Formulation of competency standards of high school principals

Hassan Nodehi[1], Maryam Nobahari[2]

[1]Assistant professor, of hakim sabzevari university, Iran

[2]Master student of Educational Management, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Neyshabur, Iran

Email: marybahar1379@gmail.com

Abstract

Advancements made in the present century have affected internal and external needs of education ministry and school are the subsystems that quality of their effectiveness represent how they respond to the expectations of the stakeholders of education system. This study examines competency standards of high school principals. For this purpose, 142 experts of Education Organization and official managers working in the second level of high schools in Neyshabur were selected and their data in 2015 were analyzed. This study was aimed to help improving the process of training management in schools, the required competencies by managers to deliver a performance superior. Therefore, the following 12 indicators were prioritized including empowering others, evolutionism, conflict management, organization and coordination, consultation, teamwork, commitment to personal morality, learning, personal progress, knowledge management, providing learning needs, attracting participation of parents, and educational leadership. The results show that attracting participation of parents and empowering others have the highest and the lowest factor loading, respectively.

Keywords: schools, quality, competence of managers

Introduction

Schools are subsystems that their level of effectiveness indicates the quality of meeting the expectations of interest parties of education. It is clear that achieving the goals and realization of strategies and educational programs and curricula as well as meeting the expectations of the target audience of education hinges on experienced and creative directors and leaders. Considering the cognitive, emotional, mental and social characteristics of high school students and the need to help the students get informed about academic majors and disciplines, what qualities should directors of high school education possess in order to be able to perform their administrative tasks effectively.

Statement of problem

Today, a new concern in the field of education is that education department must be the origin and source of comprehensive development and progress of the country. One of the most important factors in achieving the goals of education department is employing competent educational administrators. Here, competency is defined as skill, knowledge and ability as well as other qualities that any person requires for having a successful job performance. Competency is important to both the organization and employees. Such competency describes the skills and characteristics that the directors and employees need in order to build a new organizational culture and encounter the future challenges. It also helps the organizations to determine their needs, define their future developmental needs and concentrate better on developmental and recruitment plans (Dianati and Erfani, 2009).

Nowadays, management in educational systems is of paramount importance. Various movements have been established across the world to investigate about and revise the qualitative

and quantitative development of countries as well as their progress toward the standards. Such movements were specifically promoted by professionals and authorities of social and economic sciences after the industrial revolution. Later, the psychologists joined this movement and its scope of practice was extended from service and industry to education and schools. They tried to investigate the factors influencing on such progress and clarify their importance so that they could identify two classes of significance and determining factors:

1.   Causes of underdevelopment in some countries
2.   Causes of development and progress in the other countries (Halimi & Fathi Azar,2009)

However, regardless of the causes considered by the mentioned researchers and authorities and despite some disputes, it is accepted unanimously that competent and efficient directors are among the most important resources of any country.

Unfortunately, in education system of Iran, no specific standards have been designed and implemented for selection and employment of directors based on professional competencies. The lack of national standards for educational administration of schools has been always the author's concern and, hence, it has encouraged the author to investigate this issue because an integrated set of standards for competency can guaranty the efficiency of directors. In fact, strong standards have remarkable influence on the quality of management of high school principals. These standards should be regional (provincial) because national standards may not be an appropriate solution for a country like Iran with a very large area and a vast diversity of cultures and regions. Therefore, the present study – benefiting from valuable experiences and cooperation of senior educational administrators department of Neyshabur Township-- can be a useful in developing a model for standardization of required competencies for school principals.

Since our education system is also aimed at rising and educating students based on Islamic values, the issue gets particularly important. We should set out standards for competency of school principals of Iran so that the qualifications, capabilities, knowledge, skills and competencies required for school principals would be identified in a scientific, systematic and Islamic-oriented manner. Therefore, it is essential to have an accurate understanding of standardization for directors, especially school principals, and the lack of such standards is felt strongly in our educational system.

Definition of key terms

Managerial Competencies: capacity and competency is a combination of personal and individual characteristics, skills, specifications and behaviors that directly influence on the individual's performance. The United Nations has suggested two types of competencies for directors:

 A) Core competencies, B) Complementary competencies (Saemian, 2008)

Competency of Educational administrators: It means to what extent the performance and behavior of directors conforms to the behavioral standards and job performance criteria (Kumar, 1998).

Operational Definition of Competency: In the present research, the term "competency" (qualification) is used specifically to refer to potential ability of an individual (or group) to control special situation to perform a job or task successfully. This competency is evaluated by a researcher-made questionnaire.

Purpose of the study

The main purposes of the present study are as follows:
•   To set out competency standards for school principals of Neyshabur Township

- To study the existing theoretical principles
- To determine competencies for school principles of Neyshabur Township

Research Questions

The main questions raised in the study are as follows:

1) What are the managerial competency standards for school principles of Neyshabur Township?

2) How is the ranking of competency factors?

Research methodology

The present research, in terms of data collection methodology, was a survey research. Survey is a study on the sample population that represents the total statistical population. The main purpose of survey is to extend the results obtained from a small sample to a large population (Habibpour & Safari, 2009:25). The data was analyzed using Factor Analysis method. Factor analysis is a multivariate statistical method that under a hypothetical model makes a special relationship between many seemingly irrelevant variables. This method is applied when we have big data because it is not easy to analyze large numerical tables by a classic statistical method. Such data are analyzed by factor analysis method that is adequate for analyzing big data (Mansourfar, 2008). The basic assumption of this method is that the underlying factors of variables can be used for explaining complex phenomena and the correlations observed between variables is the result of sharing these factors (Afandizadeh, 2010).

Statistical Population of Research

The statistical population was a number of appropriate members that at least had one characteristic. Characteristic is a quality that is common between all members of the statistical population and differentiate this statistical population from other populations (Azar & Momeni, 2009). The research was conducted in spring 2015. The research was conducted at Neyshabur Town, Iran.

Data Collection Method

From the beginning of his research, every researcher searches for necessary data about the subject of research. This search starts with reviewing the theoretical principles and the literature and it continues by collecting new data. In other words, not only every researcher should be aware of previous scientific findings, but also he should update his knowledge during the research. Two major approaches are used for data collection in research works: Library research and field research (Sadei, 2011).

Data Collection Instrument

Data collection is one of the major parts of any research: if it is done systematically and correctly, the process of analyzing and drawing conclusion from data is done quickly and accurately. There are various instruments to collect data for research, such as observation, interview, questionnaire and existing data. Each of the mentioned instruments has some advantages and disadvantages (Khaki, 2009).

Testing empowerment factor

Table 1. Descriptive indices of empowerment factor

Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum	Number of questions
Empowerment	10.36	11.00	12	2.149	4.813	3	15	43

The average of empowerment factor was 10.36, the median was 11.00, the mode was 12, the standard deviation was 2.149 and the variance was 4.813. The minimum value of empowerment was 3 and the maximum value was 15. The number of questions relating to this factor was three. The frequency distribution diagram of this factor is as follows:
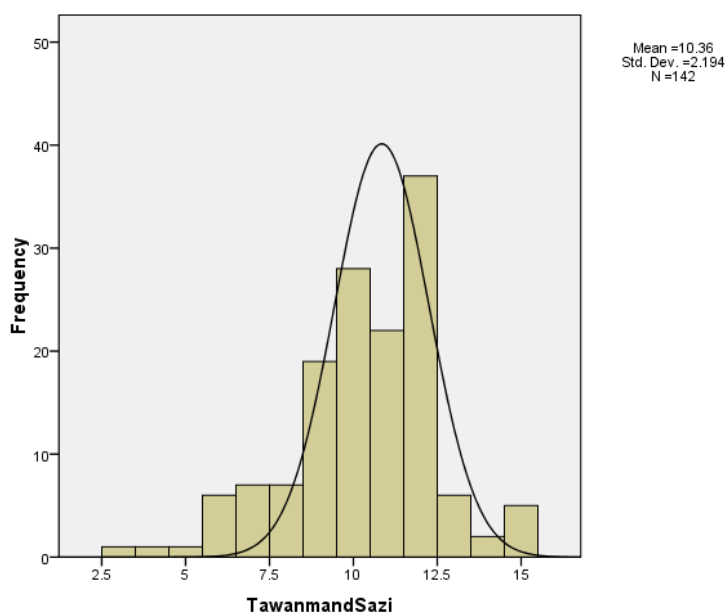

Figure 1. Frequency distribution diagram of empowerment

Investigating knowledge managerial factor

Table 2. Descriptive Indices of Managerial Knowledge

Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum	Number of questions
Managerial knowledge	14.01	14.00	16	3. 541	12.539	4	20	4

The average of managerial knowledge factor was 14.01, the median was 14.00, the mode was 16, the standard deviation was 3.541 and the variance was 3.541. The minimum value of managerial knowledge was 4 and the maximum value was 20. Four questions were related to this factor. The frequency distribution diagram of this factor is as follows:
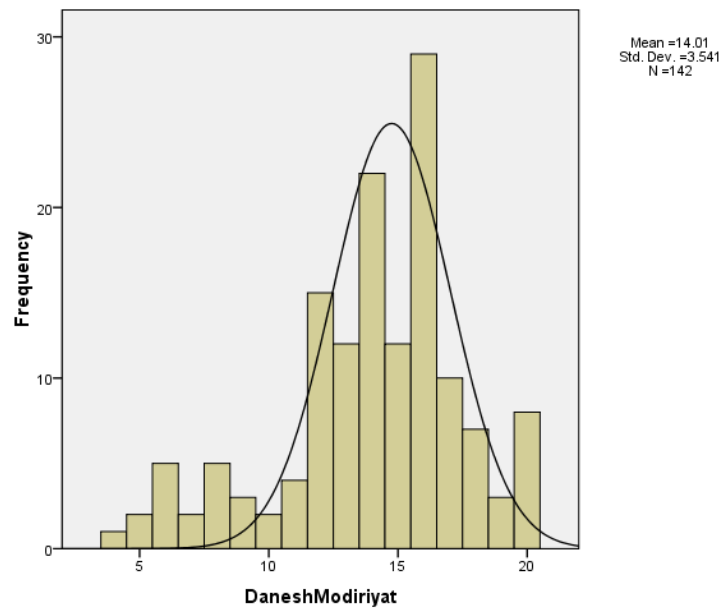
Figure 2. Frequency distribution diagram of managerial knowledge

Results

Table 3 shows the results of the competencies of educational mangers and indicates the importance and factorial load of each variable.

Table 3. Factorial loads of each factor by exploratory factor analysis

Factorial load	Factor
0/423	Empowerment
0/849	Evolutionism
0/749	Conflict management
0/689	organization and coordination
0/813	Consultation
0/741	Team working
0/643	commitment to personal morality
0/698	Learning and personal progress
0/747	Managerial knowledge
0/845	Learning needs
0/906	Parents' participation
0/795	Leadership

Table 4. Results of factorial analysis based on degree of importance

Factorial load	Competency
0/906	Parents' participation
0/849	Evolutionism
0/847	**Managerial knowledge**
0/847	**Learning needs**
0/813	**Consultation**
0/795	**Leadership**
0/749	**Conflict management**
0/747	**Organization and coordination**
0/741	**Team work**
0/698	**Learning and personal progress**
0/643	commitment to personal morality
0/421	**Empowerment**

The results indicated that the parents' participation has dedicated the most amount of factorial load and empowerment has the least amount of factorial load.

Discussion and Conclusion

If we investigate human resources systems of organizations, we find out that in most of times there is lack of adequate association and relationship between its subsystems such as education, job performance evaluation and recruitment. This issue leads to ineffectiveness of human resources systems. Taking disordered actions in management of human resources does not lead the organization toward achieving the desired results. One of the best and most appropriate approaches to integration of human resources management activities is "competency-based approach". It means that we can design each subsystem of human resources management based on competency. In fact, we put the competency in the core of all human resources activities of the organization.

In recent years, educational administrators have faced with various challenges in the field of school system (as one of the important and influential organizations of the country). Rapid development of science and information technology, information exchange in large scales and short time-intervals, increase of expectations and needs of people from education department has made it essential to develop a special type of education that by educating and training a multi-dimensional and well-informed individual help the individuals to achieve their goals and overcome their ignorance with the help of knowledge and attention.

In the present research, in order to help to improve the educational administration of schools, the managerial competencies required for presenting a performance higher than the average were identified. Then, by interviewing with experts, the primary list of factors was completed,

summarized, concluded and finalized. Based on the mentioned list, 24 indices were identified and eventually 12 indices were selected based on opinions of experts. The following 12 indices were identified and prioritized: empowerment of others, development orientation, conflict management, organization and cooperation, consultation, team-work, adherence to individual ethics, individual learning and development, managerial knowledge, meeting the learning needs, getting parents involved and educational leadership. The results indicate that, among the mentioned factors, "getting parents involved" has the maximum factor loading and "empowerment" has the minimum factor loading.

Considering the educational system of the country, there is an urgent need to compare the current conditions with the ideal conditions so that we can identify the differences and study the causes of such differences and therefore identify and implement appropriate solutions (based on Organizational Excellence Model). Setting out performance standards that form our ideals helps us to achieve the mentioned goal.

The human resources will be provided effectively only when the provision is based on scientific principles and regulations. To do so, the abilities of candidates should be compared with the job requirements and then the qualified candidates are selected. This requires precise planning and using scientific techniques and skills. Organizing the human resources in an appropriate manner, the quality of employing teachers and suitable use of their specialty based on their preference, are other measures that can be taken for increasing the efficiency of high school educational system.

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