A framework for participatory selection of the school dean: Report of an experience

Noushin Kohan, Akbar Fotouhi[1], Mohammad Jalili[2], Roghayeh Gandomkar[3], Homayoun Amini[4], Ali Jafarian[5,6]

Abstract:

INTRODUCTION: Selection of the managers and leaders is a major concern of leading organizations. Recruitment of the qualified individuals in an educational organization depends on effective selection techniques. The present study reports the experience of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) in designing a framework for selection of school dean.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: First, a literature review was conducted to identify the common frameworks for the selection of deans in academic environment. Then, the perceptions of key stakeholders were collected via focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was used to categorize participants' comments. Following, an institutional guideline for selection of school dean was developed based on the derived themes and subthemes by a task force and approved by the board of directors.

RESULTS: Three themes and nine subthemes were extracted, resulting in the selection framework for the school dean at TUMS with three phases of preparation, selection, and appointment. The preparation phase includes organizational needs analysis, designing the selection strategy and determining the eligibility of nominee. In the selection phases, various methods such as personal resume, interview, and consultation with beneficiaries were recommended, and the appointment phase includes formal appointment of the selected nominee by the university chancellor.

CONCLUSIONS: We developed a framework for selection of school dean at TUMS. It recognizes the process that top managers would look out when selecting school deans. The framework may result to choose the proper individuals who have suitable plans and stronger Curriculum Vitae, while involving key stakeholders and collecting wisdom.

Keywords:

Administrative personnel, personnel selections, school health services

Department of Medical Education, Virtual University of Medical Sciences, [1]Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Public Health, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, [2]Department of Emergency Medicine, Health Professions Education Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, [3]Department of Medical Education, Education Development Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, [4]Department of Psychiatry, Psychosomatic Medicine Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Departments of [5]General Surgery and [6]Medical Education, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Roghayeh Gandomkar, Department of Medical Education, Education Development Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, No. 57, Hojjatdust Alley, Naderi St., Keshavarz Blvd, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: rgandomkar@ tums.ac.ir

Introduction

There is no doubt that educational leader, especially on the top level, plays an important role in the success of the academic institutions, and the effective selection of them is an important task in all successful organizations. One of these high-level leaders is school dean.[1] The school dean is best understood as her/his managerial and leadership role. It entails leading programs of change in complex educational organizations; setting goals, managing educational culture, and developing faculty member and staff and ensuring that political precedence is delivered. Professional school dean must combine aspects of leadership, strategic management, communication, and collegial management.[2] In other words, the job of school dean is critical to the operation of a school and the success of organization.[3]

Recent works have highlighted the association between the quality of educational leader selection decisions and organizational effectiveness.[4-6] For educational leader,

who effect and regulate organizational policy, it is even more crucial that selection decisions be as valid as possible.[7] Many different models have been presented in the literature describing the selection process of educational leaders.[8-10] There is also abundant evidence that selection of educational leader is based upon criteria that vary from organization to organization, but all have a common objective of maximizing the person-job fit.[11-13] Until very recently, few theoretical perspectives have addressed the issue of selection of school dean.[5,14]

In the universities of medical sciences, in Iran, school deans are selected by the university's chancellor. There is no defined framework for this task and in most cases, managers are appointed based on the chancellor's individual opinions or elected through advising with trusted individuals.[15] This can lead to challenges in selection of competent managers so that institutions may be deprived of having capable administrations. Given the significance of this issue, Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) has made an attempt to design a framework for the selection of school dean, in which the selection process of school dean goes through a systematic process. The important point is that a large variety of stakeholders should participate in designing such model and the selection process. Therefore, it can be concluded that a competent manager should also be credible for stakeholders. The aim of this article is to present the experience of TUMS with regard to designing a model for participatory selection of school dean adjusted to TUMS context. Similar work has not been reported in Iran. Employing such a framework systematizes dean selection processes in line with strategic and purposeful human resource management and as a result may improve patient care.

Materials and Methods

This multi-phase study is a report of TUMS experience in designing a model for selection of school dean. A task force in TUMS performed and supervised the project based on the following phases:

Review of literature
In the first phase, related literature was reviewed for school dean selection frameworks, processes, procedures, guidelines and protocols.

Obtain views from experts and stakeholders
In the second phase, in order to obtain specific views of experts' three group discussion sessions were conducted with the 8–12 participants who had expertise in academic management and experiences in administrative through university. Each session was facilitated by a moderator and lasted 1 to 2 h. The results of literature review were used to guide the questions and discussions in group

discussion sessions. The discussions tape-recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis technique was used to analyze data. Data extracts from field notes and transcripts. Extracts of data were then coded into coherent concepts, and these codes were categorized and summarized to identify the subthemes. These subthemes were incorporated in a process of switching between the data and relevant literature and three themes emerged. Themes and subthemes were reviewed and double-checked with participants and finally defined as the proposed school dean selection framework.

Preparation of guideline
The task force developed an institutional guideline for selection of school dean based on the themes and subthemes derived from the previous phase. The guideline was modified based on discussions and then consensus. It finally was put on the website of the TUMS for public commenting of all stakeholders in the university and in the semifinal version of guideline incorporating minor modifications based on comments from stakeholders.

Institutional approval
The semifinal version of guidelines was discussed in a meeting of the Board of directors and the final edition of the guidelines was approved by the board of directors.

Results

Concise overview of literature
The literature shows that a wide variety of selection methods have been used through universities for selection of school dean. However, a rigorous frame of reference is not adequately addressed. The most common way of selection is through consultative committees with different names such as selection committee, advisory selection committee, and search committee. However, elections are less likely to occur, and most often, selection is done with the help of advisory committees with a wide range of individuals.

Qualitative results and model development
Three themes and 9 subthemes were extracted from the data, in turn resulting in the selection framework for the school deans of TUMS with three phases of preparation, selection, and appointment. This framework is demonstrated in Figure 1.

The following explains each of the three phases of frameworks.

Preparation phase
This phase includes all activities before the selection process such as organizational needs analysis and designing the selection strategy and determining of

eligibility of nominees. Analyzing the organizational needs aims to analyze the academic environment in terms of internal environment (e.g., the strategic plan of TUMS) and external environment (e.g., regulations and policies of MoMEH). We proposed the workflow process for selection of school deans and eligibility criteria based on the participants' views [Figure 2 and Table 1].

Selection phase

Selection phase start with the nominating candidates by faculty members. Nominees with the highest votes (up to 10 people) are introduced to an advisory committee. Then, various methods and tools such as analysis of personal resume, interview, and consultation with beneficiaries are used by the advisory committee to select the qualified people among the nominees. At the end of the selection phase, two nominees are suggested by the advisory committee to the university chancellor for another interview and final selection.

Appointment phase

The last phase of the proposed framework was the formal appointment of the selected nominee by the university chancellor and notifying the institution and individuals. Although the whole process of selection of school dean is participatory, the final decision-making is made by the university chancellor in accordance with the Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution.
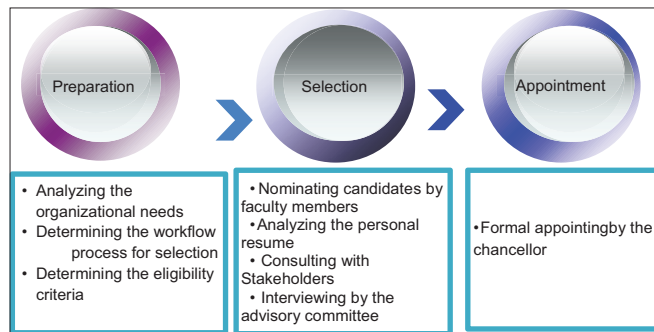
Discussion

This paper presented the experience of TUMS in designing the selection framework of the school dean in a participatory way. Evidence has shown that participation of staff in organizational decision-making is resulted in job satisfaction, motivation, organizational commitment and good interaction of staff with managers.[15-19] Based on the literature, participation is divided into two types: direct participation and representative participation. Direct participation involves the inclusion of individual opinions themselves, while representative participation involves considering the views of the representatives of individuals in the decision-making process.[20] The direct participation (secret survey of all faculty members) and representative participation (selecting representatives from each school in the advisory committee) were taken into account in the selection of school dean in this study.
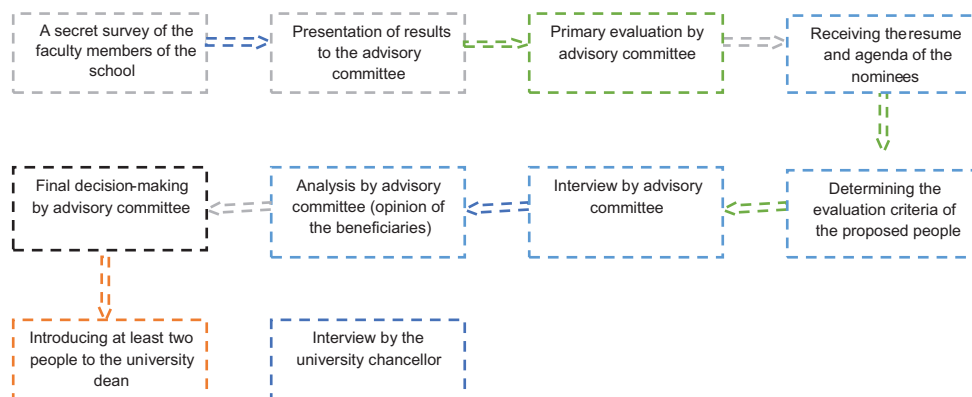
In the proposed framework, organizational need analysis was mentioned as the first step in the intended preparation phase. To this end, to determine an efficient process fitting the organizational culture of TUMS, the internal and external environment should be evaluated

Figure 1: Framework of the selection of school deans in Tehran University of Medical Sciences

Table 1: Eligibility criteria for the selection of school deans at Tehran University of Medical Sciences

General and special criteria	Expected qualifications
Academic rank of at least as associate professor	Adherence to the principles and supreme objectives of Iran
Minimum experience of 5 years as faculty member	Professional commitment
Maximum age of 65 years at the start of appointment	Executive experiences, managerial responsibilities. and leadership in academic settings
Lack of employment outside the university for holding executive positions	Efficient communicative skills
	Spirit of change and innovation in academic and administrative activities
	Intersectoral communication skills within the university and with external institutions
	International academic communication skills

Figure 2: The workflow process in the selection of school deans at Tehran University of Medical Sciences

in several meetings with expert individuals which is consistent with the other studies.[21] In the current study, following the needs analysis, the determination of qualifications of school deans in the preparation phase is obtained. Cohen *et al*. have shown that cultural and organizational environment play a pivotal role in determining and defining management and leadership qualifications in organizations.[22] Accordingly, we determined the eligibility criteria for school deans at TUMS based on the perspectives of individuals and organizational requirements.

Another great component of our framework was determining a multi-stage workflow process for the selection. De Corte and Lievens regarded single-stage selection process inefficient and believed that this type of selection would reduce the applicability of this procedure.[23] In the designed framework of present study, an interview and resume analysis were proposed to evaluate the qualifications of the nominees. Torres and Gregory (1999, 2018) asserted that interview and resume evaluation are the most common methods used in the selection of the managers.[24] Moreover, the results of several studies refer to the effectiveness of structured interview in the selection process of the suitable personnel for career, group and organization.[25,26] The results of a meta-analysis showed that cognitive ability and social skills can be evaluated well through interview.[27]

Various studies have mentioned the use of searching or selection committees for effective selection of the staff and managers.[28] The advisory committee in the proposed framework of this study comprises of various stakeholders from different groups. Mallon and Buckley conducted a study on the current and future status of the selection of the health-related university deans and stated that 85% of the heads of clinical departments and 74% of the presidents of educational hospitals in medical colleges were selected by the search committees consisting of 10–12 members.[29] Van der Merwe and Potgieter considered the accuracy of selection process dependent on the collection of accurate information from several valid sources.[30] To this end, the members of advisory committee must agree upon the selection of the intended nominee's and introducing him/her to the university chancellor for final selection.

Our study has some limitations. The proposed framework has been designed compatible with TUMS conditions and context. Further research should be conducted in other institutions with the aim of developing their specified framework and comparing its results with TUMS framework. As another limitation of the study, it was not focused on the use of the framework and its results. More research is needed to examine the utility of the framework in TUMS and other similar settings. The framework is mainly based on interview and CV and fails to capture the school dean skills based on objective tests. Another limitation is the nomination of faculty members by their peers that may not be based on the personal recognition and not the nominee plan. It is recommended to develop more comprehensive framework applying more objective selection methods and monitoring its effects on institutional efficiency.

Conclusions

We designed a framework for selection of school deans at TUMS. It is important because it recognizes the process that top manager would look out for when selecting school deans. The main point of the framework is to choose the proper individuals who have more suitable plan and stronger CV, while involving more stakeholders and collecting wisdom.

Financial support and sponsorship

Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Ramadan MZ. Effective staff selection tool: Fuzzy numbers and memetic algorithm based approach. IJET 2009;9:54-65.
2. Rich EC, Magrane D, Kirch DG. Qualities of the medical school dean: Insights from the literature. Acad Med 2008;83:483-7.
3. Carless SA, Hetherington K. Understanding the applicant recruitment experience: Does timeliness matter? Int J Sel Assess 2011;19:105-8.
4. Caers R, Du Bois C, Jegers M, De Gieter S, De Cooman R, Pepermans R. A micro-economic perspective on manager selection in nonprofit organizations. Eur J Oper Res 2009;192:173-97.
5. Harvey M, Shaw JB, McPhail R, Erickson A. The selection of a dean in an academic environment: Are we getting what we deserve? Int J Educ Metab 2013;27:19-37.
6. Jackson M. Meritocracy, Education and Occupational Attainment: What do Employers Really see as Merit? University of Oxford; 2003.
7. Fuller EJ, Reynolds AL, O'Doherty A. Recruitment, selection, and placement of educational leadership students. In: Handbook of Research on the Education of School Leaders. New York: Routledge; 2016. p. 91-131.
8. Grummell B, Devine D, Lynch K. Appointing senior managers in education: Homosociability, local logics and authenticity in the selection process. Educ Manag Adm Leadersh 2009;37:329-49.
9. Bush T, Glover D. School leadership frameworks: What do we know? Sch Leader Manag 2014;34:553-71.
10. White K, Bagilhole B, Riordan S. The gendered shaping of university leadership in Australia, South Africa and the United Kingdom. Higher Educ Q 2012;66:293-307.
11. Robinson VM, Lloyd CA, Rowe KJ. The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. Educ Adm Q 2008;44:635-74.
12. Saif A, Adnan M. Effect of job security and Governance on

teacher's job satisfactions of higher educational institutions in Southern Punjab. Inf Manag Bus Rev 2019;11:40-50.

13. Lynch K, Grummell B, Devine D. The selection and appointment of senior managers in education. In: New Managerialism in Education. London: Palgrave Macmillan; 2012. p. 54-77.

14. Anderson N, Lievens F, Van Dam K, Ryan AM. Future perspectives on employee selection: Key directions for future research and practice. Appl Psychol 2004;53:487-501.

15. Hwang JH. Participative decision making (PDM) and social workers job performance: The moderating effect of transformational leadership. Educ Adm Q 2010;46:174-209.

16. Scott-Ladd B, Travaglione A, Marshall V. Causal inferences between participation in decision making, task attributes, work effort, rewards, job satisfaction and commitment. Leadersh Organ Dev J 2006;27:399-414.

17. Irawanto DW. Employee participation in decision-making: Evidence from a state-owned enterprise in Indonesia. Manage J Contemp Manage Issues 2015;20:159-72.

18. Wadesango N. Strategies of teacher participation in decision-making in schools: A case study of Gweru district secondary schools in Zimbabwe. J Soc Sci 2011;27:85-94.

19. Busck O, Knudsen H, Lind J. The transformation of employee participation: Consequences for the work environment. Econ Ind Democracy 2010;31:285-305.

20. Oyebamiji FF. Influence of employees participation in decision making on organization performance: A study of Ladoke Akintola University of technology teaching hospital, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences & Humanities Research (IJRSSH) 2018:6 (3):8-17.

21. Sessa VI, Kaiser R, Taylor JK, Campbell RJ. Executive Selection. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership; 1998.

22. Cohen JL. Today's mandate for pharmacy deans: Anticipating change. Am J Pharm Educ 2009;73:19.

23. De Corte W, Lievens F. A practical procedure to estimate the quality and the adverse impact of single-stage selection decisions. Int J Sel Assess 2003;11:89-97.

24. Torres EN, Gregory A. Hiring manager's evaluations of asynchronous video interviews: The role of candidate competencies, aesthetics, and resume placement. Int J Hosp Manag 2018;75:86-93.

25. Macan T. Selection interviewing: Current issues and future research directions. In: Wiley Encyclopedia of Management. Chichester:John Wiley & Sons; 2015. p. 253-257.

26. Morgeson FP, Reider MH, Campion MA. Selecting individuals in team settings: The importance of social skills, personality characteristics, and teamwork knowledge. Pers Psychol 2005;58:583-611.

27. Huffcutt AI, Roth PL, McDaniel MA. A meta-analytic investigation of cognitive ability in employment interview evaluations: Moderating characteristics and implications for incremental validity. J Appl Psychol 1996;81:459.

28. Ross W. Searching for a Dean: Suggestions for the Search Committee. Academic Physician and Scientist; 2005.

29. Mallon WT, Buckley PF. The current state and future possibilities of recruiting leaders of academic health centers. Acad Med 2012;87:1171-6.

30. Van der Merwe R, Potgieter T. Assessment in the workplace: A competency-based approach. SAJIP 2002;28:60-6.