The Study of Postgraduate Quality in Sport Management Departments of Public Physical Education Faculties in Iran

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Abstract: The main objective of this research was to determine postgraduate quality in sport management departments of public universities. In the past decade, the number of master graduates and doctorate students in physical education faculties as well as in sport management field has increased, but so far no research has been carried out on the assessment of the quality of the academic output in comparison with its quantity growth. To recognize the quality of postgraduate education in sport management, it is vital to study the quality of the education, research, facilities and opportunities of employment offered to students. Regarding the above objectives, this research was carried out in 20 sport management departments which offered postgraduate courses (116 master students and 45 doctorate students) and 38 faculty members who have been teaching sport management courses and 46 postgraduate administrators. The research questionnaires were designed based on variables of research objectives in three groups under study. These questionnaires' validity was confirmed by taking into consideration the experienced professors’ viewpoints in this area and the reliability of the questionnaires was confirmed after a pilot study and estimating Cronbach’ Alpha (86%). Descriptive and inferential statistics as well as ANOVA test and SPSS software were used to collect and analyze data. The results of this research showed differences among the viewpoints of the three groups, especially in instructional contents, research affairs, quality of postgraduate management, teaching methods and finally evaluation systems. Regarding the research results and researchers’ studies of higher education quality, fundamental changes to Iran’s physical education postgraduate quality management seems necessary. Some changes suggested as a result of this research will be discussed fully in the paper.

Key words: Postgraduate %Quality %Sport management

INTRODUCTION

Development of any organization depends on its performance quality. Instructional places and facilities are prerequisites for establishing any academic center. However, achieving their objectives is impossible without paying attention to their function quality [1].

History of Postgraduate Formation and Improvement: During 800 years, since Bologna University granted the first Ph.D. degree in the 12th century, postgraduate study has been the most important degree in many countries [2].

Primary postgraduate study applied more to teaching and since the 19th century, its role has become more prominent in both teaching and researching in countries with higher education systems [3].

This issue plays a significant role in preparing individuals for managing educational, scientific, economical and political structures.

Besides, research activities together with postgraduate studies could be regarded as an important knowledge source in many countries [4]. Globally, postgraduate studies set European and United States Universities as an example before the 19th century. Postgraduate studies followed the model of French and English educational centers and focused on teaching the related knowledge. Early in 1800s in Germany, a new construct of postgraduate studies was developed in which research in higher education was highlighted [5].

The European, British, Japanese and American students who studies in German Universities grasped the concept of research and education togetherness [6].

For instance, in France, the research approach has been added extensively to the recent research units. In Britain, university professors are evaluated based on their research activities, but meeting students’ needs in
order to improve their cognitive and professional capacities has remained more serious than Germany’s instructional system where the emphasis is only on researching [7].

During the last three decades of the 19th century, the concept of research and education togetherness was formed and since then the expansion of faculties has been in progress by an emphasis on holding postgraduate courses [8].

Since 1980 postgraduate courses have gained quantity development to a great extent and this field has developed greatly in different aspects especially sport management [9].

**Major Constructs of Quality and its Application in Higher Education:** Although there have been quite a lot of studies regarding the quality of universities around the world, especially developed countries, there still remains few models of university quality [10].

However, some common models in industry like TQM, EFQM and Baldrige are generally used in higher education. It has been found that the main variables of the previously mentioned models are based on input-output and the process of changing materials to products is their basis. In higher education, it is vital for students to acquire the complicated human behavior, skills and new attitudes towards industry. It means that while universities take advantage of different sources of information and technology, they should act as a comprehensive source of information and technology as well [11].

**Some Most Common Models:** *Malcolm Baldrige model about quality:* Baldrige introduces seven variables for determining efficiency and quality in American commercial corporations:

- C Leadership.
- C Strategic programs.
- C Focus on customer and market.
- C Information and its analysis.
- C Human resources.
- C Management process.
- C Economic results [12, 13].

**TQM Model:** Mink introduced TQM to Japan after the Second World War. He emphasized abstractness and difficult nature of quality definition. Furthermore, he quoted Winch’s [14] approaches under these titles:

- C Totality.
- C Product emphasis.
- C Consumer emphasis.
- C Value emphasis.

**EFQM Model:** This model was initially formed by 14 European commercial corporations with the support of European Commission in 1988. This model evaluates the quality based on nine key criteria (Fig. 1).

**Higher Education Quality in Iran:** Physical education faculties are subsystems of higher education in every country; in Iran, physical education faculties are the same.

In the past decade, the number of master graduates and Ph.D. students in physical education faculties as well as in sport management field has increased, but so far no research has been carried out on the assessment of the academic quality in comparison with its quantity growth.

To recognize the quality of postgraduate of sport management, it is vital to study the quality of the education, research, facilities and possibilities.

So, regarding these objectives, the main purpose of this research is to find out postgraduate quality in sport management departments in Iran public universities.

Research variables: According to the nature of this research, the studied variables were as follows:

- C Awareness of postgraduate goals and missions.
- C Teaching styles.
- C Instructional content of courses.
- C Communication with external environment.
- C Evaluation system.
- C Management and planning in postgraduate.
Constructions and facilities. Organizational environment. Research activities. Motivational symbols.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research has been carried out in 20 sport management departments which have postgraduate courses (116 master students and 45 doctorate students) and 38 faculty members who have been teaching sport management courses and 46 postgraduate administrators.

Three different questionnaires were used to gather data which were designed based on variables of research objectives in three groups:

- Postgraduate sport management students.
- Faculty members who are teaching sport management.
- Postgraduate administrators.

These questionnaires’ reliability was confirmed after a pilot study and estimating Cronbach’ alpha (86%) and the validity of questionnaires was confirmed after considering experienced sport management professors’ viewpoints. Descriptive and inferential statistics and SPSS software were used to collect and to analyze the data.

The Most Significant Results Are Shown as Follows:

Variable 1) The extent of awareness of objectives and missions of postgraduate courses from the three under study groups’ viewpoints:

As you can see in Fig. 2, there is a significant difference among the three groups' viewpoints. For instance, only 15% of the professors selected the option “low” while around 40% of students selected this option.

Variable 2) Satisfaction of Teaching Styles: There is a significant difference among the three group' viewpoints. For instance, only 19% of professors selected the option "average" while around 50% of students selected this option (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2: Variable 1) objectives and missions

Fig. 3: Variable 2) satisfaction of teaching styles
Fig. 4: Variable 3) satisfaction of instructional content of courses

Fig. 5: Variable 4) communication with external environment

Fig. 6: Variable 5) satisfaction of evaluation system in postgraduate courses
Fig. 7: Variable 6) satisfaction of management and planning postgraduate

Fig. 8: Variable 7) satisfaction of construction and facilities in postgraduate courses

Fig. 9: Variable 8) the effect of current organizational environment on the quality of postgraduate courses
Variable 3) Satisfaction of Instructional Content of Courses: Different viewpoints among the three groups were observed on “instructional content” while 40% of the administrators considered this option as “very low”, 20% of the students considered as “high” (Fig. 4).

Variable 4) Communication with External Environment: In Fig. 5, there is quite a similar frequency among the three groups’ viewpoints on “communication with external environment”. There were some subjects in these groups who considered this variable as “average”.

Variable 5) Satisfaction of Evaluation System in Postgraduate Courses: In Fig. 6, there is a significant difference. This difference is especially noticeable for the option “high” with 9% for students and 51% for administrators.

Variable 6) Satisfaction of Management and Planning Postgraduate Courses: There is not much difference among the three groups’ viewpoints; only a slight difference was observed in the option “high” (Fig. 7).

Variable 7) Satisfaction of Construction and Facilities in Postgraduate Courses: As Fig. 8 shows, the majority of the subjects in the three groups are satisfied with the construction and facilities at average and high levels.

Variable 8) the Effect of Current Organizational Environment on the Quality of Postgraduate Courses: It can be implied that the administrators believed that the effect of current organizational environment was much stronger than professors and students (Fig. 9).
Variable 9) the Effect of Research on the Quality of Postgraduate Courses: Generally, it seems that students do not have a right attitude towards the option “research” in postgraduate courses. (On the whole, 19% of the students selected two options of “high” and “very high”. However, the professors and administrators more strongly believed in this variable.) (Fig. 10).

Variable 10) Motivational Symbols of Postgraduate Quality: Regarding this variable, the professors were not questioned as the administrators were more aware of its significance in postgraduate quality (compare the percentage of “average” and “high” options) (Fig. 11).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Regarding the obtained results of ten under study variables, we can discuss and conclude as follows:

These three groups had a low and average level of awareness regarding the objectives and missions of the postgraduate courses. Therefore, it is necessary to provide the administrators, faculty members and students with the guidelines containing the objectives and missions of these courses.

As far as the extent of satisfaction is considered, most of the students, professors and administrators were satisfied with the teaching methods of these courses. Since using different teaching methods is an effective factor in students’ learning, it is necessary to change teaching methods based on students’ viewpoints.

Regarding satisfaction from course content, the majority of administrators and faculty members were not satisfied and majority of students were a little or to some extent satisfied. This result required the revision of instruction and reference contents used in these courses.

Regarding the communication with the environments out of the university, the majority of administrators have selected “low” option and the majority of the students and faculty members have selected “low” and “medium” options which indicated poor communication with other related sport centers or organizations which can provide good job opportunities for postgraduates of sport management.

The majority of administrators and professors have rated the existing evaluation system positively while most of the students have rated it about average. Then, it is essential to consider the three groups’ viewpoints and reasons to apply necessary changes.

Regarding the current management and planning situation in postgraduate courses, no significant difference has been observed in three groups’ viewpoints and the majority of them evaluated it as positive. As a result, it is suggested that the current situation will be continued.

The majority of all groups were satisfied with the current buildings and facilities; so, it is not necessary to change this situation.

The administrators believed in the effects of organizational environment on the quality of postgraduate courses more than other groups.

A significant difference was observed regarding the effect of research activities on the quality of these postgraduate courses. This could be due to the uncommon understanding of research activities in these groups.

Concerning the effect of motivational symbols on the quality of these courses, the attitude of students and administrators towards this issue was positive. So, these symbols need to be enhanced to increase the interest and sense of belonging among the groups.

SUGGESTIONS

Regarding the results of this research, the researcher suggested some points to improve postgraduate quality in Iran sport management departments:

To increase the quality of postgraduate courses by a change in the structure of both instruction and research in addition to problem recognition will be possible if a main core composed of representatives from faculties with postgraduate courses is formed.

To increase the ability to connect the environments out of universities (places like sport organizations, clubs, instructional and recreational sport centers) and the graduates will be possible if a center in universities is formed to provide job opportunities.

To establish an assessment center in physical education faculties especially in sport management departments to constantly evaluate students, faculty members and administrators’ viewpoints and demands in postgraduate courses will be useful.

Finally, it is essential to form a maintenance department to provide the facilities in sport management departments.

REFERENCES