

Developing an Effective Academic Leadership Model at Islamic Azad University

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ABSTRACT:

Effective academic leadership is a complicated issue to investigate because of its intangibility and potential consequences. In addition, it plays an essential role in the success of institutions as well as being an important factor in improving quality performance of faculty members, administrators and qualified alumni. In this study mixed methods was used to develop a model of Islamic Azad University (IAU) effective academic leadership in Iran. Qualitative approach involved content analysis through identifying, categorizing and verifying the constructs of effective academic leadership dimensions, its barriers and its challenges. Open-ended questions and in-depth interviews with IAU academic leaders in managerial positions were performed. Quantitative approach was conducted in form of a nationwide survey and analyzing the quantitative data by using descriptive statistics to determine the perceptions and preferences of faculty members regarding organizational culture at IAU branches in Iran. Then, a draft model in the multilevel pie diagram was developed by merging the results through developing procedures. After that, the model was proposed to IAU and international experts for validation.

The key results of this study based on theoretical framework and analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data, showed that IAU effective academic leadership dimensions could be categorized into three scopes of setting direction, developing organization and developing people in three levels of administration (central office level, branch level and faculty level) while, the barriers to effective academic leadership were proved to be centralization and bureaucratic hierarchy structure, budget deficiency in some branches, ineffective networking in communication, and social, political and cultural intervention, insufficient high qualified and merit human resource.

Keywords: *Effective academic leadership, Organizational culture, Internal and external challenges, Barriers, Islamic Azad University in Iran*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays nations deal with many new challenges in terms of education and higher education due to the influential factors such as economic, social, political and technological changes in the world. The lead nations need to keep pace with technology and scientific advancement as well as maintaining their

cultural identity through effective educational leadership to ensure the quality of teaching, learning and research to fulfill their objectives. To enhance the functions of higher education institutions, academic leaders could set direction toward protecting cultural identity and promote ethical values as well as quality teaching and

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research with the assistance of educational experts and governments. They could meet requirements of quality education and confront contemporary challenges and obstacles through developing structure of institutions, curriculum and their people. It is necessary to develop a model of effective academic leadership as a foundation of institutional performance by creating a comprehensive vision, drawing up missions and objectives as well as managing the change through developing institutions and their people by identifying the cultural context and environmental challenges.

As there have been relatively few studies regarding the leadership in higher education (Bargh et al., 2000; Bland et al., 2005; Benoit et al., 2005; Bikmoradi, 2009; Bryman et al., 2009), this study on developing the IAU effective academic leadership model was carried out to understand the success of Islamic Azad University during last 30 years. This model could be applied as a practical guideline by academic leaders in managerial positions and encourage them to reconsider their current academic leadership practice toward effective administration and management with necessary leadership traits, values, skills, and strategies (Leithwood, 1994; Ramsden, 1998; Boyd, 2002; Bass and Avolio, 2004; Kouzes and Posner, 2007; Bass, 2008) with respect to organizational culture, internal and external environmental challenges (Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Hoy et al., 2008).

The Islamic Azad University (IAU) is a nonprofit private system of chain universities with 440 branches in Iran. It is considered as the world's second largest university and the great cultural-educational achievement of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the past 30 years; the IAU main objective is believed to be the developing the Islamic culture and humanistic development among its faculty members, scholars and staff. In spite of the significant institutional reforms in Iranian higher education after Islamic revolution in 1979, and great pressure to pursue and enhance Islamic values and quality knowledge in universities, IAU has been successfully dealt with changes and environmental challenges through effective academic leadership.

This study aimed to develop an effective academic leadership model on reflection in

theoretical framework and the views of academic leaders, faculty members, and experts by exploring the current IAU academic leadership dimensions and its barriers, its challenges, and its organizational culture. The objectives of this study were:

1. To explore the effective academic leadership dimensions and its barriers at IAU branches
2. To determine IAU organizational culture
3. To determine the challenges facing academic leaders with managerial position at IAU branches
4. To develop an effective academic leadership model at IAU branches

The coverage of this research was limited to IAU branches in Iran during 2011 and early 2012. The scope of the study was set by sampling of IAU former president and vice presidents, heads of districts, chancellors, vice chancellors, administration directors, deans, vice deans, heads of departments and faculty members with work experiment of at least five years as well as IAU and international experts in academic leadership field.

Literature Review

This research was an analytical approach derived from the theoretical framework and practical paradigms in which IAU academic leaders in management positions worked. The theoretical framework was based on the most outstanding styles of leadership in academic context that are transactional (management) and transformational (leadership) by Bass and Avolio (2004), Bass (2008), Kouzes and Posner (2007), Ramsden, (1998) and Leithwood, (1994) in a sense that reflecting IAU effective academic leadership dimensions in setting directions, developing organization and developing people in three levels of administration (central office level, branch level and faculty level). Moreover, determining the dominant organizational culture type at the IAU branches based on Competing Values Framework (CVF) which developed by Cameron and Quinn (2006). In this study an effective academic model was developed as the result of in-depth understanding of effective academic leadership by analyzing and evaluating IAU's academic experts and leaders in managerial positions. This model was also built on foundation of well-documented and well-

recognized knowledge about leadership that already exists as well as the theoretical framework of organizational culture.

Transformational leadership is about a leader with strong personality who has a clear vision of future and can go beyond the self interest to meet individual needs toward achievement of the organizational goals (Hater et al., 1988). Transactional leadership is characterized as managerial role and mostly these leaders are managers. In the educational system transactional leadership is successful if components of the context agree on the importance of tasks and goals. Transformational leadership on the other hand, is successful if the context requires transferring the culture toward shared vision, mutual support and stimulation between leaders and followers. In many perspectives transformational leadership is the extension of transactional leadership; accordingly one must be first an effective manager in order to be an effective leader (Boyd, 2002).

Bass (1985) conceptualized transformational leadership in four dimensions which were idealized influence (attributed and behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Bass and Avolio (2004) was defined transactional leadership by contingent reward and management-by-exception active. Furthermore, they stated that transactional leadership was about the close monitoring of employees' performance; met the goals and standards while transformational leadership was based on relational contract and motivation to perform at higher level. In this theory, leadership effectiveness is about the ability of leader to meet individuals' needs along with organizational requirements (Bass, 2008).

Later on Kouzes and Posner (2007) extended the idea of transformational leadership into a list of five types of behaviors which was influential in being effective leaders. They studied the correlation between followers' perception of their managers' credibility and their behaviors to the organization. They emphasized on leading by example as visible management to inspire employees to perform better and willingly challenge the system to turn ideas into action to accomplish goals.

The idea of transformational leadership in academic context was supported by Ramsden (1998). He stated six principles and four responsibilities of academic leadership. The six principles were highlighting the competencies of the academic leadership. And four responsibilities for being an effective academic leader were enabling, visioning, developing and learning to lead. He also supported the idea of effective academic leadership by employing different combination of leadership practices such as the leader motivating, inspiring and enabling individual to achieve a clear planned vision. Ramsden (2003) believed that the idea of effective leadership in higher education is also about the harmonious process in order to develop and change students' understanding of the world around them and to transform and empower students by advancing their knowledge and skills.

Leithwood (1994) also supported transformational leaders who practiced their leadership style in setting direction, developing the organization and people. He believed that effective transformational leaders in educational context understand how to set a clear direction to have a greatest impact and how to develop the institution and people in an increasing challenging and complex environment. He also emphasized on being successful managers with inspirational instructions to embody the best thinking in teaching, learning and research.

According to Schein (2004) effective leaders are depending on the organizational culture and they can create effective managerial culture, as leadership is a concept which is formulated in context (Shah, 2006). Identifying different models of organizational culture has given different styles of leadership to perform effectively. In this study the academic culture of Islamic Azad University branches was measured by Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) based on Competing Values Framework (CVF) which developed by Cameron and Quinn (2006). Four cultural types are distinguished in this framework which are:

- ✓ Clan or collaboration culture (internal focus and flexible)
- ✓ Adhocracy or create culture (external focus and flexible)

✓ Market or compete culture (external focus and controlled)

✓ Hierarchy or control culture(internal focus and controlled)

In clan culture, effectiveness mostly concentrates on teambuilding, employee involvement, human resource development, employee empowerment and open communication. This type of culture belongs to family-type organizations which focus on internal issues and integration. Mostly the management role is “Do things together”. In adhocracy culture, most highly values are in continuous improvement, creating new standards, creative solution finding and flexibility. The organizational focus of this culture is on external positioning and new opportunities along with innovation which are the key success of the organization. The management role is ‘Do things first’. Market culture mainly focuses on transaction with external communities such as suppliers, contractors and unions. Competitiveness and productivity are the core values of the organization. The organizational structure focuses on external positioning and control. The management role is “Do thing fast”. In hierarchy culture, major goal of the organization is to foster stability and efficiency through structured workplace in long term. The management role is “Do things right”. Four major culture types were measured by six dimensions which are: dominant characteristics, organizational leadership, and management of employees, organizational glue and strategic emphases.

RESEARCH METHOD

The mixed methods approach was utilized to measure different kinds of characteristics and concepts to obtain information regarding the research objectives in this study. IAU former president and former vice-president for research and technology, heads of districts, chancellors, vice chancellors, administration directors, deans, vice deans, heads of departments and faculty members with work experiment of at least five years were selected as population of the study. The multiple methods of data collection were used to achieve the objectives of this study and to develop an effective academic leadership model. Secondary data of this research was collected from documents such as textbooks,

articles, official records, newsletters, online journals and dissertations; along with primary data which was collected from interviews, open-ended questions and a questionnaire. According to Creswell and Tashakkori (2007) and Johnson & Christensen (2012), applying mixed methods is an excellent way to conduct high quality research, by this manner researchers pay attention to the characteristic as well as pervasive of the case. This kind of methodology has been used in many academic disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, political science, psychology and education (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005) to achieve deeper understanding of issues related to target organization by a logical structure. By using the mixed methods in this study different kinds of information and characteristics of the research objectives were collected, analyzed and explored.

The qualitative approaches in this research included different methods of sources such as documentary research, interviews with IAU former president and former IAU vice-president for research and technology, discussion with a focus group and sending open-ended questions (Creswell et al., 2011) to collaborate each other in order to explore the effective academic leadership dimensions and to determine its barriers and challenges in IAU. The purposive sampling strategy was applied for objectives 1, 3 and 4. Qualitative content analysis through inductive categorizing and deductive reasoning approach were employed based on the research theoretical framework to determine effective academic leadership dimensions, its barriers and its challenges facing IAU leaders in managerial position.

The quantitative technique consisted of a nationwide survey to determine the perceptions and preferences of faculty members regarding organizational culture at IAU branches in Iran. The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) questionnaire in Persian was used to assess faculty members’ points of view regarding the preferred and actual perception of organizational culture. Descriptive statistics was used to determined IAU’s dominant academic culture.

Having merged systematically and explicitly the data from qualitative and quantitative, a holistic framework displaying in a dynamic draft model was used to demonstrate effective

academic leadership in as many fundamental constructs as possible with their associations. The analytical process was mixed methods and data driven approach was pragmatic paradigm in which the philosophical basis for research were relayed on different approaches for collecting and analyzing data to provide the best understanding of the research questions; using pluralistic approaches to develop knowledge about the research questions; and the study took place in cultural, social, political and other context (Creswell and Tashakkori, 2007). The proposed model presented a new paradigm of effective academic leadership by localizing the theoretical framework, adaptation and development of related knowledge, values and behavioral norms in IAU context. Moreover, it displayed the functions of academic leadership based on Islamic, academic and educational management principles in the hierarchical structures as well as it presented barriers and challenges facing the IAU leaders in managerial positions to fulfilled the missions of IAU in the various fundamental levels of the individual, institutional, societal and global.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

IAU Effective Academic Leadership Dimensions and Its Barriers

In terms of effective academic leadership dimensions and its barriers, the result based on qualitative content analysis showed three scopes of setting direction, developing organization and developing people in three levels of administration (central office level, branch level and faculty level). Setting direction which was applied the same in the three levels of administration, was subcategorized into the practicing Islamic values and ethical perspective, creating shared vision, missions and feasible objectives, communicating effectively as well as creating sustainable value-based performance.

However, developing organization and people were different in each level of administration. Developing institution in central office was subcategorized into the practicing transformational leadership, applying analytical and strategic management, creating research and teaching models, modifying organizational culture, creating Quality Assurance (QA) indicators, and strengthening relationships externally and internally. And developing people

was subcategorized into the concepts of providing an appropriate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) model, creating efficient assessment and establish an evaluation system. Similarly, developing IAU branch level was subcategorized into the practicing collaborative leadership, managing the resources, facilitating research and teaching process, modifying organizational strategies and structure, encouraging creative and entrepreneurship culture, monitoring QA, and networking with national and international universities. And developing its people was subcategorized into the providing academic support, implementing CPD and efficient recognition system. Likewise, developing faculty level was subcategorized into the fostering team leadership, practicing fair management, being research and teaching leader, strengthening organizational culture and implementing QA. And developing faculty level people was subcategorized into the offering them intellectual stimulation and providing them with individual support. The model of effective academic leadership dimensions guides current performance and target future performance by employing measures in management performance, institutional and intellectual processes, stakeholders' quality knowledge and evaluation, their learning and growth toward achieving long-term goals.

Moreover, the results regarding barriers to effective academic leadership illustrated centralization and bureaucratic hierarchy structure, budget deficiency in some branches, ineffective networking in communication, and social, political and cultural intervention, insufficient high qualified and merit human resource.

IAU Dominant Organizational Culture

In terms of the organizational culture, the results based on descriptive statistics revealed that the dominant current organizational culture was hierarchy with the highest mean score of 33.02 and followed by market with a mean score of 25.17, clan with a mean score of 23.23 and adhocracy by a mean score of 18.58, respectively. And the dominant preferred organizational culture were clan with the highest mean score of 31.75 and followed by adhocracy with a mean score of 27.37, hierarchy with a

mean score of 20.61 and market with a mean score of 20.27, in that order. In addition, the results pointed out that the dominant current culture type for the six facets was hierarchy and the dominant preferred culture type was clan for five facets and adhocracy for one dimension. Accordingly, after analyzing six dimensions, it could be proposed that the current dominant culture was convincingly fit or congruent which meant different characteristics of this organizational culture were aligned. In all six facets which were dominant characteristics, organizational leadership, management, organizational glue, strategic emphases, criteria for success, hierarchy was the dominant current culture type at IAU in Iran. Many studies indicated that the high performance and long-term effectiveness of an organization were associated with cultural congruence (O'Reilly et al., 1991; Kotter et al., 1992; Kotter, 1996; Whetten et al., 2006). Based on the findings of this study, the type, the strength and the congruence of the IAU dominant culture profiles were hierarchy.

IAU Effective Academic Leadership Challenges

In terms of the challenges confronting IAU leaders in managerial positions, the result based on qualitative content analysis revealed two categories: internal challenges and external challenges. Internal challenges were subcategorized into the administration and managerial affairs, financial issues, organizational culture and students' affairs. Administration and managerial challenges were highly representative of the concepts of centralization in recruitments, layoff and financial decisions, tendency toward bureaucracy, hierarchical organization, ethical perspective, insufficient attention to welfare of employees, insufficient qualified supporting staff, lack of professional development workshop for supporting staff, inexperienced academic managers in some positions, and work overload at all level of management. Financial challenges were highly representative of the concepts of insufficient budget in some branches, budget allocation on construction and quantity growth, lack of government funding, and increasing the expenditures rate. Organizational culture challenges were highly representative of the concepts of hierarchy

culture, low motivation which was about low level of participation and team spirit as well as entrepreneurial spirit among academic leaders in managerial position, changing the role of universities toward professionalism, regulation based relationship between students and administrators, and lack of ownership sense among employees. Students' affairs challenges were highly representative of the concepts of centralization system of student admission, excessive number of graduates, high ratio of students to faculty members, students' high expectation from faculty and non-faculty staff, increasing number of students and limited resources, as well as insufficient attention to student satisfaction. External challenges were subcategorized into the political, economic, social and technological factors and international and national competitions. IAU academic leaders and decisions makers are aware of the importance of combining qualification and skills along with global development of the university to target economic, social, cultural, technological and scientific comprehensiveness. Higher education institutions should respond effectively to social, political, economic, educational and technological challenges to be successful in developing academic leadership practice (Bikmoradi, 2009).

Fatemeh Hamidifar (FH) Effective Academic Leadership Model of IAU

The model visualizes the combined elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches in an epistemologically consistent way. The multi-level pie diagram was utilized to create a coherent design based on findings of objectives one, two and three in developing a model of effective academic leadership at IAU in Iran. In this dynamic model the leading components are effective academic dimensions which in a sense lead institutions toward growth and transformation in a stable way. This model represents a complex system with many parts which have mutually interactive dynamic layers to explain the functional perspective of effective academic leadership in three distinct areas of setting direction, developing organizing and the people in three levels of IAU organizational administration (central office, IAU branch and faculty). A variety of leadership practices and behaviors are expected to facilitate these

functions. The model outlines dimensions of academic leadership to perform effectively with regard to environmental influences. The effective academic leadership dimensions are varied among different managerial levels. This model could be implemented as an action plan for institutional administration to significantly improve their achievement through stakeholders' commitments and support in fulfilling of university branches visions, missions and objectives.

In figure 1 shows Fatemeh Hamidifar (FH) effective academic leadership model of IAU with eight layers of circles. The gray part of the model is representing the core section which is effective academic leadership dimensions and white part is representing outcomes of the research which are IAU effective academic leadership, organizational culture, barriers and internal and external environmental challenges. The dotted lines indicate the associations between different circles, and dashed lines represent flow of information and the certain relationship of the components in the circle 2, 3, and 4, finally the solid circle appear on the eighth circle representing the limit and the boundary of the model.

Eight layers of circles are consisted of:

- 1st layer of circle illustrates the outcome of research which is the IAU effective academic leadership.
- 2nd layer of circle explains three levels of IAU organizational administrations which are:
 - ✓ Central office level (academic leaders are IAU 5 councils, the president, 10 vice-presidencies and 17 directors of regions).
 - ✓ Branch level (academic leaders are IAU branch chancellor and vice-chancellors in education, in research and technology, in administrative and financial affairs, in civil and development, in cultural and in student affairs).
 - ✓ Faculty level (academic leaders are dean, vice deans, heads of departments and faculty members).
- 3rd layer of circle illustrates the setting direction(SD) developed by academic leaders at central office which is followed similarly in three levels of administration, and the subcategories are:
 - ✓ (SD1) practicing Islamic values and ethical perspective.

- ✓ (SD2) creating shared vision, missions and feasible objectives.
- ✓ (SD3) communicating effectively.
- ✓ (SD4) creating sustainable value-based performance.
 - 4th layer of circle shows the three different approaches of developing organization and people according to the related administration level, and the subcategories are:
 - ✓ (DI) Developing the institution is the function of academic leaders at IAU central office level, and the subcategories are:
 - (DI1) practicing transformational leadership.
 - (DI2) applying analytical and strategic management.
 - (DI3) creating research and teaching models.
 - (DI4) modifying organizational culture.
 - (DI5) creating QA indicators.
 - (DI6) strengthening relationships externally and internally
 - ✓ (DPI) Developing people in institution is the function of academic leaders at IAU central office level, and the subcategories are:
 - (DPI1) providing an appropriate CPD model.
 - (DPI2) creating efficient assessment and establish an evaluation system.
 - ✓ (DB) Developing IAU branch level is the function of academic leaders at IAU branch level which is under supervision of central office, and the subcategories are:
 - (DB1) practicing collaborative leadership.
 - (DB2) managing the resources.
 - (DB3) facilitating research and teaching process.
 - (DB4) modifying organizational strategies and structure.
 - (DB5) encouraging creative and entrepreneurship culture.
 - (DB6) monitoring QA.
 - (DB7) networking with national and international universities.
 - ✓ (DPB) Developing people in the IAU branch is the function of academic leaders at IAU branch level, and the subcategories are:
 - (DPB1) providing academic support.
 - (DPB2) implementing CPD.
 - (DPB3) efficient recognition system.

✓ (DF) Developing faculty is the function of academic leaders at IAU faculty level which is under supervision of branch level, the subcategories are:

- (DF1) fostering team leadership.
- (DF2) practicing fair management.
- (DF3) being research and teaching leader.
- (DF4) strengthening organizational culture.
- (DF5) implementing QA.

✓ (DPF) Developing people in the faculty is the function of academic leaders at faculty level, the subcategories are:

- (DPF1) offering intellectual stimulation.

• (DPF2) providing individual support.

• 5th layer of circle reflects the barriers to effective academic leadership which comprises of:

- ✓ Centralization and bureaucracy.
- ✓ Social, political and cultural intervention.
- ✓ Ineffective networking in communication.
- ✓ Insufficient merit human resource.
- ✓ Budget deficiency in some branches.

These barriers are changeable due to different circumstances such as organizational change and implementation of institutional objectives; so academic leaders in three different levels of administration should identify the existence of these obstacles in order to overcome them effectively.

• 6th layer of circle shows the abstract concepts of the six dimensions of dominant organizational culture at IAU branches which is currently identified as hierarchy with six subcategories:

- ✓ Dominant characteristics are represented by formalized and structured organization.
- ✓ Organizational leadership is represented by coordinating and organizing leaders.
- ✓ Management is represented by management of employees through procedures.
- ✓ Organizational glue is represented by formal rules and policies.
- ✓ Strategic emphases are represented by long term stability and efficiency concerns.
- ✓ Criteria of success are represented by managing smooth running organization.

The dominant organizational culture should be identified in different levels of administration as being hierarchy, marketing, clan or adhocracy based on the institution's vision and missions. And accordingly the six dimensions of the identified organizational culture should be acknowledged to design the strategic formulation and implementation of institutional objectives.

• 7th layer of circle indicates the current internal challenges which are confronting the IAU leaders in managerial positions, they are:

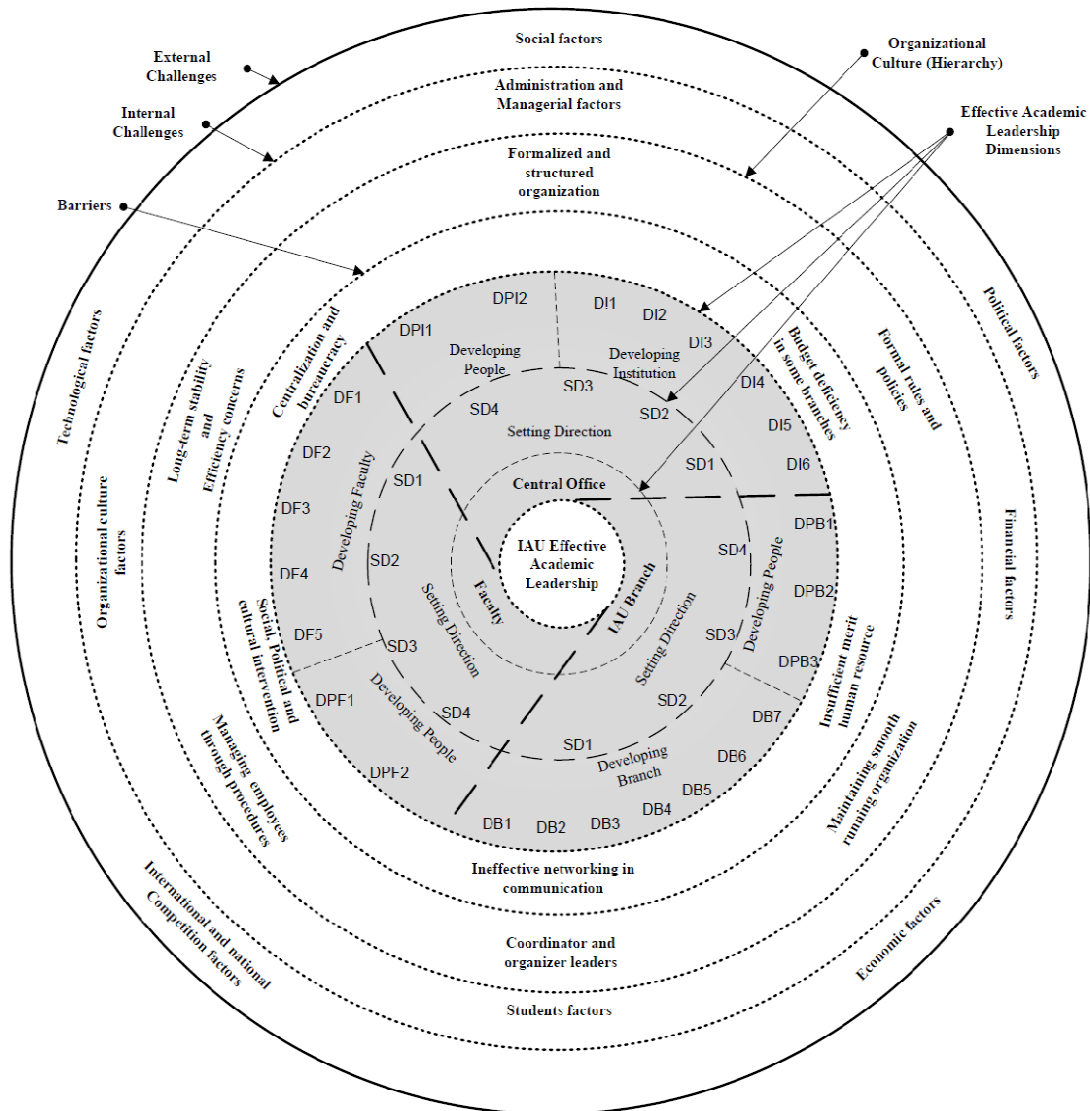
- ✓ Administration and managerial factors.
- ✓ Financial factors.
- ✓ Organizational culture factors.
- ✓ Students' factors.

• 8th layer of circle reflects the external challenges facing IAU leaders in managerial positions which includes:

- ✓ Political factors.
- ✓ Economic factors.
- ✓ Social factors.
- ✓ Technological factors.
- ✓ International and national competition factors.

Identifying and monitoring the internal and external environmental challenges are the functions of academic leaders at the central office to find the ways managing these constraints and converting them to opportunities. Effectual communication and collaboration among three levels of administration academic leaders are the key success to facilitate improvement of institutions by overcoming these challenges and strengthening the quality of academic programs and services.

This model was developed based on IAU effective academic leaders in managerial positions and it could be formulated and implemented in any higher education institutions through supervision, monitoring the quality assurance, setting clear standards and performance criteria, regulations, supportive and motivational mechanisms, understanding and identifying the organizational culture and external and internal environmental challenges.



SD1 representing practicing Islamic values and ethical perspective (mutual trust and respect)
 SD2 representing creative shared vision, missions and feasible objectives
 SD3 representing communicating effectively
 SD4 representing creating sustainable value-based performance
 DI1 representing practicing transformational leadership
 DI2 representing applying analytical and strategic management
 DI3 representing creating research and teaching models
 DI4 representing modifying organizational culture
 DI5 representing creating QA indicators

DI6 representing strengthening relationships externally and internally
 DP1 representing providing an appropriate CPD model
 DP2 representing creating efficient assessment and establish an evaluation system
 DB1 representing practicing collaborative leadership
 DB2 representing managing the resources
 DB3 representing facilitating research and teaching process
 DB4 representing modifying organizational strategies and structure
 DB5 representing encouraging creative and entrepreneurship culture
 DB6 representing monitoring QA

DB7 representing networking with national and international universities
 DPB1 representing providing academic support
 DPB2 representing implementing CPD
 DPB3 representing implementing efficient recognition system
 DF1 representing fostering team leadership
 DF2 representing practicing fair management
 DF3 representing being research and teaching leader
 DF4 representing strengthening organizational culture
 DF5 representing implementing QA
 DPF1 representing offering intellectual stimulation
 DPF2 representing providing individual support

Figure 1: Fatemeh Hamidifar (FH) effective academic leadership model of IAU

Discussion and Implications

IAU in different levels of administration has been engaged in a competitive environment and as a result it has been initiated to practice the kind of academic leadership to respond to changes in which addresses the challenges and sustain value-based performance. Thus it was important to develop a model of IAU leadership as a guideline to effective academic leadership practices and its development programs.

The FH effective academic leadership model of IAU was developed based on mixed methods, findings from research objectives one, two and three, as well as research theoretical framework. The literature review indicated the association of effective leadership, organizational culture type and internal, external environmental challenges and their dynamic role in the organization. Transformational leadership model based on theories of Bass and Avolio (2004), Kouzes and Posner (2007), Ramsden (1998), and Leithwood (1994) as well as organizational culture model based on Cameron and Quinn (2006) provided the theoretical framework of the research. This model covered the core competencies of academic leadership, the obstacles which managers were faced or what were done badly or the conditions lead to poor performance, the internal atmosphere of the organization, the internal conditions to be improved and the external circumstances to be turned into institutional advantages. The findings from research objectives one, two and three, were supported by many studies, indicated that effective leaders influenced organizational culture and environmental challenges had significant influence on organizational culture and leadership behaviors (Tierney, 1987; Deshpande and Webster, 1989; Tierney, 1989; Chin Loy et al., 2003; Martin et al., 2003; Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Cameron et al., 2007; Bass, 2008; Bikmoradi et al., 2009; Rahimnia et al., 2009).

Based on the findings setting direction, developing organization and people significantly influenced the stakeholders' collective efficacy, commitment and resilience to enhance the quality of managing the learning program, teaching and research (Ramsden, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999). Each of these categories has their origin in the different kinds of

transformational leadership which displaying role modeling, efficient and fair management, communicating a compelling vision and value-based sustainable performance. Bass (2008) and Kotter (1996) reflected the concepts of management and leadership as opposite sides of the same continuum of administration in creating agendas, developing human networks and enhancing quality. Leithwood (1994) likewise reflected these two concepts in pursuing a collaborate culture by fostering staff improvement, involving staff in planning collaboratively toward feasible objectives as well as active communicating institutional vision and values by using management system to lead toward productive outcomes in transforming environment.

Effective academic leadership can manage changes by communicating directions and aligning people through motivating them and efficient management (Kotter, 1996; Ramsden, 1998). This model elaborated the multifaceted complementary of management and leadership and their integration roles to facilitate quality teaching and research based on the academic leadership model of Ramsden (1998) and Leithwood (1994).

Academic leaders in Iran usually require playing diverse roles in teaching, research, administration and political fields; so they should learn about the aspects of effective academic leadership to be able to perform well (Bikmoradi et al., 2009), and to be able to identify and overcome the barriers of centralization and bureaucracy, social, political and cultural intervention, ineffective networking in communication, insufficient merit human resource, and budget deficiency in some branches because of decreasing the number of students. IAU as a complex organization can be defined by cultural, social-cognition and political representations (Hamidifar, 2010); this complexity can explain the barriers to academic leaders. These barriers in long term could reveal a lack of autonomy and freedom of academic leadership which may lead to job dissatisfaction and declining in motivation of middle managers and faculty members. Considering the fact that the government and political authorities have been keen to dominate universities traditionally (Mehralizadeh, 2005); IAU branches are not

exceptional, and their interventions eventually have a great impact on autonomy and decision making of IAU management, faculty members and participation level of staff. Therefore, the IAU board of trustees has tried to formulate strategies to adjust the structure of the institutions toward shared governance system to create a learning environment to meet the faculties and staff needs.

Bass (2008) argued that leadership and organizational culture have continuous interaction and he believed that the culture influence the leadership. He also identified the culture as glue which kept the organization together. Cameron and Quinn (2006) based on CVF identified six dimensions of culture which determined four models of culture. The hierarchy culture which was determined as dominant culture type of IAU branches was derived from Weber's theory of bureaucracy. This model emphasized on the internal factors more than external factors and paid attention to stability and control to achieve efficiency. Masland (1985) mentioned that organizational culture affects faculty members', administrators' and student's behaviors as well as curriculum. Many researchers defined culture as combination of tangible and intangible shared meanings which is influenced by leadership style, internal and external environmental factors of organization (Lewis, 1996; Hershey et al., 1997; Hofstede, 2001).

Successful academic leadership facilitates institutions to create a continuous learning environment, to provide the best solutions for the problems in research and teaching and to be innovative to convert challenges into the opportunities. IAU academic leaders recognize the dialectical-political and socio-cultural change in the institutions so they plan strategically to adjust the university structure and organizational culture in order to enhance academic autonomy, staff commitment, and professional development of human resource. IAU academic leadership in each branch is now moving toward decentralization mode in financing, management of the university structure and quality of the operational performance in spite of environmental challenges and barriers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During almost thirty years of establishing Islamic Azad University in Iran, it is now recognized as a pioneer in the field of academic teaching, research and production of new science and technology based on the Islamic values, national demands and global criteria. Its aims are to promote knowledge, skills and culture identity as well as responding to the educational and research services required by Iranian society based on Islamic values and ethical characteristics in order to face contemporary challenges, issues and problems (<http://www.iau.ac.ir>). Given these facts, Islamic Azad University's success and growth has been due to IAU working behavior of institutional management and leadership style toward the changes effectively to overcome the structural stagnation. In spite of barriers and challenges confronting IAU leaders in managerial position, there is strong commitment held by them to achieve university vision, missions and objectives. Islamic Azad University compared to other largest universities by enrollment in the world such as Indira Gandhi National Open University, Anadolu University, AllamaIqbal Open University and many others, considered being a good academic model to follow by other institutions in serving modernize training style and educating students with contemporary skills and knowledge (Hamidifar, 2010).

The model of IAU effective academic leadership was developed primarily to be a practical guideline for new IAU academic leaders in managerial positions to operate effectively in regards to the organizational culture, internal and external environmental challenges as well as administrative barriers; and to be an instructional model of effective academic leadership for other higher education institutions in Iran.

The operational principles of this model based on the shared vision, missions and feasible goals and performance are: committed leaders in promoting Islamic ethics and Iranian culture in training contents, satisfied shareholders expectations of excellent returns, organized individuals and teamwork in research and teaching, excellence in resource stewardship, strong implementing and learning ethical values,

open communication, building trust and respect in their relationship. This model pointed out the alignment of ethical values and feasible goals to ensure the purposes of sustained value-based performance, effective communication, quality teaching and research and successful management of resources through collaborative leadership and trusting environment by recognizing the barriers and challenges facing leaders in managerial position in different levels of administration.

Academic leaders in this research included administrators who work in central office or top level, university branch level and faculty level to execute the IAU vision, missions and objectives. This model explains the key functions and responsibilities of the academic leaders as presidents, vice presidents, heads of districts, chancellors, vice chancellors, deans, vice deans and heads of departments. Academic leaders who are continuously improving their leadership skills and performance which are necessary to apply the hierarchy structure of the institution appropriately to the stakeholders in order to lead them to agree with the direction, developing organization and people to achieve excellence in teaching, learning, research and social services in spite of existing barriers and challenges. Based on the integration of scientific and ethical attitudes of academic leaders along with a supportive organizational culture, this model can facilitate the development of effective leaders in managerial positions within IAU and other higher educational institutions.

In order to implement this model to practical projects and programs, the Professional Development Body should be created to identify the priorities according to changing circumstances and challenges and to enhance the exchange of expertise, experiences and relations among IAU branches. The Body should create knowledge environment for academic leaders in different administration levels to achieve university goals and as a result to satisfy educational, scientific, cultural and social needs dimensions. Moreover, the Body should monitor the process of academic leaders' intellectual development through establishing and activating implementation mechanisms of professional development based on the model. These mechanisms would be necessary for organizing

training session and regional workshops for the administration executives.

To enhance the academic leadership effectiveness, the Body should continuously monitor and analyze the achievements of university stakeholders as well as the performance of administrators and faculty members, recognize the barriers and remove them, identify the internal and external environmental challenges and tackle them effectively to improve constantly quality of teaching, learning, research and services by minimizing the expenses. The Body should consider practical effective academic leadership based on the model through developing action learning program or institute training for three levels of management. These training programs should be inter-disciplinary so academic leaders could perform effectively in any fields or disciplines and to improve their team work behavior and their skills.

An action learning plan was recommended based on the FH effective academic leadership model of IAU in following steps after identifying the needs and concerns of the people who work as academic leaders in different managerial positions. As it shows in figure 2, the four steps of action learning plan are:

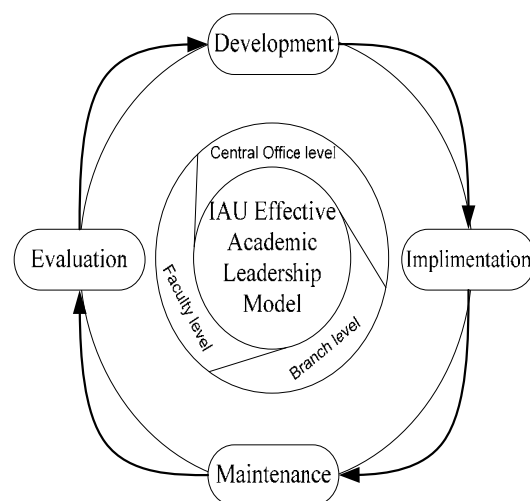


Figure 2: The action learning program of FH effective academic leadership model of IAU

- ✓ **Development** refers to creating the action learning program based on the IAU effective academic leadership in different

levels of administration in accordance with the need evaluation and current existing barriers and challenges. In this stage program expectations, vision, goals and possibilities as well as role of program directors, coordinators and consultants should be clarified. The process of the program should be defined (its beginning, end and objectives). The key tasks, people involved, budgeting, facilities, learning premises, instructional materials used, learning activities, work methods, environment and evaluation system should be described.

- ✓ **Implementation** refers to execution of the program and to monitor the process of fulfilling the program objectives, parameters and participants expectations in the process of operation. The program initiates on the set days for selected participants in the pleasure environment. The area of implementation should be specified and the roles and responsibilities of the team of program developer as well as organizational characteristics need to be determined.
- ✓ **Maintenance** refers to continuation of implementing the program and to observe the effects of the program on the quality performance of academic leaders in different managerial positions. The status of implementation program should be checked. The improvement of performance should be examined and any necessary enhancement should be identified.
- ✓ **Evaluation** refers to assessment during the implementation and study the results and to review how much they learnt affect on their performance, team and individual efforts and what could be predicted as well as determining and examine the needs of academic leaders.

These action learning programs could be enhanced by networking and inviting influential individuals in society who effectively practicing the most recent leadership styles. These workshops and learning projects should be link with the research streams of the academic setting to serve as a continuous effective academic leadership program.

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