

ABSTRACT

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Name: FATEMEH HAMIDIFAR

Dissertation Title: A STUDY OF DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP MODEL AT ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY BRANCHES IN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Dissertation Advisor: DR. WATANA VINITWATANAKHUN

Dissertation Co-advisor: PROF. DR. FRAYDOON RAHNAMAY ROODPOSHTI

Islamic Azad University (IAU) is the first non-profit private chain of universities established in 1982; and it currently has 440 branches in Iran with about 1.7 million students and 4 million graduate students. All campuses are supervised and governed by councils, the president and vice-presidencies of Islamic Azad University which located in Tehran. Its core values are to preserve Islamic and cultural identity through collaboration in knowledge production and quality scientific research to contribute effectively to Iranian economic growth and development responsive to the modern Iranian society needs. The objectives of this study were to develop a model of IAU effective academic leadership through determining its effective academic leadership dimensions, its organizational culture, its barriers and challenges.

Mixed methodology was used to achieve the objectives of this study and to develop an effective academic leadership model. Secondary data from documents such as books, articles, IAU official records, newsletters, online journals and dissertations; and primary data from interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and open-ended questions were applied. The model was constructed by designing the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Analyzing the qualitative data was applied by using procedures of coding and developing inductive categories system, and analyzing the quantitative data by using descriptive statistics. Then by merging the results through developing procedures, the draft model was designed. Finally, the model was proposed to IAU experts and international experts for validation.

The key results of this study based on theoretical framework and analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data showed: IAU effective academic leadership dimensions which were categorized into three scopes in three levels of administration (central office level, branch level and faculty level): setting direction, developing organization and developing people. Moreover, the barriers to effective academic leadership which were 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. And Based on Competing Values Framework (CVF) by Cameron and Quinn (1999), the dominant current organizational culture revealed to be hierarchy followed by market, clan and adhocracy. The challenges facing academic leaders in managerial positions were categorized into: internal and external challenges. Internal challenges subcategorized into the administration and managerial affairs, financial issues, organizational culture and students' affairs. External challenges subcategorized into the political, economic, social and technological factors and international and national competitions.

Based on the research objectives, the model of effective academic leadership was developed primarily to be a guideline for IAU academic leaders in managerial position to operate effectively in accordance with the organizational culture, internal and external environmental challenges as well as administrative barriers; likewise it could be an instructional model of effective academic leadership for Iranian higher education institutions. Based on the integration of theory and practice, the key features of implementing the model of effective academic leadership were on professional growth through action learning program, collaborative development environment working groups and transformational leadership. The action learning plan of the IAU effective academic leadership was designed in four steps after identifying the needs and concerns of the academic leaders who work in different managerial positions.

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Student's signature.....*Shahinifar*

Advisor's signature*Dr. V.*

Co-advisor's signature.....*F. Rahmani*