



An Investigation of the Relationship between Managers' Skills and Their Effective Performance at Undergraduate Educational Centers

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Required skills for educational managers can be categorized in technical, human, and cognitive fields. Skills are defined as developing abilities of human which are reflected in his/her responsibilities, survival, and actions. Therefore, skill would be considered as personal experience and effective knowledge application ability. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between educational managerial skills of the educational managers and their performance at undergraduate educational organizations in Shiraz.

Method: According to the purpose and nature of the research, descriptive -correlation method was used. The subjects of this study consist of educational managers of public schools working in the city of Shiraz. The target population was all of the educational managers of undergraduate educational centers; the study population consisted of 130 educational managers of undergraduate educational centers selected based on Cochran Formula. Data collection tools in the present study included two standard questionnaires for management skills and effective performance. After the data were gathered, they were analyzed through SPSS software, version 14. Quantitative data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regressions tests.

Results: Findings of this study indicated that there was a significant relationship between the total score and performance skills of the educational managers ($p < 0.001$, $R = 0.38$); based on the results, none of the three dimensions of technical, human, and conceptual skills of executives was able to predict effective performance.

Conclusion: As management skills education has shown its considerable and positive effects in all systems, effectiveness in management and educational leadership will be achieved by absorbing, instructing and employing skillful individuals to play the mentioned role.

Keywords: Management, Skills, Performance, Undergraduate

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Introduction

One of the most important activities in the social life of modern man is management. Through promotion of management activities, objectives and mission of the organization and realization of the utilization of existing resources and the people in the organization of the resource capability will be achieved (1). It is obvious that at present, which is the era of leadership and management, organizational success largely depends on educational managers' performance (2). One of the managers' duties is thus that of achieving a high level of performance through the use of all facilities in the organization, including staff and material resources. Effective performance on the part of educational managers requires three skills (technical, human, conceptual). Skills outlined would lead to success in the management of any organization. In the meantime, administrators, and educational

organizations have a crucial role. Educational managers must possess certain abilities and skills, so that we could be sure to put our kids' educational fate into the hands of those entrusted. Educational managers need skills and knowledge before addressing management to the extent that management need not be repeated in trial and error since the experimental error is associated with irreparable losses (2). With the money spent on education and the significance of management of education, having more skills than the other educational managers of the organization is necessary (3).

Skill refers to fostering the ability to reflect on performance and perform tasks. Therefore, what we mean by skill is the ability to effectively apply knowledge and personal experience. Formularization of the skills is being effective in action in various situations. Robert Katz (4) classifies technical skills required for educational managers, by the criteria of human and perception. Katz

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(4) in describing the technical skills, states that 'technical skills is the knowledge and ability to perform certain tasks that require the mastery of techniques and tools for application of specific and practical competence, behavior and activity'.

Human skills possessed by the educational managers' means to work with other people and to maintain good relations with others (5). Cognitive skills include the ability to understand and recognize the fact that a variety of functions are related to each other and a change in any of the other sections does necessarily affect the other part (5).

In the definition of management performance, the performance management, leadership, training, human relations, professionalism and administration are being considered. Educational leaders, no matter at what level and in what direction they serve, they work directly or indirectly with students, teachers, parents, social groups, and operators of other agencies and community organizations. They are all expected to contribute to the development of society. Qualifications and skills of educational managers in carrying out the duties all together reflected in playing two roles: first) administration and supervision, and second) the leadership (6). Among other factors affecting the performance of educational managers' professional and educational aspect is that educational managers need to improve their optimum performance, always assess their abilities, skills and duties, reinforce desirable behaviors in their attempts, and have self-discipline. The strategies for success in their profession also include punctuality in work and timely attendance at meetings as a principle in school governance (7).

The research literature suggests an association between triple skills of educational managers and variables such as efficacy, academic achievement and performance (8). In order to achieve a high level of performance, educational managers require technical, human and cognitive skills (9). Educational managers who have high-performance also possess features such as "Taking responsibility; making a decisive commitment to the mission of the school; being attentive to the needs of students, teachers and other staff; trying to establish a good communication; gathering complete information for decision-making; flexibility; motivation; orientation development; oriented towards the development of staff and students; delegation; communication; confidentiality; sensitivity; organization; and the ability to express themselves (10). Even though the results of previous research indicate a link between the skills of educational managers and their performance, the results do not specify which of the triple skills of the educational managers can play a greater role in predicting effective performance in management. For this reason, the present study considered the predictive ability of three educational managers' skills (technical - human - cognitive) in their prediction of effective performance(9, 10). As such, the following questions were posed:

Is there a significant relationship between the skills of educational managers and the effectiveness of their performance?

• Which aspects of skills (technical - human - cognitive) of the educational managers is a significant predictor in their effective performance?

Methods

Due to the nature of the subject, the present study is descriptive. Skills for educational managers are the independent variables (predictors) with three components (technical - human - cognitive), and effective performance is the dependent variable. The present study population consisted of all educational managers in the public schools of four districts of the city of Shiraz in the year 2011-12. The target population was all of the educational managers of undergraduate educational institutions; subjects consisted of 130 of educational managers of undergraduate educational institutions selected based on Cochran Formula.

$$n = \frac{Nz^2pq}{Nd^2 + Z^2pq}$$

Two questionnaires were used in this study:

1. Management skills questionnaires:

The questionnaire had four components: technical skills, human, conceptual and professional (11). In this study, professional skill questionnaires were extracted from the questionnaire with three components: technical skills, human and conceptual. It consists of 27 items, and the three skills for each component, 9, the question is assigned.

The method used for determining the validity was,"item analysis". The reliability of the three aspects of management skills was calculated using Cronbach's alpha as 0.87.

2. Effective Performance Questionnaire

To evaluate the effective performance of the educational managers, Tavangar's revised standard performance questionnaire was used(12). The effective performance of the duties of educational managers is generally based on five aspects: leadership, educational, administrative, professional and human relations measures. The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions and was based on a Likert scale with five options. In this study, the effective yield is the total scores. In order to determine the validity of the questionnaire, item analysis was used,i.e. the correlation of the total scores was calculated for each question. Coefficient range was from 0.30 to 0.65 and all coefficients in the $P < 0.001$ were meaningful. To determine the reliability of the effective performance questionnaire, the Cronbach's alpha reliability was used and ultimately the range of 0.78 was achieved. The collected data were analyzed in SPSS version 14 using independent t-test and Pearson Correlation. The level of significance was considered ≤ 0.05 .

Results

Before addressing the research questions, descriptive

statistics of the study variables are presented. As shown in Table 1, the mean scores of technical skills was 40.20 ± 2.90 (45 was the maximum grade and 32 minimum), the mean scores of human skill was equal to 41 (a maximum score of 45 and a minimum score after 35), the mean of cognitive scores was 40.1 ± 3.10 (a maximum score of 45 and a minimum score of 34), and that of educational managers' effective performance variable was 88.20 ± 7.45 (a maximum score of 109 and a minimum score of 71).

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of the Study Variables

Variable	Aspects	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	The Minimum score	The Maximum Score
Management skills	Technical	130	40.20	2.90	32	45
	Human	130	41	2.83	35	45
	Cognitive	130	40.1	3.10	34	45
Effective Performance		130	88.20	7.45	109	71

To answer this question, Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied and the results are shown in Table 2. There was a significant relationship between skills of the managers and their effective performance ($r=0.38, p<0.001$).

To determine the relationship, multiple regression test was used; it was indicated none of the three aspects of skills for educational managers could significantly predict the effective performance of educational managers.

According to data analysis, Regression Rate was 40% and R^2 was equal to 16%.

Table 2. The relationship between aspects of educational managers' skills and their effective performance

Model	B	Standard Error	B Standard	t	P value
Constant	43.78	9.19		4.76	0.12
Technical Skills	0.46	0.38	0.18	1.22	0.33
Human Skills	0.70	0.37	0.26	1.88	0.54
Cognitive Skills	-0.70	0.35	0.03	0.2	0.87

Discussion

As already mentioned, the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between triple skills of educational managers and their effective performance at undergraduate educational institutions in Shiraz. The study's findings in relation to the first question, "Is there a significant relationship between the skills of educational managers and their effective performance?", indicated that there was a significant relationship between the skills of educational managers and their effective performance ($r=0.38, p<0.01$). In other words, by increasing management skills of the educational managers, their effective performance also increases. These results are consistent with the research carried out by Aminian and Ghanbari (13, 6). However, as the study results show,

the correlation coefficient is low. One reason for the low correlation with the performance of their management skills can be the fact that in our educational system, the educational managers are appointed not based on their skills but they are merely appointed through other considerations. Thus, the low correlation between the skills required for effective management and performance can be expected. The distribution of educational managers who have been selected as samples here indicates that among the 73 responding female educational managers,

35.6 percent were educated in Education and Psychology and 47 people (64.4%) in other disciplines. Moreover, among 57 male responding educational managers, 26.3 percent were educated in Education and Psychology, and 73.7% were from other disciplines. Therefore, educational managers who participated in this study mostly do not possess the necessary expertise for educational administration. In addition, educational managers who are specialized in educational psychology have probably passed some courses in educational management in services, which proved not to be effective. The positive coefficient of correlation between the skills of educational managers and their effective performance illustrates the fact that by increasing their management skills, educational managers would improve their effective performance. Management knowledge cannot sufficiently provide management skills in managers by itself. While the management theory is knowledge, management acting is a kind of art. So, a manager must learn and develop a combination of professional skills, such as technical, official and personal skills in order to be effective (14).

Effective managers let others cooperate in managers' decisions and they help the staff and Line Employees to be aware of what exists in educational organizations (15). The results of the second question, i.e. "Which one of the aspects of educational managers' skills is a significant predictor of their effective performance?" indicated that among the three skills there exist no significant predictors of their performance. The result obtained is justified due to the following reasons: the age distribution of educational managers in this study (50-40 years old) is more than other age groups, the educational managers have been attending the universities and centers of higher education between 1980-87 and our country during those years has been tackling with numerous problems such as changing the system, Cultural Revolution and the imposed war. With the above mentioned problems without hardware development in higher education system in the country, the capacity of universities grew by 50 percent over the years in the field of humanities. This lack of assessment

in higher education in recent years and inefficient system of education in service time in today's executives has led to ineffectiveness of the three skills of educational managers as the predictors of effective performance. Also, as previously mentioned, people in the educational system in our country are mostly appointed and this leads to much greater selection of school principals ignoring the skills necessary for the successful management. Effective Educational Organizations have effective managers (16).

According to the results, it can be concluded that it is necessary to revise the selection of school administrators in education and try to recruit the educational managers with evaluated skills on the basis of opinion and expression and the their selection skills. This leads to increased efficiency and effective performance; therefore, it would ensue useful results in our educational system.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

As the present research was conducted in public high schools, we suggest that future studies assess the skills of educational managers in the management of non-profit schools. Moreover, this study considered the relationship between the management skills of educational managers and their efficient performance. To complement and extend the results of this study, we suggest that the skills necessary for effective management of stakeholders in charge of education and the education from the viewpoint of the parents could be scrutinized more efficiently.

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