Evaluation the chairperson's managerial competencies from 360-degree feedback at the universities

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ABSTRACT

The academic department is the base unit of universities and colleges, "the central building block... of American university". While departments fragment and divide the faculty of an institution of higher education, they also provide a useful structure for the day-to-day activities that shape faculty members' attitudes, behaviors and performances.

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INTRODUCTION

The academic department is the base unit of universities and colleges, "the central building block… of American university"[1]. While departments fragment and divide the faculty of an institution of higher education, they also provide a useful structure for the day-to-day activities that shape faculty members' attitudes, behaviors and performances [2]. The department chairperson is the heart of an effective academic department, where most academic action takes place. The chairperson is a key figure in determining the educational success of the university and his/her performance, attitudes, skills, capabilities and competencies influences the reputation on which a university strongly depends. The chairperson is squeezed between the demands of upper administration and institutional expectations on the one side and the expectations of faculty, staff, students on the other, with both attempting to influence and shape the chair [3]. The chairperson is caught in the middle, required to provide the most sophiscated leadership and management competencies and skills to avoid being crushed by these two opposing forces [2].

The quality of the program of an academic department is largely determined by the quality and performance of the faculty. Evaluation, the process of making judgments about performance, is one of the most powerful opportunities for developing quality available to a chair [4]. In the universities, department chairs interface and will continue to confront challenges resulting from role conflict and ambiguity, lack of evaluate criteria for the position, lack of effective social communication skills, and lack of critical and core competencies, lack of knowledge about evaluating methods specially 360-degree feedback.

Developing competency of personnel especially chairpersons in the university is considered as one of the important missions of the higher educations centers. For a number of years, the term "competency" has been a catch phrase in organizational literature [5]. Some treat competencies of the corporation as an entity, while others including Boyatzis[1982], Burgoyane[1989] and Collin [1989] treat competencies of employees. Employee's core competencies are also referred to as personal competencies [6–8]When the competencies possessed by successful managers are discussed, the term "Managerial Competencies" is frequently used [9,10].

Competency is a significant factor in the development an organization's personnel. Competencies comprise the knowledge, skills, values, and attributes demonstrated through behavior that results in competent and superior performance. Competency describes what superior performers actually do on a job that produces superior results. Armed with this information, selection, retention, training, succession planning and performance management systems can be integrated and designed to attract, develop and retain top performers. McClelland [11,12], who is often recited with coining the term competency, defined it as a characteristic that underlies successful performance or competency is defined as a capability or ability [13].

Chairpersons must be those who have competency in task administration: knowledge, ability, skills in administration in accordance with coordination in the same direction as senior administrators. Competency is an important factor of developing persons to be able to perform their tasks to achieve the goals [14].

Many organizations currently use 360-degree feedback [multi-rater feedback] to provide information on work performance, skills and competencies to individual employees or mangers[1,15–17].

In the 360-degree feedback process, individuals receive ratings from their superiors, subordinates, colleagues or peers, even external and internal customers and suppliers[18].

Little has been written about the chairpersons' competencies from 360-degree feed back in universities , in general, and to the authors' knowledge and searches, no researches have been carried out around this subject in Iran. However, the researchers undertook this survey to provide policy-makers and decision-makers some data and guideline with which make rational decisions regarding selecting and appointing competent chairpersons in the universities departments ,who may evaluate chairpersons, which methods of evaluations is the best and applicable , and what competencies can be used to evaluate.

Importance of research
Evaluation the competencies of human resources, managers and individually departments' chairpersons have known as a critical task in the universities because universities officials tend to identify performance weakness and strengths. Since the chairpersons are the heart of an effective academic department, where most academic action and decisions takes places and they are in position that have responsibility for planning ,organizing, coordinating, leading and controlling [19] in other side, it is necessary to conduct a research about their competency evaluation so that competency are a useful instruments for leadership/management development and measurement of capability, skills and knowledge of chairpersons.

Background
No specific methods or criteria exist in universities regarding evaluation of chairpersons' competencies. School deans are the only persons to evaluate and judge chairs' performance. Their evaluation are based on chairs' annual reports, as well the deans' knowledge of the chairs achievement [3]. Researchers after studying the concepts and theories about managerial competencies, utilized them as a research conceptual frame work and extracted a mixed of competencies for chairpersons at the Universities. Boyatzis [13] popularized the term competency in " The Competent Manager" and defined it as a combination of a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image or social role , or a body of relevant knowledge [20]. Competency is an underlying characteristic of an individual which is casually related to effective or superior performance in a job. Competency is a mixture of knowledge, skills, abilities, Motivation, beliefs, values, and interests [21]. A competency is any knowledge, skills/ability, or personal quality, demonstrated through behavior that results in service excellence [22].

In our research we combine and extracted nine competencies from these theories and concepts which they are: planning, organizing, Human resource management, decision making, team work, leadership, communication, information and communication technology [ICT] and control.

Regarding the important role of chairpersons at the universities, it is obvious that the method of their evaluation has been critical. It is essential that department chairperson have a clear concept of their role within the governance structure of the university. This will help them[a] have sufficient decision-making power to carry out their responsibility and tasks;[b] return after their term of office to their original position as an accepted faculty member, and[c] make their position more attractive and effective [23]. Therefore, an effective should be clear and should contain specific, well-defined criteria. The evaluation process must be understood and explained well, and evaluation procedures must be selected, based on department and faculty goals.

By the early 1900s, departments were solidly established and academic administrative positions such as the" departments chair" were created. Traditionally, department chairs were appointed by the president to supervise

faculty and administer programs, and they had special expertise in the given discipline. Such appointments do still occur, as department chairs are sometimes appointed by the dean with or without the consultation and approval of the faculty. Alternatively, department chairs can be elected by faculty following either an internal or external search [24].

There are many techniques and models to evaluate chairoersons' skills, function, and competencies. The most important point will be the selection of one which would present the closet estimation to the reality to its user. The 360-degree feedback is a new method in evaluation and optimization of function [Hirsch, 1994]. One-dimensional evaluation of skills and competencies are impossible, whereas, it requires a multidimensional evaluation. So, the 360-degree feedback model is a method to evaluate skills and competencies and select praiseworthy ones [25].

A relative recent development in the performance appraisal arena has been the increasing adoption by organization is multi-rater feedback or 360-degree appraisal systems [26,27].

One of the reasons for its growing popularity is its perceived potential objective assessments of employee performance [27]. Particularly when compared to the constraints of one-way feedback that characterizes organizational practice. Mount and Judge [1998, p.557] characterize 360-degree feedback system as an evaluation of an individual's performance by multiple-raters from multiple levels in the organization. The majority 360degree systems include feedback from peer, subordinate, supervisors, and self-ratings. The target manager is normally rated various behavioral dimensions or competencies, in particular leadership and teamwork. 360-degree feedback is a performance appraisal methodology that captures input from an employee's supervisors, colleagues, subordinates, and, possibly, customers. The person being appraised also evaluates his/her own performance [self-evaluation], and those ratings are added to the overall feedback mix. Most 360-degree feedback programs focus on upper leadership positions [28]. The feedback enables participants to compare their own perceptions of their leadership skills and personal style with the perceptions of important ``observers'' in their work environment. These observers'' can include co-workers, subordinates, managers and even customers, suppliers and alliance partners [29].

Institute of Government faculty reporter and performance evaluation expert Margaret S. Carlson [1998] reported three key assumptions on which 360-degree feedback is based: [1] Multiple viewpoints from multiple sources will produce a more accurate picture of one's strengths and weaknesses than would a single reviewer's evaluation; [2] The act of comparing one's own self-perceptions with others' perceptions will lead to enhanced self-awareness, and greater self-awareness is a good thing; and[3] People who are effective at what they do will have self-perceptions that match others' perceptions of them fairly closely[28]. According to Dyer [2001], 360-degree feedback is increasingly being used by educational and business organizations as a tool to provide leaders with ban authentic read on their relational assets and liabilities[28]. Edwards [1996] believes that the accuracy and credibility of 360-degree performance evaluations are enhanced by expanding the sources of assessment [28].

Literature Review
Nowadays, defining and developing competencies of managers and personnel in the organization is considered as one of the most important missions of every organization. Managing a department or group in the university in accordance with its mission requires its mangers or chairpersons to have vision, knowledge, skills, capabilies and competencies to do their jobs and duty. Many researches has done about managers competencies A summary of managerial competencies and previous empirical studies is shown in Table 1.

Hellrigel . Jackson and Slocum (2001) identified six key managerial competencies compromising:1) Communication 2)teamwork 3)strategic action 4)Planning and administration 5) global awareness 6) self-management. The Office of the teacher Officials and Educational Personnel Commission(2006) determined four competencies which consisted of 1) Achievement motivation 2) teamwork 3) Service mind 4)Expertise. The competencies for managers are as planning, decision making, judgment, communication, information processing, technical skills, interpersonal relationship and control.

The researcher decided to assess chairpersons competencies in the universities because there have not been studies about chairpersons' competencies yet. It seems that the universities have not yet determined the chairpersons' competencies. Many universities still have problems developing competence chairpersons.

This research was carried out to evaluate and compare the overall and the four types of assessment: Self-assessment (Chairpersons) as compared with assessment of superiors, subordinates, and peers. The main aims for the present research were:

1) To assess and compare chairpersons competencies via the four types of assessment (Self-assessment, Superior assessment, subordinate assessment and peers assessment).

Managerial competencies	Sub-competencies items	Studies
Personal relationship	Team work, Customer relationship	Raybould and Wilkins (2005), Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kay and Russette (2000), Kriegl (2000), Kay and Moncarz (2007)
Communication	Writing communication, Effective communication, Oral communication	Raybould and Wilkins (2005), Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kay and Moncarz (2007), Brophy and Kiely (2002).
Leadership	Team cooperation, Leader capability, Suitable leadership, Team build , Team spirit, Team cooperation, Strategic position	Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kay and Russette (2000), Kriegl (2000), Kay and Moncarz (2007), Siu (1998), Brophy and Kiely (2002) and Brownell (2008). Agut et al. (2003), Brophy and Kiely (2002) and Connolly and McGing (2006) , Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kay and Russette (2000), Brownell (2008)
Human resource management	Training and developing, Managing and supervising, Recruiting and selecting, Motivation.	Kriegl (2000), Kay and Moncarz (2007), Agut et al. (2003), Brownell (2008) and Cizel et al. (2007)
Culture	International viewpoint, Integrating local culture, Appreciating different cultures.	Kriegl (2000), Jauhari (2006) and Brownell (2008)
Self-management	Regulating stress, Pursuing self-development, Challenging oneself, Managing emotion.	Raybould and Wilkins (2005), Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), Kriegl (2000), Connolly and McGing (2006), Brownell (2008) and Cizel et al. (2007)
Attitude	Strong industry interest, Achievements, Self-realization, Devoting to work, Positive being	Kriegl (2000), Siu (1998), Brophy & Kiely (2002), Jauhari (2006), Brownell (2008) and Cizel et al. (2007)
Field management	Management flexible Crisis management Health and risk prevention Service management Customer service focus	Kriegl (2000), Agut et al. (2003), Brophy and Kiely (2002), Jauhari (2006), Brownell (2008) and Cizel et al. (2007)

Source: Shyan, Horng Jeou- et al(2011)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research type was descriptive (evaluative). The quantative data was collected from population consisted of chairpersons' (56), faculty members (265), students (2850), deans and superior mangers (18) in the large university. The sample size was calculated through the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). According this table, 639 samples selected randomly. A researcher-administered questionnaire on the managers' competency consisted of nine competencies(Planning, organizing, human resource management, control, leadership, communication, decision making, teamwork, and Information and communication technology(ICT), was distributed to determine and evaluate chairpersons competencies in the university.

Table 1 the reliability of subscales with its total reliability for Chairpersons competencies questionnaire.

Subscales of competencies	Cronbach's alpha
Planning	0.76
Organizing	0.80
Human resources management	0.81
Communications	0.85
Leadership	0.87
Decision making	0.83
Teamwork	0.84
Control	0.85
ICT	0.79
Total	0.91

The questionnaire is consisted of 89 items in five-point Likert scale. Two versions of the researcher questionnaire ascheduled, one for "others" and another for "self" .The content validity of instrument approved by a panel of

experts. Furthermore, its reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha about 0.91. Table 1 shows the reliability of subscales with its total reliability for questionnaire.

The range of subscales reliability was 0.76-0.87 which is related planning and leadership accordingly.

RESULTS

The results of subscale analysis demonstrated high correlations of all items of each subscale which indicated high internal consistency of each one of nine subscales of chairpersons' competencies (Table 2).

Table 2 correlation between pairs of nine subscales

Subscales	Planning	Organizing	Human resources management	Communication	Leadership	Decision making	Teamwork	Control	ICT
Planning	1	0.62*	0.60*	0.66*	0.67*	0.64*	0.65*	0.68*	0.57
Organizing		1	0.57*	0.71*	0.69*	0.65*	0.65*	0.61*	0.59
Human resources management			1	0.64*	0.60*	0.67*	0.68*	0.59	0.63
Communication				1	0.53	0.70*	0.64*	0.54	0.63
Leadership					1	0.69*	0.60*	0.66*	0.60*
Decision making						1	0.58*	0.67*	0.62*
Teamwork							1	0.69*	0.61*
Control								1	0.68*
ICT									1

$0.05 \leq P$

The finding showed that the moderate range of correlation is 0.65. This means that it is an acceptable range, in other hand; it shows that subscales of chairpersons' competencies have an appropriate internal consistency.

The means of the total and subscales of chairpersons' competencies of the view of superior managers (deans and assistants), peers (Faculty members), subordinates (students) and the chairpersons as self assessment are presented in table 3.

Table 3 : Mean of superior assessment, self-assessment, peers and subordinate of chairpersons competencies

competencies	superior assessment	Self- assessment	peers assessment	Subordinate assessment
planning	3.72	3.95	3.64	3.41
Organization	3.57	3.79	3.44	3.21
leadership	3.77	4.07	3.71	3.40
Human management resources	3.67	3.91	3.47	3.28
Communication	3.85	4.05	3.70	3.02
Decision making	3.66	4.08	3.68	3.40
Teamwork	3.82	4.23	3.81	3.40
Control	3.84	4.02	3.69	3.30
ICT	3.71	4.09	3.64	3.40
Total	3.43	4.21	3.64	3.06

The results showed that the mean of the self-assessment of chairpersons was significantly higher than others-assessment in all subscales and in total (P<.05). In other hand, the chairpersons evaluated themselves high and inflated.

Hence, the first main hypothesis was confirmed. It can also be seen from Table 4 that the means of the self-assessment are significantly higher than others (Superior, Peers, and subordinates) for all the subscales and in total (P<.05).

DISCUSSION

Evaluation of chairperson's competencies in the university is very important because they are the heart of an effective academic department, where most academic action take place. The chairperson is a key figure in determining the educational access of the university and the performance of departments influences the reputation on which university strongly depends [3].

Traditionally, superior mangers assumed sole responsibility for evaluation and assessment the performance and competencies of their subordinates or employees. Gradually, the limitations of such practices became apparent. Therefore, alternative assessments by subordinates, peers, and employees have been developed. Recently, multi-source appraisal system or 360 degree feedback , which considers a combination of all four sources of superiors, subordinates, peers and the self is being introduced [26]. The application of 360-degree feedback assessment on a sample of chairpersons, superiors and employees in a large university m has been the concern in this research.

Analysis of data showed that the chairpersons have managerial competencies from view point of faculty deans/assistant as superiors, faculty members as peers, students as subordinate and self-assessment in all subscales of competencies and mean of obtained scores was 3.06 to 4.20.

The results of data analysis demonstrated that there was a significant difference among the view point of chairpersons, faculty deans/assistants, faculty members, students in all competencies[P<.05].Theron and Roodt [30]found that significant differences existed between the different rater groups.

The results showed that the mean total scores of self-assessment of the chairpersons was significantly higher than others assessment as superiors, subordinates, and peers assessment [P<.05]. These findings are consistent with Borman et al [31]as they also have shown that self-assessment is higher than other types of assessments. Consistent with previous research, it was indicated that self-assessments are inflated [30]. According to the principle of self-serving bias, people tend to overestimate their own performance or competencies.

Also, the results showed that the students as subordinates rated chairpersons' competencies at lowest level in all competencies than other-ratings.

There was not significant relationship between gender and competencies. This finding was consistent with [32]. One reason suggested for this is that over time many occupation, for example management, have become gender neutral rather than being viewed as stereotypically female or male-oriented thereby removing a potential source of bias. This finding is inconsistent with Millmore et al.[33] Study. They found that performance ratings were either gender neutral or higher for female mangers.

However, although they may be applicable, those findings reported on above do not relate specifically to 360-degree feedback appraisal system. This leads to a second difficulty with research evidence of gender bias in performance appraisal assessments in that there is little publish material relating directly to 360-degree appraisal[33]. Considering of significant higher rating of self-assessment of chairperson to other-ratings, it recommended that further researches have to carry out and should include more chairpersons and peers in several universities.

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