

The effect of competencies of university managers on competitive advantage and organizational independence of universities

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Abstract

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of competencies of university managers on competitive advantage and organizational independence of universities and higher education institutions. The type of research was descriptive-correlational and the statistical population included the administrative and educational directors of Kashan University with 261 people, of which about 160 people through Cochran's formula were selected as a sample. In order to collect data, three questionnaires of managers' competence in the form of 38 items, competitive advantage with 16 items and organizational independence with 20 items were used according to the five-point Likert scale. The questionnaires face and structural validity (confirmatory factor analysis) was examined. The reliability of the questionnaires was obtained through Cronbach's alpha coefficient for managers' competence of 0.91, competitive advantage of 0.89 and organizational independence of 0.81. Data analysis was performed at descriptive and inferential levels by using Pls and Spss software's. The results showed that the mean of each variable was higher than the standard score and was in a relatively favorable condition. Also, there was a positive and significant relationship between managers' competencies, competitive advantage and organizational independence, and regression coefficients showed that managers' competencies can predict competitive advantage and organizational independence.

Keywords: Competence of Managers, Competitive Advantage, Organizational Independence, Higher Education

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Introduction

Universities In order to maintain and improve their competitive position, must strive to be better, adopt a competitive strategy and always seek learning and innovation. In today's organizations, the growth and development of human capital is the center of value production, and paying attention to the important and basic competencies of human resources will improve the performance of the organization's members. Therefore, recognizing the competencies needed by managers and planning based on it, should be at the top of the organization's goals (Shams Mourkani et al, 2014). Competence is the basic characteristic of a person that makes a person perform better in her job and task (Danaeifard, Azar, & Shirzadi, 2012). Management researchers believe that managerial competencies are summarized in three dimensions: emotional intelligence, cognitive competence, and social intelligence competence (Zareei Matin et al, 2014). Shams Mourkani, & et al (2014) in a research, have investigated the main and sub-components of university managers and identified the three main dimensions as managerial, social and individual competencies.

In order for universities to use their maximum capacity, they need to be independent in their various departments; because the independence of universities is a fundamental policy to create stability and increase accountability and responsibility (Aqatabar Roudbari et al, 2017). Research findings show that the existence of managerial competencies can help to realize the organizational independence of the university (Birknerová & Uher, 2022, Redding, 2017). Jandegroof & et al (2007), believe the dimensions of academic autonomy as procedural (systemic) independence, fundamental or intrinsic independence, and organizational independence. Among the most important components of the independence of universities and higher education institutions that have been considered in this research are scientific independence (free thinking and theorizing), financial independence and structural independence. Scientific independence is the same as scientific freedom, free exchange of ideas, expert opinions about scientific issues, and the free conduct of research and the publication of its results (Karimian et al, 2012).

In financial independence, the main goal is to run the universities, to maintain the desired quality and to protect it against the damage caused by the government's financial deficits. In terms of financial independence, maintaining educational standards, the possibility of proper development and matching the needs of the labor market, controlling the student acceptance capacity, and creating goals and motivation for professors and students will be at the top of the agenda. Structural independence is more related to the structural part of the university, and members will have the right to organize their scientific organization, which can be faculties, departments, schools, institutes, and professional fields, according to their expertise and skills (Zakirsalehi, 2010).

Due to the rapid expansion of universities and the increase in competition between universities, as well as the emergence of new universities, it is necessary for a university to increase its competitive advantage compared to other universities (Dehnavi et al, 2020). Management competencies can help to realize competitiveness and even competitive advantage (Manroop, 2015, Sepahvand et al 2016). An organization can achieve a competitive advantage if it creates more value for its customers compared to other organizations (Rezaei Dowlatabadi, et al, 2011).

It is expected that the managerial competencies of university administrators can help to realize this. According to the above explanations, this question arises, is the university's competitiveness and its independence influenced by the quality and competence of university managers? In other words, does the competence of university managers cause changes in its competitive advantage and organizational independence or not?

Methodology

The type of research was descriptive-correlational and the statistical population included the administrative and educational directors of Kashan University with 261 people, of which about 160 people through Cochran's formula were selected as a sample. In order to collect data, three questionnaires of managers' competence in the form of 38 items, competitive advantage with 16 items and organizational independence with 20 items were used according to the five-point Likert scale. The questionnaires face and structural validity (confirmatory factor analysis) was examined. The reliability of the questionnaires was obtained through Cronbach's alpha coefficient for managers' competence of 0.91, competitive advantage of 0.89 and organizational independence of 0.81. Data analysis was performed at descriptive and inferential levels by using Pls and Spss software's.

Results

The results showed that the average of each of the variables of managers' competencies, organizational independence and competitive advantage is higher than the criterion score and in a way in a relatively favorable situation. One sample t-test showed that these differences are significant and the assumption of the researcher's claim is accepted at the error level of 0.05. The results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between managers' competencies and competitive advantage of 0.285. The regression table showed that the competency of managers with (Beta=0.26 & P=0.02) can predict competitive advantage. Also, there is a positive and significant relationship between managers' competencies and organizational independence of 0.332. The regression table showed that managers' competence can predict organizational independence with (Beta=0.32 & P=0.002).

Discussion and conclusion

The results showed that the average of each of the variables of managers' competencies, organizational independence and competitive advantage are in a relatively favorable situation. Also, the results showed that there are a positive and significant relationship between managers' competencies and competitive advantage and organizational independence. In other words, the more the competences of managers in different dimensions increase, the more it will help to improve the competitive advantage and organizational independence.

Today, universities should recognize the gap between the current and desirable state of academic independence and competitive advantage and understand the existing gaps in this field, with proper planning and use of all resources and facilities, while adapting to the up-to-date requirements of higher education, provide the conditions to be able to achieve independence and create a competitive advantage; Because according to the results of the research, universities have higher ranks and more productivity that have sufficient independence and a higher competitive advantage.

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