

Evaluating the higher education policies in terms of political development indicators in the Islamic Republic of Iran

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Abstract

Iran's higher education policies in non-profit higher education institutions were evaluated from political development indicators. This study was conducted on 1029 managers and faculty members of non-profit higher education institutions in Tehran, Iran, who were selected by random sampling. Based on Cochran's formula, 280 managers and faculty members of non-profit higher education institutions were selected as the statistical sample of the research. The results showed that higher education policies have a 33% ability to predict political development in the studied institutions, and the remaining 67% is related to other factors and variables. Communication with industries and financial institutions (beta= -0.23) as the most predictive power, scientific development (beta= 0.22), internationalization of education (beta= 0.21), and university goals and mission in line with development (beta= 0.19) could affect political development. A flexible organizational structure with a beta coefficient of 0.15 could not predict the political development of institutions. Based on the results, the T value of the relationship with industries and financial institutions was higher than other variables and had a more favorable situation.

Keywords: higher education policies, political development indicators, non-profit higher education institutions
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1 Introduction

The university is the pillar of culture and the main factor in the production of science in any society in terms of history and civilization. The university has always been influential in various aspects of society throughout history, which has marked many developments and determined the direction of these developments. The university can create a space where people of an era's different or non-mass ideas can be aggregated, demonstrated, and propagated in a broad mission. This concept should be objectified by becoming an institution or institution in the modern era. Universities were the place where such concepts were objectified. In a thousand years, sometimes, these institutions emerged in the golden ages of civilization and have fallen apart with the decline of that era. The disintegration of a university like Jundishapur University as an institution did not mean the collapse of that concept. The university has always tried to gather high thoughts together (aggregation), express them in the form of classes and scientific gatherings (demonstration), and provide the possibility of expansion and expansion through providing training to interested volunteers (propagation). The essence of all the efforts made by the world community to develop university institutions can be interpreted as these three goals [1]. There are two concepts of mission in the university. The first

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concept is the institutional concept of the university. In this sense, from a historical point of view, the university is an institution that mediates or establishes a kind of interaction and balance between the existing discourses in society, especially knowledge as an academic and structural cultural discourse of society. According to this view, the main role of the university institution is related to reflective communication and citizenship, which covers the explanation of technological and cultural citizenship, especially in today's conditions. In the second concept, the university's structural concept is considered an organization whose effectiveness is considered [2].

Foucault links the genealogy of the emergence of social sciences and their development with power, which in his opinion, knowledge is deeply mixed with power relations and goes hand in hand with progress in the exercise of power. In other words, wherever power is applied, knowledge is also produced. From this point of view, human sciences are formed within the network of power relations and help to advance the technologies of power [3]. Power has been considered the essence of politics [12]. According to Max Weber and Parsons, power is defined as the social ability to make binding decisions with long-term results for society. From Michel Foucault's point of view, power is a tool owned by the state that is used to analyze the order of society. Power either implies legitimate deterrence based on established legal contracts or repressive legislation and supervision to maintain class dominance. Hence, power is inherently negative, limiting, and inhibiting. Therefore, the administrative relations of a university are a part of the state and national bureaucracy, and a picture of the whole workflow (government) can be imagined. Every artificial and man-made structure is mainly affected by the preferences and capabilities of its founders. The observer can find out by analyzing, researching, observing, and studying them [6].

The higher education system, in general, and the institution of the university is an influential society in various aspects, which determines many political, economic, social, scientific, and technical developments. Therefore, the university cannot be excluded from political development. Certain places, such as the university, originate from this place in response to the necessity of care and disconnection of dangerous connections and the necessity of creating a proper place and strict and strict division of the place, and it is gradually connected to the political-administrative site. Therefore, the university as a structure is close to the reproduction relations between the building and the subject, and apart from the building, various intangible relations also play a big role in power construction reproduction. Relations between professor and student, a student with student, employee and bureaucratic elements with students, gender relations arising from power, language relations, and the production of various discourses play a role in the construction of power in various ways [13].

Political development is one of the common aspects among third world countries, and the characteristics of the administrative system governing these societies and their problems. Political development leads to structural diversity, specialization, and formalization of society and causes a lack of political and administrative concentration [18]. Experts believe that the reason for the underdevelopment of some countries, despite having suitable material facilities for development, is their political underdevelopment and the lack of creating suitable conditions for people's participation and the existence of widespread political tyranny, and the lack of the rule of law [17]. Political development is one of the common aspects between third world countries, where the characteristics of the administrative system governing these societies and the related problems. The characteristics mentioned are similar, making these countries distinct from others [19].

Keykhah and Zakersalehi [7] evaluated the macropolicies of higher education in selected countries. In the Netherlands, it is possible to point out the intertwining of quality assurance policies with internationalization in France regarding macro policy differences. Policies to attract international students, especially from developing countries in Singapore, and establishing a world-class university in Malaysia were emphasized. Innovation in the financial system of universities was noted along with becoming a regional higher education hub in South Africa; equity, access, and justice were emphasized, and corporate governance of higher education was addressed in Saudi Arabia.

Panahi et al. [16] conducted a comparative analysis of cross-border higher education in the countries of the Persian Gulf region with the approach of international poles of education and concluded that the upstream documents in Iran years ago were focused on policies to become an international pole of education. However, in practice, the adopted planning approach is passive, and other studied countries have benefited from an active and strategic direction.

Evaluating the effect of higher education on political development will be directed inside and outside the political system. The study investigated specialization, structural separation, structural differentiation, and increasing the power of absorbing demands by the ruling system, the development of the political system, and the effect of higher education on educating citizens to play a role in the social body. This research examined the components of the political development of the products and outputs of the higher education system and the university institution, their effect, and their interest in political participation. Questions about non-profit higher education institutions and the university as agents exist.

2 Theoretical foundations

2.1 Indicators of political development

Political development theories are summarized in three concepts:

1. Institutionalized competition: means providing fields for interaction and confrontation of thoughts, ideas, and actions of various individuals, groups, and even ideologies. The legal structure of competition should be institutionalized for this purpose and allow political competition so competitors can enter the competition by relying on the rules of political competition and trusting conflict resolution institutions.
2. Realization of participation: means the permission of the involvement of individuals and social groups in political decisions and the possibility of their influence on the political system and its policies.
3. Possibility of social mobility: Social mobility is the product of institutionalized competition and participation in a politically developed society. Social mobility creates the process of circulation of elites, which means the possibility of people belonging to lower social layers and strata to reach higher political and social ones based on their own merits and sufficiency (meritocracy vs. authoritarianism) [4].

Most political development theorists agree that participation is one of the important indicators of political development. Participation has a wide scope, and in this article, there is no scope to deal with the nature, degrees, characteristics, and elements of political participation. Three elements of freedom (freedom of initiative and voluntary and voluntary choice), awareness (knowing and deciding among different options), and equality (rights, privileges, and equal opportunities) can be recognized in all the definitions of participation. All theories of direct or indirect development consider the role of participation in political development undeniable [19].

Participation is essential in the development process because the whole society can be considered a system, and the requirement for its effective and optimal performance is the organic connection between the components and the use of the capabilities of all the existing elements. In this way, it is possible to understand why most development theories that ignore the element of participation fail in practice. Meanwhile, broad and universal participation is not accepted in some development theories; on the contrary, the essential role of elite participation is emphasized. Marxist views and especially Lenin's opinion on the necessity of forming and leading a party consisting of intellectuals and "professional revolutionaries" can be referred to. On the other hand, a significant group of development theories considers political development synonymous with Western-style democracy. Carl Friedrich, Lucien Pai, Seymour Lipsett, and Arthur Smith are among the essential theorists of this topic. The main indicators of political development were parliamentary, elections, pluralism, multi-party political systems, competitive political system, institutionalized legal authority, press freedom, economic development, and political legitimacy. Third-world societies cannot blindly apply and follow the historical experiences of developed countries in achieving sustainable development. The analyses presented regarding these societies' development were compiled based on Western societies' cultures, insights, and needs. This analysis is representative of the theories justifying the expansion of contemporary capitalism and practically leads to contradictions rooted in the adherence to development based on capitalism and the commitment to democratic changes, and the expansion of equality and social justice [2].

The government's position in the process of political development, especially regarding the political participation of individuals and social groups, is another topic raised regarding political development. The government's position in the process of political development, especially regarding the political participation of individuals and social groups, is another topic regarding political development. This issue is the same important crisis called the crisis of participation as the most important crisis of government in political development. The government is facing a serious crisis with the increasing demands of citizens for more and more involvement in the administration of society and policy making. There is a point of view among the rulers who see the increase in the number of new political actors who lack the necessary coherence and legitimacy as a negative phenomenon. Due to their limitations, the current bureaucratic facilities and structures cannot quickly respond to the mentioned demands.

Apart from the tendency to violence and struggle with oppression, the new participants have not yet learned the rules of the political game well. The government's positive response to the new groups demanding participation requires redistributing power and handing over at least a part to these groups, which will certainly face resistance from the rulers. In any case, the participation crisis is created by the widespread tendency of new forces to participate in politics, and only a developed political system can solve the crisis by absorbing and responding to these demands based on participation. In such a system, the necessary arrangements and predictions have been made by creating legal and legitimate institutions to face such crises. Theorists believe that a strong and decisive government is essential for development. Due to the lack of familiarity of the groups seeking participation with the existing political rules and principles, it is not required for such a government to always respond positively to the demands of these groups, but achieving growth goals should be considered its most important priority.

2.2 Higher education policies

For a long time, universities were only engaged in educational and then research activities in the early stages of their life. With two important scientific revolutions, these universities took on a third mission, technological innovation, from paying only attention to education and research. The first scientific revolution and transformation happened at the end of the 19th century in German universities, during which universities assumed the research mission in addition to the educational and teaching mission. Education-oriented universities are first-generation, and research-oriented universities are second-generation [17]. A university is a good place for knowledge-based innovation due to basic characteristics such as the flow of human capital in the form of students and faculty members who are potential sources of inventors. The university is the authority for producing and disseminating new knowledge, which can train entrepreneurs and establish new companies according to the technologies it develops. Therefore, the university is potentially a natural incubator and mother of new and knowledge-based enterprises. A university can be an entrepreneur, and university entrepreneurship is knowledge-based entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial university can create a strategic focal path in formulating academic goals and transforming new knowledge into economic value and social utility [9]. Table 1 reviews the indicators of theoretical foundations and research background.

Table 1: Indicators of higher education and political development

No.	Factors	Index	Reference
1	Higher education: Factors of the external environment	Internationalization of education	The presence of foreign students, international databases, international agreements, foreign scientific members, holding joint courses, seminars, and workshops with foreign universities. [5]
		Commercialization of academic ideas	Royalty Fee, joint investment, cooperation in the field of research and development Outsourcing, strategic alliances, equity investment in technology transfer branch company, and establishment of licensing offices and growth centers [17]
		Communication with industries and financial institutions	Communicating with financial institutions and institutions, informing about industrial innovations [9]
2	Higher education: Internal environmental factors	The goals and mission of the university in the direction of development	Existence of openness, place of innovation, place of technology [8]
		Flexible organizational structure	Focus, formality, sophistication [15]
		Scientific development	Educational, research, cultural, administrative, financial, and support [17]
3	Political development	Institutionalized political competition	Availability of fields for interaction and confrontation of thoughts, ideas, and actions of individuals, groups, and even different ideologies, the legal structure of institutional competition, the permission of political competition, and trust in conflict resolution institutions. [19]
		Realization of participation	The permission of the involvement of individuals and social groups in political decisions, their influence on the political system and its policies [2]
		The possibility of social mobility	The circulation of elites, the achievement of people belonging to the lower social layers and strata to the far higher political and social ones, meritocracy versus despotism [10]
		Political institution building	Institutionalization or creation and strengthening of modern institutions related to the government, development of various areas of social life, institutionalization from below [4]
		Legalism and lawfulness	Rule of law, just law, social order, attention to law enforcement [14]

3 Method

This correlational, applied, quantitative, survey, and cross-sectional study was conducted on 1029 managers and faculty members of non-profit higher education institutions in Tehran by simple random sampling. Based on Cochran's formula, 280 managers and faculty members of non-profit higher education institutions in Tehran were selected as the statistical sample of the research.

$$n = \frac{NZ_{1-\frac{\alpha}{2}}^2 pq}{(N-1)\varepsilon^2 + Z_{1-\frac{\alpha}{2}}^2 pq} \Rightarrow \frac{1029 \times (1.96)^2 \times (0.5)^2}{1029 \times (0.05)^2 + (1.96)^2(0.5)^2} \cong 280$$

The stratified random sampling method was used in the present research. In this research, a researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect data. The face validity of the questionnaire was used to check the validity of the measurement tool. The questionnaire prepared, along with the resources, was submitted to the judgment of several professors to ensure the use of appropriate sentences to measure the research variables, and after the necessary corrections, the scientific validity of the questionnaire was confirmed.

Table 2: Reliability of the research tool

No.	Variable	Cronbach's alpha
1	Internationalization of education	89.0
2	Commercialization of academic ideas	90.0
3	Communication with industries and financial institutions	88.0
4	The goals and mission of the university in the direction of development	79.0
5	Flexible organizational structure	82.0
6	Scientific development	85.0
7	Institutionalized political competition	81.0
8	Realization of participation	83.0
9	The possibility of social mobility	89.0
10	Political institution building	78.0
11	Legalism and lawfulness	80.0

A standard questionnaire was also used to collect data, and the opinions of professors and experts were used to strengthen its validity. Cronbach's alpha test was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, and confirmatory factor analysis was used to measure the validity of the research instrument. In addition, Pearson and regression statistics were used to check the relationship between the research variables, and the regression model was used to check the effects.

4 Results

The highest percentage of the statistical samples of the research in terms of age was, on average, 36 to 45 years (37.63%) and 35 to 25 years (31.89%). Further, 69.89% of the samples were made up of male managers and faculty members, and 30.10% of the samples were made up of female managers and faculty members. The normality of the data was checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to analyze the research data. The error rate of the test was 0.05 in all the tests.

Table 3: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results related to research variables

Variable	Frequency	z-statistic (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)	Significance level
Internationalization of education	280	657.0	335.0
Commercialization of academic ideas	280	857.0	198.0
Communication with industries and financial institutions	280	759.0	289.0
The goals and mission of the university in the direction of development	280	826.0	208.0
Flexible organizational structure	280	682.0	357.0
Scientific development	280	758.0	281.0
Institutionalized political competition	280	867.0	269.0
Realization of participation	280	863.0	278.0
The possibility of social mobility	280	729.0	186.0
Political institution building	280	904.0	125.0
Legalism and lawfulness	280	867.0	268.0

Since the obtained significance level value is less than 0.05, the normality of the distribution of all variables was confirmed. The next step is path analysis after determining the validity of the measurement tools and identifying the relationship between the variables. The correlation coefficient was used to identify the relationship between the variables present in the model. The results of the correlation coefficient between the research variables are listed in Table 4. The correlation coefficient between higher education policy variables and political development was significant at $p < 0.01$.

Table 4: Correlation matrix of research constructs (* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Internationalization of education	1						
Commercialization of academic ideas	**30.0	1					
Communication with industries and financial institutions	**32.0	**38.0	1				
The goals and mission of the university in the direction of development	**28.0	**32.0	**35.0	1			
Flexible organizational structure	**30.0	**32.0	**35.0	**30.0	1		
Scientific development	**31.0	**32.0	**34.0	**33.0	**29.0	1	
Political development	**32.0	**34.0	**32.0	**28.0	**30.0	**32.0	1

The absence of a collinear effect between independent variables is one of the regression assumptions. The value of the tolerance index is between zero and one, and there is one value for this index for this independent variable. If the value of this index is close to one, this variable does not correspond with the rest of the independent variables of the effect, and if it is close to zero, it shows the opposite. In addition, the VIF index confirms the absence of a colinear effect between the independent variables if it takes a value less than 2.

Table 5: Variance tolerance index and variance inflation factor
Multiple colinearity indicators

Predictor variables	Tolerance	VIF
The overall score of higher education policies	0.96	1.03
Political development	0.95	1.07

All numbers indicate the absence of a strong collinear effect between the predictor variables. Another assumption of regression is error independence, which should reject the assumption of correlation between errors. Watson camera statistics can be used to check this assumption, which should be 1.5 to 2.5. This statistic is equal to 1.86 in this study, which shows that this assumption is correct. The first test is the general model test. If at least one of the predictor variables of the study has a significant effect on the criterion variable, the researcher’s model is confirmed. The null hypothesis is as follows:

$$\begin{cases} H_0 : \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \dots = \beta_5 = 0 \\ H_1 : \beta_i \neq 0 \quad \forall \text{one } i \text{ for } i = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 \end{cases}$$

Table 6: Regression results of predicting political development

Model	Sum of square	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	R	R ²	R ² _{adj}	Sig
Regression	57.11	5	31.2	22.11	578.0	334.0	304.0	000.0
Residual	10.23	275	20.0					
Total	68.46	280						

The sig value is less than 0.01 and indicates the significance of the regression model, and at least one predictor variable significantly affects the criterion variable. In this research, the value of R² is equal to 0.33, and higher education policies have 33% of the ability to predict political development, and the remaining 67% are related to other factors. T-test was used to check which of the coefficients is not zero, or in other words, which variable or variables have a significant effect in the model.

Table 7 shows six dimensions of higher education policies that can predict political development. Communication with industries and financial institutions (beta= -0.23) as the most predictive power, scientific development (beta= 0.22), internationalization of education (beta= 0.21), and university goals and mission in line with development (beta= 0.19) could affect political development. A flexible organizational structure with a beta coefficient of 0.15 could not predict the political development of institutions. The variable t-test is presented in Table 8 to evaluate higher education policies in line with the average political development indicators.

Table 7: Standard, non-standard coefficients and t-statistics of the variables included in the regression equation

Predictor variable	Regression coefficients		T-statistic	sig
	Not-standardized	Standardized Beta		
Constant value	58.18		50.81	001.0
1- Internationalization of education	01.0	21.0	63.2	01.0
2- Commercialization of academic ideas	01.0	18.0	19.2	03.0
3- Communication with industries and financial institutions	-01.0	-23.0	-89.2	005.0
4- The goals and mission of the university in the direction of development	01.0	19.0	01.2	04.0
5- Flexible organizational structure	01.0	15.0	65.1	10.0
6- Scientific development	01.0	22.0	71.2	001.0

Table 8: One-variable t-test to evaluate the current situation

Variable	t-statistics	Mean	Degree of freedom	Two-tail significance	Mean difference	Result
1- Internationalization of education	28.83	83.22	279	001.0	83.19	Above average
2- Commercialization of academic ideas	85.102	71.32	279	001.0	71.29	Above average
3- Communication with industries and financial institutions	87.125	21.55	279	001.0	21.52	Above average
4- The goals and mission of the university in the direction of development	34.111	12.39	279	001.0	12.36	Above average
5- Flexible organizational structure	44.144	66.54	279	001.0	66.51	Above average
6- Scientific development	51.99	00.17	279	001.0	00.14	Above average
7- Political development	27.92	34.25	279	001.0	34.22	Above average

Table 8 shows that the t calculated for the variables indicates that it is greater than the critical t (1.96) at the 99% confidence level, and the significance level (two-tail) is less than 5%. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the state of the research variables is favorable. The T value of the relationship with industries and financial institutions is at a higher level than the rest of the other variables and has a better situation.

5 Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to evaluate the higher education policies in non-profit higher education institutions of Tehran from the perspective of political development indicators. The R^2 value was 0.33, meaning that higher education policies have a 33% ability to predict political development, and the remaining 67% is related to other factors and variables. Communication with industries and financial institutions (beta= -0.23) as the most predictive power, scientific development (beta= 0.22), internationalization of education (beta= 0.21), and university goals and mission in line with development (beta= 0.19) could affect political development. A flexible organizational structure with a beta coefficient of 0.15 could not predict the political development of institutions.

Political development is, in a sense, the institutionalization of politics in which the law is considered the main standard and criterion for any superiority of individuals over each other, and the government is intended for the general right of the people. In political development, all old structures are presented to society in a new form. Appropriate thoughts and ideas in the old society, which is generally based on the supremacy of some people over others, are changing, and political principles such as equality and freedom are being proposed. There are connections or differences between the political system and the educational system of all countries regarding political development, and it seems that the relationship between the educational system and political development is a so-called dialectical relationship (both support and criticism; without this mutual relationship, political development cannot exist. As much as higher education in its public and private forms can penetrate wider and deeper levels of society, the scope of its effects on society is more impressive. An overview of the expansion of democracy and political development in different countries shows a close and significant relationship between this process and the quantitative and qualitative increase of universities and higher education centers in these countries. The expansion of higher education in today's societies has experienced political development with criteria such as increasing the number of students and higher research and educational centers along with the training of educated people from different strata of people in creating the necessary infrastructure to achieve a developed society naturally and sustainably as basic preconditions. Therefore, it is considered that higher education plays a fundamental role in the central and essential components of political development (i.e., people, government, and civil society) and can facilitate and guarantee the achievement of political development in society. An overview of the expansion of democracy and development in different countries shows a

close and significant relationship between this process and the quantitative and qualitative increase of universities and higher education centers.

Relationships with industries and financial institutions had the power to predict political development. The university is the main center for training specialized and trained human resources, which can grow society by having new ideas, and the industry can realize the idea of economic development and the progress of society by applying the emerging ideas of academics. Therefore, any shortcoming, whether temporary or continuous, in the continuity of cooperation between these two institutions directly and indirectly challenges comprehensive development. Mercer et al. [13] believe that educational leaders have to seek competitive advantage through strategies likely to improve motivation, build capacity for organizational progress, and create a better value-added performance.

Based on the results, it is suggested to create international databases and conclude international agreements with foreign universities. Universities should cooperate with international centers in research and development and invest in technology transfer branch companies. Communication with financial institutions and institutions should be established between graduates and the market.

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