

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **A survey of the attitude of faculty members at Islamic Azad Universities (Region Four) concerning the present and desired status of universities in providing human capital**

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The present descriptive survey was an attempt to investigate a survey of the attitude of faculty members at Islamic Azad Universities (Region Four), concerning the present and desired status of universities in providing human capital. As long as the professional human resource, which is the major resource at the universities, can develop other resources, this research study aims at identifying and describing these capabilities. The major findings of this research led to identification of four features: information, knowledge, skill and specialization. The statistical analysis of the survey demonstrates that the feature of information, knowledge, skill and specialization is 3/15, 3/39, 3/66 and 3/50 in the present status, while in the desired status, it is 4/23, 4/55, 4/55 and 4/51, respectively. The population of this research project encompasses all faculty members at Islamic Azad University in Esfahan (Region Four), from which 200 people have been drawn by stratified random sampling. The investigation led to the four features of information, knowledge, skill and specialty. Thus, there was a significant difference between the present status and the favorite status of the features. The results of this study can be applied, using the obtained features, to improve the performance and qualitative level of faculty members of the universities and also to modify and remedy the obtained pitfalls so that the distance between the present status and the favorite one will be decreased.

**Key words:** Higher education system, human capital, information, knowledge, skill, specialty.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Human capital in particular represents the individual stock of knowledge embedded in the firm's collective capability to extract the best solutions from its individual employees (Bontis, 2006). Human capital (HC) especially represents the individual supply of hidden knowledge in the organization's collective ability to achieve the best solution from each employee (Alam, 2009; Alam et al., 2009). This capital is defined as the total skill, experience, abilities and implicit knowledge of the individuals. Theodore W. Schultz, William Arthur Lewis

and Edward Fulton Denison showed that direct training, through creating and increasing the individuals, skills and capability, would increase the national income, and it became the starting point for an extended study on the economic value of investment in education (Alam, 2009; Ghanadan, 2007). Screening theory was presented by Stiglitz (1970) who highlighted the issue of quality. Obtaining necessary information on the quality of a phenomenon in economic decisions has already been discussed as a critical issue. In this regard, the factor of human has a special position. The two sides have a benefit in understanding the quality of the human factor; one is the human agent and the other one is those agents that need the human force services (Alam et al.,

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2010). The human factor may be aware of its own natural and acquired competencies, but the others may lack such information. According to Stiglitz (1970), training is a suitable tool that screens the people based on their abilities. Therefore, the individuals with higher levels of training will be considered as the ones that are more capable. Use of higher training implies high costs for individuals and society (Alam and Hoque, 2010). Now, the question is: who is supposed to pay such costs? Based on the prediction of economic theory, they are implicit in the training benefits (Naderi, 2004).

Based on the research aim and objectives, as well as the research questions that are dealt with in the findings, this study aims at answering the following questions:

1. What are the features and elements of human capital at the universities?
2. What is the present status of human capital at the universities?
3. What is the appropriate model used to develop human capital at the universities?

These questions were dealt with in order to recognize the human capital features and to be aware of the present status of human capital in the universities, as well as knowing about the distance between the present status and the desired one. Providing the deduction of the aforementioned questions, we could improve human capital in scientific societies, like universities, and improve the information level of faculty members. It can also increase knowledge, skill and specialty, that is, it is an important condition for growth and development of the university and consequently, it will lead to improvement of students' knowledge and the scientific society, as well. A model is needed in human capital to enable faculty members and managers know and recognize human capital level in universities. Therefore, Questions 1, 2 and 3 of this research are conducted with regards to these subjects.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Filter theory was presented in 1973 by Kenneth Arrow. The cornerstone of the filter theory is undergraduate education. This theory is based on the course that university credentials play a role as the only criteria of natural capabilities than the acquired skills. Arrow introduced higher education as a filter and claimed that in the basic framework of Filter theory, education will not lead to increasing individual's economic efficiency any more. Also, it will neither improve perceptual capabilities, nor socialized individuals. In contrast, it acts as a tool in screening the people and categorizes the trained individuals based on their capabilities. University credentials act as a tool to indicate the natural potentials of their holders. Therefore, people make an effort to

achieve their degree whereby they can show their natural potentials to the competent customers (Naderi, 2004). Signaling theory was presented in 1973 by Spence. This theory disregards the role of education productivity in education, and recognizes the role of information dispersion and signaling about the people's natural capabilities (Alam et al., 2010). In signaling theory, economic authorities cost a value to specific features through paying a system that has essential roles in optimizing the economic performance of individuals. In fact, authorities do not have necessary information about employee's capabilities and this theory removes the lack of such information to some extent (Naderi, 2004; Emadzadeh, 2005). The basic idea of human capital theory is that individuals invest on themselves in different ways (education, learning, hygiene and remedy, seeking profession, immigration and information retrieving) not for immediate enjoyment, but for future gains. In this way, looking towards the future justifies the present performance (Naderi, 2004). Therefore, societies that enjoy not only natural resources and physical investments, but also encompass significant human resources will develop, while countries that have educated and competent workforce in addition to appropriate human resources will economically develop. Schultz (1960) showed that more than 20% of the economic rate in America is due to the investment of human capitals of workers and education advancement, (Ghanadan, 2007). Therefore, the majority of the world countries are investing on education since investment on educated people will not only increase their income, but also increase the national production.

The most recent research studies on human capital in Iran are as follows: Memarnejad (2002) carried out a research on human capital in the internal growing economy of Iran and found out that the causal factors for economic development in Iran encompass workforce, human capital and physical investment. The results showed that there is a relationship between human capital and graduates indexes so that the effect of human capital is higher in long-term, rather than in short-term (Memarnejad, 2002).

Mila (2002) did a research on the effect of human capital and government investing in human capital on the economic development of Iran within the framework of internal developing models. The results indicated that the people's income is not only affected by their education and experience, but can also be modified by their gender. Nile and Nafisi (2005) did a study on the estimate of human capital on the average education years of the work force in Iran (1966 to 2000). In this study, the average education years of the workforce was estimated as an index of human capital. So, it has been concluded that the highest rate was related to the years of 1345 to 1356 and it indicated the importance of education in this time frame (Nili et al., 2005).

The research study carried by Salimifar and Mortazavi

(2005) on "Human capital and job creation: A technical vocation approach" showed that the lack of investment is one of the important barriers of self-employment of educators, and that technical- vocation centers have been able to train skillful workforce (the symbol of human capital) and develop the spirit of job creation (through workshop), even though some factors such as educational channels, lack of workshop facilities, short term of educational classes, and the difference between the technology facilities of these centers and those of industry, have lessened their achievement (Salimifar et al., 2005).

Ghelichi and Moshabaki (2006) carried out a study on "the role of social capital on the intellectual capital of the organization" and found out that there is a significant relationship between social and intellectual capital (Ghelichi et al., 2007).

Hajkarimi and Farajian (2008) did a study on the "the management of human capital, social capital and emotional capital: An effective perspective on job satisfaction". They come up with the conclusion that human and social capital are positively significant in job satisfaction whether objective or subjective. This indicates that human capital such as knowledge, specialty, skill and the capacity of learning put an effect on shaping and increasing the job success and satisfaction (Hajkarimi, 2008).

Skaggs et al. (2004) did a study on "human capital and its function on service organizations" and developed a customer-centered attitude. This study deals with the issue of how service organizations have a relationship with their human capitals and how interaction between strategic situation and human capital leads to effective performance in the organization. Digregorio (2004) carried out a study on "human capital, social capital and administrative conformity" and found out that there is a positive relationship between administrative conformity and human capital. Navickas (2005) did a study on "the role of CLO (Chief Learning Officer) and the best methods on making optimal capital to provide basic changes in the organization in the passage of time". He used qualitative and quantitative methods to discover what kind of information, skill and potentials CLO should possess to make successful changes in the organization. This study had important conclusion in theory and practice.

Chu et al. (2006) in their study on intellectual capital (IC) in ITRI (Industrial Technology Research Institutes) showed that IC can present new tools to observe organization hidden values. This research study aims to correlate the elements of intellectual capital such as human capital, structural capital and communication capital with the function of ITRI. In a study on "participating on knowledge as a facilitative factor to develop organization performance through human capital", HSU (2008) showed that knowledge networking does not often happen successfully, although it is said to

be able to develop organization performance and to access the competitive goals. How to encourage organization and facilitate knowledge distribution or improving organization performance is still an important research question.

Lai et al. (2009) asked if human learning will balance the interaction between information capital, information behavior and information value. The results showed that organizational learning has a moderate role on the effect of information capital on information behavior and value. As a result, organizational learning will lead to appropriate information value and behavior if it merges with organizational learning and information capital in health organizations.

The literature on human capital shows that formal education is an indicator for measuring human capital, in that human capital is related to the graduates indexes, and its effect is much strong in long-term than in short-term. Human capital affects the income, as an effective factor and social capital is positively related to the intellectual capital in the dimensions of human, structural and relational. There is a strong relationship between human capital management and different kinds of intellectual capital and therefore more knowledge, skills and talent are needed for effective changes in the organization.

The four aforementioned essential features have been used by other researchers: Ghanadan (2007), Stiglitz (1970), Naderi (2004), Emadzadeh (2005), Schultz (1960), Mila (2002), Hajkarimi et al. (2008), Arvanitis et al. (2008), Skaggs et al. (2004), Navickas (2005) and Chu et al. (2006). Therefore, in this study, they have been exploited. Participating in knowledge as a facilitative factor to develop organizational performances through human capital can lead to competitive excellence. The methods of dividing organizational knowledge can facilitate knowledge division and is positively correlated with human capital. Intellectual capital puts an effect on information behavior and information value.

Due to the vagueness of university performance regarding the present status of human capital, and the lack of human capital model, the present study was done in order to clarify the essential features of human capital at the university and to assign their role in promoting and developing human capital. In cases, where there is no research about the attitude of faculty members in universities up to now, the authors exploited other researches which had more similarity to the present study. The features which have been used in this study include:

- (1) Information: All the data obtained on whether the faculty members have or must be acquired by individualized training and workshops (Kentia, 2005).
- (2) Skill: Facility with the means and methods of accomplishing a particular task.
- (3) Knowledge: Command of a body of facts required to

do a job.

(4) Specialization: In the faculty, it means performing a special task (Davenport, 1999).

By carrying out this research study, the features of human capital will be recognized and human capital management can improve the universities based on these features. Subsequently, it can lead to the progress of some other resources within universities, students and also society. Moreover, supporting human capital can lead to growing other capitals such as social, knowledge, intellectual and physical ones.

## METHODOLOGY

The approach of the present study is survey-descriptive, in that it entails the perspectives of faculty members. The statistical population includes all the faculty members in 21 branches of Islamic Azad University in Esfahan and 1462 staff members. 150 faculty members were estimated using Cochran formula and 220 members were selected due to downfall effect using the method of cluster random sampling. In order to collect data, the researcher used two researcher-made questionnaires, while in analyzing the data, the description statistic methods inferential statistic methods, such as T-confirmative factor analysis, were used. The questionnaire had a high validity using Cronbach.

## RESULTS

The first question: "what are the basic features of human capital?" was answered. Based on the findings of Table (1), the highest mean was related to specialty (3.77) and the lowest was related to knowledge (3.11). So, specialty with the highest mean is considered as the most essential feature in human capital and other features of skills, information and knowledge are the next important features, respectively. Moreover according to the findings of Table 1, the observed T was greater than the critical T at the probability level of  $\geq 0.5$ . Therefore, the features and components (information, knowledge, skill and specialty) are within the human capital. Based on the obtained mean (4.56), a higher amount of mean for the features of human capital was evaluated.

Table 1 shows that the highest mean in the present status contributed to the "rate of one's attention to quality and reviewing knowledge (Mean = 3.11). Thus, the highest demand of faculty members refers to "the higher quality and increasing knowledge" and the lowest one refers to the "practical knowledge" that needs due attention". In the third basic feature, "skill", which is based on the findings of Table 1, the highest mean in the "present" status contributed to this question: "what is your endeavor to promote skill level" (mean = 3.76)? and the lowest mean contributed to this question: "what is your recognition from getting skill" (mean = 3.61)? Consequently, the rate of faculty members' recognition of methods of getting skill is the lowest sub-feature and needs a due attention. As Table 1 shows in the fourth basic feature of "specialty", the highest mean was in

association with the question: "what is the rate of using your expertise in university activity" (mean= 3.83) and the lowest mean was in association with the question: "what is the quality of using your expertise from your university field in other activities" (mean = 3.30)? Therefore, it is necessary to draw attention to peripheral activities following the principle of specificity. The more varied activities take place with specialty, the more valuable benefits will come up in the society since learning is not limited within the framework of classes and university.

The second research question is: "What is the present status of human capital at the universities?" In order to answer this question, a questionnaire with four basic features and 23 sub-features was made and distributed to the recipients. The question entailed the theories of human capitals, frameworks, perspectives, conceptual models, attitudes, paradigms and different theories. In summary, the results of this study turned to 21 models and ideas. In the first basic feature of information based on the findings of Table 2, the highest mean in the present status contributed to "the attitude for more information" (M=3.80) and the lowest one contributed to "the allocation of the study permitted more information" (M=1.93). As the table demonstrates, the sub-feature of "attitude for more information" is the highest demand of faculty members. Furthermore, the sub-feature of "the allocation of the study permitted more information" is the lowest mean that needs a due attention. As Table 2 shows, the observed T in the present and desired status is greater than the critical T at the probability level of  $\geq 0.05$ . Therefore, the features are appropriate to recognize and improve the level of "information" at an average level. According to Table 2, the observed T in the present and desired status is greater than the critical T at the probability level of  $\geq 0.05$ . Accordingly, the features are appropriate to recognize and improve the level of "information" more than the average level in the present study. Table 2 shows that the observed T in the present and desired status is greater than the critical T at the level of  $\geq 0.05$ . So, the features are appropriate to recognize and improve the level of "skill" more than the average level in the present status. As Table 2 shows, the observed T in the present and desired status is greater than the critical T at the probability level of  $\geq 0.05$ . With this in mind, the features are appropriate to recognize and improve the level of "specialty" in the present status more than the average level. So, it comes to the conclusion that appropriate sub-features have been taken into consideration for information, knowledge, skill, and specialty regarding human capital.

## DISCUSSION

The present descriptive study has been carried out to target the perspectives of faculty members of Islamic Azad University (Region Four) in association with the present status of human capital at the university. The first

**Table 1.** Descriptive indexes of features and components of human capital.

Components and sub components		Present		Desire	
		Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Human capital components	Information	3.24	0.694		
	Knowledge	3.11	0.864		
	Skill	3.46	0.833		
	Specialty	3.77	0.885		
Sub Components of information	Your information rate in your expertise	3.66	0.803	4/51	0/58
	Rate of your tendency in university for more information	3.80	0.938	4/54	0/60
	Your recognition from getting information methods	3.45	0.844	4/43	0/62
	University function rate for member to get information	2.79	0.916	4/28	0/85
	Present obstacles of promotion and of your information in university	3.49	0.953	4/75	1/5
	Workshops activities to inform you	2.90	1.15	4/30	0/83
	The rate of allocation study opportunities	1.93	1.18	4/16	1/0
	Being update and quality informing you of current events in university	2.66	1.20	4/42	0/75
	Sub components of knowledge	Success rate of members of related knowledge	3.24	0.693	4/53
Success rate of members from practical knowledge		3.11	0.864	4/48	0/692
Rate of your recognition from knowledge getting methods		3.46	0.833	4/52	0/668
Rate of your attention to quality and reviewing knowledge		3.77	0.885	4/54	0/667
Success rate of members of related knowledge		3.24	0.693	4/53	0/613
Sub components of skill	Your skill level in related expertise course	3.70	0.774	4/55	0/600
	Your endeavor to promote skill level	3.76	0.897	4/58	0/586
	Your recognition from getting skill	3.58	0.741	4/50	0/658
	Your ability to promote trainable abilities	3.61	0.812	4/50	0/626
	Your ability in using skills for special tasks	3.64	0.869	4/48	0/690
Sub components of specialty	Your ability to provide agreeable environment	3.74	0.895	4/60	0/531
	Rate of your expertise in related field	3.83	0.771	4/61	0/575
	The quality of your use from your university field in other activities	3.30	1.00	4/53	0/575
	Your acquaintance from expertise promotion methods	3.50	0.817	4/29	0/766
	The rate of using your expertise in university activity	3.55	0.954	4/53	0/610
	The rate of using from proper methods to promote expertise	3.34	0.802	4/53	0/632
	Rate of your expertise in related field	3.83	0.771	4/61	0/575

Mean and Standard deviation in figure (1) demonstrated the features of human capital that consists: Information, Knowledge, Skill and Specialty.

**Table 2.** A comparison between the features and components of human capitals with hypothetical mean.

Variable and proper components for recognition and to promote features level			Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error	T
Variable	Human component	capital	4.56	0.524	0.042	36.50
Information status	Present		3.15	0.500	0.042	3.54
	Desire		4/19	0/514	0/042	28/32
Information knowledge	Present		3.39	0.609	0.052	7.58
	Desire		4/52	0/542	0/045	33/75
Information skill	Present		3.67	0.654	0.0551	12.15
	Desire		4/54	0/485	0/04	38/11
Information specialty	Present		3.50	0.670	0.056	8.92
	Desire		4/49	0/489	0/040	37/41

Table (2) , T test was used in this study for comparing two groups: present status human capital in the university and desired status. The comparison has been done between four features of human capital in the universities. The first row of the figure shows all of the human capital components which has been compared.

question was: what are the features and basic elements of human capital at the university. To find answer to this question, four basic features (information, knowledge, skill and specialty) were recognized. The highest feature was specialty and the lowest was knowledge. Therefore, the feature of specialty mostly causes human capital for faculty members. Since in one way, the “specialty” is of no use or is used inappropriately in most organizations and educational institutes, and in another way, the reason for education fails in the educational system and system malfunctioning caused by lack of “specialty”, this feature is of the highest mean in this study based on the members’ points of view. Thus, it is necessary to take this feature into account in planning for human capital management.

Regarding the second question posed here as: how is the present status of the university? The information level of faculty members in the present status is the lowest. It means that the information at the university for faculty members is noticeable at an average level, whereas information is regarded as the operational tool at the level of education and of management either major- innermost or operational. If the information of faculty members is increased, it is plain that it will be effective not only in their academic and research results, but in those of staff and students. In the feature of information, the highest mean contributed to the sub-feature of “The rate of your tendency in university for more information” and the lowest mean contributed to the sub-feature of “The rate of allocation study opportunities”. In the second basic feature of knowledge, the highest mean in the present status is in association with the sub-feature of “The rate of your attention to quality and reviewing knowledge” and the lowest one is in association with the sub-feature of

“Success rate of members from practical knowledge”. This can be put on the shoulders of human capital management at the university to pave the way so that the challenge and negative or wrong competitions at the university will be lessened. If the members can remove these shortcomings and gaps, the roots of many conflicts and challenge will be eliminated. Of course, improving the academic level of faculty members should be done by taking their capabilities and talents into account and getting higher degree must be dependent on some approaches and channels so that the genius and talented can be filtered and then be educated. In the third basic feature of “skill”, the highest mean in the present status is related to “Your ability to provide agreeable environment” and the lowest one is related to “Your recognition from getting skill. “Rate of your expertise in related field” has the highest mean, while the lowest one is related to the sub-feature of “The quality of using your expertise from your university field in other activities”.

The research of this study highlights the importance of human capital features, some of which are related to education and are accorded to the findings of Nile and Nafisi (2005) study, which indicated the importance of education. They are also similar to some parts of the research done by Ghelichli and Moshabaki (2006), which indicated that the human capital including knowledge and specific skill puts an effect on job satisfaction. The obtained results are in the direction of the research study of Navickas (2005), which shows that there is a direct relationship between knowledge, information, skill and talents in management and authorities in learning with the improvement and development of the organization. Moreover, the results of this study are parallel to the research of Moose (2008) in which there is lack of facility

and weakening of knowledge in organization. In some researches such as Schultz (1960), it was shown that human capital can elevate the national income and, in turn, improve the students' knowledge, as well as faculty members' ability in knowledge skill, information and specialty (Ghanadan, 2007). Stiglitz (1970) noticed that individuals with higher training will be considered as the ones that are more capable. Ghanadan (2007) and Spence (1973) mentioned that the population is the basis of human resources and combination, and that management has specified the capability of human resources. Emadzadeh (2005) mentioned that the basic idea of human capital theory is that individuals invest on themselves in different ways including education, learning, information, etc for future gains. Memarnejad showed a correlation between human capital and graduate indexes. In the aforementioned studies, as well as in other researches, Chu et al. (2006), Skaggs et al. (2004), Navickas (2005), Ghanadan (2007) and Naderi (2004) mentioned that the importance of human capital in organizations and features of human capital has been noticed as: information, knowledge, skill and specialty. Therefore, it is concluded that individuals with higher education earn much income and the costs used in education are considered as a kind of investment.

## CONCLUSION

This research leads to the study's descriptive perspectives of faculty members of Islamic Azad University (Region Four) in association with the present status of human capital at the university. The first question was what are the features and basic elements of human capital at the university. It can be concluded that the components of information, knowledge, skill and specialty are essential in human capital. In the propriety test of features, the interrelationship of features of information, knowledge, skill and specialty with human capital was significantly meaningful.

The second question posed here is: how is the present status of the university? The results indicated that the feature of "skill" in the present status has the highest mean and that of "information" has the lowest mean. It means that the information at the university for faculty members is noticeable at an average level, whereas information is regarded as the operational tool at the level of education and of management (either major-innermost or operational). This result indicated that faculty members need to obtain more information at the highest level and the "study permit" needs to be highly considered.

In the feature of "knowledge", the faculty members highly need to increase the quality of their knowledge. So, the chancellor of the university can make use of this spirit of understanding in order to reach the mass knowledge and higher-level goals through different strategies such as workshop, etc. In the feature of "specialty", the highest mean in the present status is in

line with the question. It is significant to highlight other various activities following the principle of "specialty" so that some useful and ideal performances can be carried out. Moreover, they are fundamental in speeding up intellectual and economic development. In the third research question posed as "to present an appropriate model for human capital", a model of human capital was presented based on the findings of the first and second question. Therefore, according to this study, faculty members should be improved by information, knowledge, skill and specialty in order to become highly professional.

## Practical implications

1. Improving the information, knowledge, skills and specialty of faculty members at the universities.
2. The feature of specialty as the most important feature of human capital should come first in programs, such as securing the faculty members and human capital management.
3. The feature of information in human capital is weak and need to be improved.
4. The features of information and knowledge within the faculty members are the weakest aspect at the universities and they need due attention. Furthermore, the feature of skill and specialty are stronger as compared to those of previous features, but they do not enjoy high levels and should get the due attention of human capital management in planning.
5. Planning needs to be done to enrich the scientific and educational culture via supporting the features of human capital in the research.

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