Education System (2008)

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Abstract: The study is trying to unfold one of the key issues in higher education which is titled by “the study of crisis dimensions and components in higher education and providing suitable strategies for Iran's higher education system. There have been three questions put forward by the researcher 1) what are the components and dimensions of the crisis? 2) What are the strategies that can be offered to meet Iran's higher education problems? 3) What is the compatibility range of the strategies suggested by experts, specialist and those in charge of the higher education in Iran? We adopted a descriptive measurement method and the samples for the study included the managers and their vice presidents of state and Azad universities (35), department managers (78) and professors (140) which sums up to 245. To answer the first question, regarding the theoretical basis and studies, the crisis-prone factors were recognized and categorized in 8 classes which include educational, research, management, economical, political, cultural, social, technological and international dimensions. The researcher put the result of this study in two questionnaires of 1 and 2 which were approved with %95 and %92/2 respectively and based on the above-mentioned crisis-prone factors the suggested strategies were offered, then the strategies were verified and confirmed by question 3 which have been estimated to have %90 percent of compatibility and this compatibility of these strategies have been counted to be % 75 from 100 by expert in the field.

Key words: Crisis Dimensions • Higher education system • Iran

INTRODUCTION

Although higher education can serve as an accelerator to help undeveloped and developing countries facing the problems which has rooted in their higher education departments. The growth of modern technology and the resulted changes brought about the new paradigms, viewpoints and attitude in higher education. Creating the new ideology has lead to new challenges for higher educations and made the related institution to be more active. Regarding the new era and its unique characteristics, universities area bound and obliged to shoulder new responsibilities to meet the needs and that way facing challenges and problems is inevitable [1-2].

There are important challenges that all higher education systems are facing with them that are The globalization of the economy political, social and technical

changes, the changes in students' structure, the limitation of the resources and the variety in having legitimate higher education, the communication and technological development, applying the traditional and old concepts and research methods in higher education systems, the issue of curriculum design and its capacity, multiculturalism and multinationalism, understanding the over complication of the new generation of the universities, useful application, the increasing demand for higher education and the competitive race among the universities in the world. It seems, on the other hand, that the current educational, economical, and cultural, management and research conditions of the higher education are unable to meet this time's challenges and the communication and post-modernism time [3-4].

According to above mentioned challenges, there would be new expectation and ideologies such as the molecular organizational culture, the digital and virtual

culture in education, the research camps, the university and research incubator centers which have caused changes such as multipurpose universities, adult universities and internet based universities. Therefore, it confirms the need for having changes at universities which could get along with the new challenges and also could be completely equipped with to manage contingent crisis. This is something which made the researcher evaluate all the crisis dimensions and components and offer suitable strategies for them. It is hoped that the result would serve to be a useful tool to develop the literature on managing crisis in higher education [4].

Considering the studies and researches done on the conditions of the crisis in Iran and world higher education, the researcher faced with limited resources, therefore there would be a brief introduction of the resources on researches about higher education.

Farahani [5] emphasized the cultural standpoint of the managers "which shows that most of the managers consider the unfit recruitments of the managers for the cultural affairs positions and numerous decision making centers as the main and most important cultural problems.

Some studies showed that one of the main factors of graduates' unemployment is the over-acceptance of the students at the universities which is not in harmony and is incompatible with the market need. These studied on "university crisis" also showed that there are major differences among feminists, post structuralists and post exploitationists on what is called as knowledge and knowledge logicity, development, globalization and intellectualism. The knowledge power crisis is meant to be that universities are not considered to be the primary producers and decision makers of valuable knowledge everywhere [5-6].

According to other study, it is considered the existing challenges in knowledge management as the following ones:

- The current culture of the universities do not spread knowledge managements
- There is no clear-cut understanding about the knowledge management and its related resources
- Institutions are not that capable of assessing the financial resources of the knowledge managements.
- Managers are not bound to implement knowledge management [7].

Smith [8] has offered the idea of "silent crisis" in higher education and believes that silent crisis in higher education shows the imperative situation and the urgent

need for having a fundamental change and offering new strategies to improve the education in America and meet the needs of the society . Higher education lacks the necessary information for its structures and it causes millions of people to fail and it is not due to their inability in learning but to the incompetence of the universities in education.

Marandi [9] stated that the traditional methods were doom to failure facing with dangers and uncertainty. Countries are facing 3 main strategies to decrease the effect of educational crisis which are reaction danger method, positive danger method and detailed danger method. In order to reform the higher education system it is important to consider managing variables but it is not enough, it can be said that the education method for having reforms in higher education is useful.

Wells [10] remarked that the" coming out of crisis theory in higher education and certified that higher education system has faced a major crisis and its marketing did not find its place and is completely dependant on the knowledge from the business sections. The aim of the study is to find the problems by applying the findings of international researches and proposing an adaptable pattern for higher education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Regarding the nature of the study and the aims of this study, we used a descriptive measurement method. The samples for the study included the managers of universities, colleges and branches and their vice presidents of state and Azad universities (35), department managers (78) and faculty members (140) which sums up to 245 (n= 245). Expected sampling routine at first was used. 70 universities from state and 70 from Azad universities were chosen and samples from these two groups were selected randomly.

The measuring and data gathering tools were researcher-made questionnaires which subdivided into three questionnaires. The first question were used for confirming and prioritizing the crisis factors in higher education which was comprised of educational, research, management, economical, political, cultural, social, technological and international dimensions and had 95 factors and were taken to 5 degree Likert measurement range. The second one was an open-ended one which had 10 questions about the kind of crisis in state and Azad universities to each 5 questions were assigned and it was to complete the data from the first questionnaire and the third questionnaire were used to

find the compatibility range of the suggested strategies which were distributed among 40 experts and concerning the validity of the data we used the content validity and distribute them among 10 other expert.

To get the correlation of the gathered data and viewpoints we used Cronbach's alpha method with which the coefficient correlation of the first question was % 95 and the second and third were % 92/2 and % 90, respectively and the compatibility of the offered strategies on the 8 factors equaled to % 73/5, therefore, the strategies were asserted by the experts and were suggested to be used for higher education systems.

RESULTS

First Question: What are the components and dimensions of the crisis? This question evaluates the samples viewpoints on the eight factors of educational, research, management, economical, political, cultural, social, technological and international dimensions by using a questionnaire having close questions answers of Likert kind (5 choices) and open-ended questions.

As it can be seen from table 1 the crisis- prone factors in higher education for the study after prioritizing economical, research, educational, management, technological, political, Cultural& social, international. The findings of this research are in harmony with the some findings [11-12].

The evaluated indexes in Table 2 showed that there is a significant difference between the two averages on 95% probability scales; therefore, we can generalize the result to our sample. The research sample prioritizes the most 5 crisis prone factors in higher education in open-ended questions.

- Lack of equipments and standard learning tools.
- Weak management.
- Job insecurity.
- Lack of motivation for learning among students.

- Having tendency for getting documents rather than getting the knowledge.

Second Question: What are the strategies that can be offered to meet Iran's higher education problems? This question evaluates the research samples' standpoints on the offered strategies in facing the crisis on 8 factors of educational, research, management, economical, political, cultural, social, technological and international dimensions.

Third Question: What is the compatibility range of the strategies suggested by experts, specialist and those in charge of the higher education in Iran?

As it is estimated the compatibility range of the offered strategies in 8 dimensions has its maximum in education dimension and minimum in international dimension.

DISCUSSION

The data on Table 1 has shown the crisis prone dimensions in higher education with their priority which are economical, research, educational, management, technological, political, Cultural& social, international and Table 2 showed that there is a significant difference between the average standpoints measuring and average levels on 95% scale. Evaluating the open-ended questions, 5 important crisis- prone factors of lack of equipments and standard learning tools, weak management, job insecurity, lack of motivation for learning among students, having tendency for getting documents rather than getting the knowledge in higher education has been stated.

Table 3 shows the strategies and policies to reduce the crisis in educational, research, management, economical, political, cultural, social, technological and international dimensions. The most important strategies in education dimension is "creating new curriculum based

Table 1: The average distribution of the crisis-prone factors in higher education regarding their priorities

Index	Factor						The average Sum of		
	Economical	Research	Educational	Management	Technological	Political	Cultural & Social	International	the crisis prone factors
Average X	2/871	2/861	2/853	2/85	2/824	2/757	2/587	2/57	2/772

Table 2: Comparison between the average viewpoints and average levels in crisis-prone factors in higher education by t-test

X	S	S2	t-V	d.f	Critical t	P<a
2/772	1/34	1/79	2/65	244	1/96	0/05

Table 3: The percentage distribution of the samples answers regarding the priorities for the most important strategies when facing the crisis prone factors

Strategy percentage	The strategies and policies when facing with the crisis prone factors in eight dimensions	Priority based on the dimension
Educational dimension	• Creating the new curriculum with regard the changing needs of the time	85
	• Reforming the content of the materials and up-to-dating the materials	82/52
	• Students cooperation in teaching and learning process	82/5
Research dimension	• Conducting and directing the research activities to recognize the needs.	87/5
	• Obliging students to do researches in different courses.	85
	• Having plans to encourage students economically and emotionally in researches.	85
Management dimension	• Familiarizing the university managers with the crisis management and change and change disturbance management of universities.	87/5
	• Providing the ways to make managers to be free in controlling and managing.	82
	• Paving the legitimate way to meet the needs in crisis time.	80
Economical dimension	• Having changes in the attitude of the university managers to university as an economical and scientific institution.	52/5
	• Trying to have a job creating university to face financial and economic challenges.	50
	• Uniting the university researches with the social and economic needs	50
Political dimension	• Strengthening the scientific, political and cultural societies at universities	87/5
	• Creating thinking securities for intellectuals to participate in helping with the issues.	67/5
	• Having political discussions among managers and students	40
Cultural & Social dimension	• Planning and appreciating the learners' values.	82/5
	• Creating suitable conditions for gifted students.	35
	• Strengthening the social-cultural institutions to increase the technical talents of the society.	30
Technological dimension	• Preparing the facilities to have access to communicative, training and informational technologies.	47/5
	• Having plans to create communicative and informational basis by participation of the related institutes.	47/5
	• Developing the computer networks and up-to dated technologies at universities	45/5
International dimension	• Preparing the conditions for contribution of the international affairs by offering courses which has international and world basis.	47/5
	• Financial support for teachers and students to attend international conferences.	47/5
	• Creating a system of ranking universities based on international criteria to reduce the scientific gaps	45

Table 4: The percentage of the compatibility of the presented strategies from the experts' standpoints in eight dimensions of crisis prone factors according to their priority

Index	Factor							
	Educational	Political	Economical	Research	Management	Technological	Cultural & Social	International
Percentage	92	87	80	79	77	74	72	67

on the changing needs of the time”, therefore considering this strategy is of high importance. On management dimension the best strategy is considered to be “familiarizing the university managers with the crisis management and change and change disturbance management of universities which merits attention.

On the research dimension “conducting and directing the research activities to recognize the needs” is important therefore we must pay attention to the needs

analysis. On the economical dimension the best strategy is “having changes in the attitude of the university managers to university as an economical and scientific institution” which must be given the highest importance.

The most remarkable strategy on political dimension is to “strengthening the scientific, political and cultural societies at universities” which should be highlighted. On the cultural and social dimensions the most significant strategy is to “planning and appreciating the learners’

values” which must be on the top in the cultural activities. On the technological dimension the best strategy is to “preparing the facilities to have access to communicative, training and informational technologies” which merits attention and on international dimension the significant strategy is to “preparing the conditions for contribution of the international affairs by offering courses which has international and world basis that should be considered [12-18].

Therefore, we should not forget the far-reaching dimensions of the crisis, because the higher education crisis has got the capacity to penetrate into the other social dimensions. Therefore it is inevitable to have plans for avoid such interference and it needs a strong leadership to change it [19-20]. It should also be noted that the proactive managing system and crisis prevention programs will play a key role in preventing the crisis, as it has been included in the development program of the nations, and by providing pore capacities we can do our best in fulfilling the educational, research and student-centered activities [21].

It is, of course, to be put here that the issue of the globalization for removing the crisis which is in harmony with the findings of this research has been certified by Angel Gurria the secretary of the OECD, it is meant that we remove the universal crisis by having a cooperative standpoint which included different universities as well. Finally, the best suggestion for this research is the application of the offered policies and strategies for removing the crisis factors in higher education. It is expected that the managers and officials of universities apply all these strategies regarding the universal planning for the universities [22-25].

THE SUGGESTION AND APPLIED IMPLICATIONS

- University managers’ familiarity with the crisis management factors (component) (prediction, prevention, facing and reforming)
- Distribution of the knowledge and culture of supervising and evaluating the educational and scientific institutions to remove the barriers and problems and to boost the activities considering the indexes and plans and applying the results of the analysis.
- Creating planning, evaluating and policy making systems in higher education for improving the quality and adapting the programs to the society’s needs.
- Reviewing the university curriculum and offering courses with world and international issues and increasing the adaptable courses

- Planning and increasing the rules and regulations of the official systems on merits
- Recognizing the research needs and increasing the budgets of university researches from the research budget of the country.
- Giving importance to the results of the researches by implementing the developmental planning of the country.

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