فصلنامه پژوهش در مسائل تعلیم و تربیت
شماره پیاپی ۵۵– دوره دوم ، شماره ۳۸– تابستان ۱۴۰۰
مقاله شماره 4 – صفحات ۶۷ تا ۷۰

A comparative study of the Ph.D curriculum in higher education in Iran with three universities in the United States

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Abstract:

In Iran as a developing country, university administration or higher education administration is gaining popularity as a specialized Ph.D program. This program along with programs such as “planning the development of higher education”and “economy and financial management of higher education” was first initiated in one university, Shahid Beheshti University, in 2002. Thus, it is a very young course among Ph.D programs in Iran, and just during the short period after its establishment, the course has experienced some decrease in the number of the credits the students must pass before their comprehensive exam as a measure to improve the program effectiveness, but it seems still some problems persist. As a result, using Beredy’s comparative method and applying content analysis, the present work aims at comparing the curriculum for this program with those implemented in University of Michigan, University of Nevada, Las Vegas and University of Texas at Austin in the United States and providing clues on the ways to improve the program .

Keywords : comparative study , higher education , Iran , United States

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1-Introduction:

Documented history of education In Iran dates back to the third millennia BC at the time of the Elamites. Clay tablets, marked with stylus, that were found in the first capital city of the world susa ,when deciphered ,revealed they were homework assignment done by the students of this country's ancestors.

Upon the establishment of the Achaemenian Empire (550-334 BC),as the first and most benevolent of all empires ,a multitude of races, religions, languages ,and cultures coexisted peacefully under one central government. the coexistence, in turn, necessitated the need for cross-cultural communication and paved the ground for the succeeding Persian states to pay due attention to education.(IRPHE, 2003)

Higher education in Iran, subsequently ,commenced when the Sassanid founded the Jondi Shahpur University in 250 AD in southwestern Part of contemporary Iran as the center for higher learning.

Modern higher education ,however ,initiated when students were awarded scholarship to pursue their studies abroad. (IRPHE, 2005)

Following the trend ,in 1851. Amir Kabir, the wise minister of Qajarids founded Dar-al-Fonoon (House of techniques) in Tehran. A number of teacher training and medical schools were subsequently founded .Eventually ,in 1937 the establishment of the University of Tehran marked the onset of university education, in the modern sense of the word. Shortly after, colleges and universities were added to the educational institutions of the country so that by 1979 they added up to 26 universities, 87 colleges, and 228 higher education centers, admitting over 180/000 students annually .Upon the victory of the Islamic Revolution in February 1979, the need for higher education was felt more than ever in that the country had staged a path toward self-sufficiency, and in the light of this attempts, the student population index quadrupled in less than ten years. (IRPHE, 2006)

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Planning and policy making for the higher education at the national level is mainly shouldered by the parliament, the cabinet, the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, and the National Planning and Management Organization. At the ministerial level, however, the Ministry of Science , Research and Technology is entitled to plan for provision to elevate the educational status quo and know-how, as well as to secure the required skillful manpower .

When it comes to universities and research centers ,internal councils ,such as board of trustee, university councils, college council and department council convene to make decisions .

2- History of Doctoral degree in higher education in Iran.

Nowadays different occupation in different organizations have become an independent profession. University administration or higher education administration is one of these professional occupations and a branch of educational science in universities. In Islamic Republic of Iran the importance of science ,culture and art has a long history .Paying attention to higher education administration as a profession is one of the most important ambitions of this country. In this situation, Iranian specialists in educational domain have started to initiate and establish the doctoral degree in higher education. For the first time three graduate degrees were established to develop and finance higher education planning in Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran in 2002 . They were sponsored by Institute for Research & Planning in Higher Education (IRPHE)which was a fundemental step in developing higher education in Iran .In 2002,after the entrance exam in three aboved mentioned fields of studies ,nine persons totally and three persons in each course were admitted and one student from each group or division financially supported on the basis of a scholarship sheme by IRPHE.

Second group of these three courses were accepted in 2004 by entrance exam. Five persons in higher education administration division, four persons in the division of economics and finanancing in higher education .

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Again, two of them were supported by above mentioned institute, and in the division of planning for developing higher education, four persons were accepted and one of them obtained the scholarship by the IRPHE. Those who entered in 2004,now passes their courses and according to the curriculum proposed by Ministry of Science, Research and Technology rules and regulations, each student should pass 30 unites in order to be able take part in comprehensive exam before committing themselves to work on writing of their thesis.

According to the new rules established in 2004, the number of unites to the passed is decreased to 18 and now the departments are allowed to determine the number of units according to students requirements. Students of higher education administration for Ph.D degree in Shahid Beheshti University should pass 30 credits to take part in comprehensive exam based on department decision. This paper is going to study the registered units of the higher education administration field with that is the same field at American universities over the same Period.

The method of study is comparative one Content analysis method is also used in this study .At the end of the paper some suggestions are made for the propose of improving the program.

3-A rewiew of universities abroad in doctoral degree in higher education (curriculum & course)

3-1-University of Michigan

At Michigan university ,doctoral study in higher education through the center for the study of higher education is characterized by the following:

- B reath of area of study within higher education,

- Flexibility in ways to fulfill most requirements,

- The opportunity for students to individualize their programs of study to match their interests and needs ,and

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- Access to a vast array of intellectual resources and learning environments throughout the University of Michigan .The doctoral program of study is organized as follows.

A total of 60 hours of graduate courses must be taken perior to achiving Dissertation candidacy .Most courses are offered for 3 credits ,numbers of credits listed for each category are minimum requirements.

A-Common curricular experiences (minimum of 9 credits)

- Proseminar in higher education

- History of postsecondary education

- Comprehensive qualifying examination.

B-"GetWay "courses to concentration Areas (minimum of 6 credits)

- Postsecondary institutions as complex organization(Getway to OB&M)

- Public policy in postsecondary education (GetWay to public policy)

- Academic affairs and student development in postsecondary education.

C- Research Requirements (minimum of 18 credits)

Since the Ph.D. is a research degree, the research reqirement consists of several courses as follows .

- Introduction to Quantitative methods in educational research

- Quantitative methods for non –experimental research

- Research design in higher education

- Research practicum in higher education

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D- Concentration courses (minimum of 12 credits),selection in consultation with advisor :a set of courses appropriate to in –depth study.

E- Cognate course (minimum of 6 credits) :is offered outside the school of education.

F- Electives (remaining credits to meet 60 hours requirement)

G- Dissertation pre - candidacy and candidacy

- Dissertation pre – candidacy

- Dissertation candidacy

3-2- University of Nevada, Las Vegas

At the university , the program consists of a minimum of 72 credit hours of study beyond the master's degree .Including the completion of the dissertation, which present a minimum of 12 of those credits .

A- Higher education core (18 credits)

- History of American higher education .

- Foundation of American higher education

- Finance & budgeting in higher education

- Theory of educational organizations

- Higher education law

- seminar in economics of higher education

B- **Research core (12 credits)**

- Designing & critiquing research

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- Evaluation Research methods .

- Qualitative Research methodology

- Descriptive inferential statistics

C- Research Elective (6 credits, select two course)

- Advanced qualitative research.

- Inferential statistics & experimental design

- Multivariate statistics

D-Dissertation and Internship (18 credits)

- Internship

- Prospectus for dissertation

- Dissertation

V- Cognate Area (9 credits minimum) at least 2 of these courses (6 credits)be taken outside of the department. Specialty requirements & elective (12 credits) course can be selected from academic areas of workforce education , college student personnel ,athletic administration, or higher education leadership

3-3-The University of Texas at Austin

Specialization course in Higher education(in general)

- Organization and administration of higher education

- Higher education business management

- Legislative Issues in higher education

- Administrative leadership in higher education

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- Instructional leadership

- Institutional research & planning

- Higher education law

- History of higher education

- Comparative higher education

- Seminar :Issues in higher education & specialization qualification.

- Policy & Policy Development in higher education

- Administrative leadership in higher education

- The college student (with emphasis on student Development)

- College / university student personnel administration

3-4- Shahid Beheshti university ,Tehran

The doctoral program of study is organized as follows .A total of 50 credits must be taken prior to taking part in comprehensive exam and achiving dissertation candidacy .Number of credits listed for each category are minimum requirements.

A- Common core (21 credits)

- Philosophy of higher education (2 credits)

- Higher education systems in the world (2 credits)

- Qualitative and qualitative research in higher education (2 credits)

- Policy making and planning in higher education

- Designing and managing of Information systems in higher education (2 credits)

- Administration and planning for student affairs (1 credits)

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- Faculty and college personnel development (1credits)
- Finance and organization of higher education(1credits)
- Systems analysis in higher education(2 credits)
- IR and planning in higher education(2 credits)
- Human resources planning for national development (2 credits)

B- Integrative experiences(minimum of credits)

- Internship
- Seminar (current Issues in higher education

C- Administrative core (6 credits)

- Organization and Administrative theories analysis in higher education(2 credits)
- OB in higher education(2 credits)
- Administration in higher education

D- Electives (12 credits)

- Teaching –learning process in higher education(2 credits)
- Research in consultation and supervision systems in higher education(2 credits)
- Student counseling (2 credits)
- Administrative and organizational evaluation (2 credits)
- Administrative consultation in higher education(2 credits)
- OR in higher education(2 credits)

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E- Ph.D.thesis (20 credits)

4- Comparison:

4-1- University of Michigan

- Total credits: 60 credits

- In Details:

- common curricular experiences credits

- Get way course 6 credits

- Research 18 credits

- Concentration 12 credits

- Cognate 6 credits

- Electives remaining credits

Advantages of the program

1- Breath of study within higher education

2- flexibility in curriculum and ways to fulfill most requirements.

3- The opportunity for student to individualize their programs to match their interests

4- History of postsecondary education ,public policy in postsecondary ed.,academic affairs and student development can be very helpul and useful for students in the curriculum.

4-2- University of Nevada, lass Vegas

- Total credits :72 credits

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- In details :

- Higher education core 18 credits

- Research core 12 credits

- Research elective 6 credits

- Dissertation & internship 18 credits

- cognate Area 9 credits

-Specialty requirements & electives 12 credits

At the university you can see specific paying attention to special condition of America .

- Paying attention to higher Education law is a good idea

4-3- University of Texas at Austin

At this university, Ph.D program is flexible based on advisor ideas and need of students. The curriculum is more professional than other universities. In the curriculum we can see specific & important issues in higher education like business management, legislative issues, leadership, IR, law, history of higher education, comparative studies, policy making, college student development .But the program did not pay attention to micro issues like teaching skills and methods, Education technology ,so and so .

4-4- Shahid Beheshti University

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-Total credits :50 credits

- In details :

- common core 21 credits

- Integrative experiences 3 credits

- Administrative core 6 credits

- Ph.D. thesis 20 credits

- Electives 12 credits

In the program we can see common core more than similar program and there is variety in the program with many courses like systems analysis, human resources planning ,MIS,OB in

higher education that they result in a complete program. The program is comprehensive and complete, but there are some problems such as :

- in the program there is not a serious attention to national and native conditions, And characteristics.

- There is not a close relationship between theory and practice. It means there is not a close relation between student of a particular level and division of higher education (Science ,Research & Technology Ministry).This is a serious problem at all levels in Iranian higher education .

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2- Another point is that this course is not based on realities and needs of Iranian society, but it is adapted by imitation

5- Discussion and Recommendations:

Some years ago, Ph.D program in higher education was established in Shahid Beheshti University, that was a necessary and useful step for promoting higher education in Iran. But we need some time to pass for seeing the results. For achieving the goals, we must make some changes in the program including:

- Making a closer relationship between Ph.D students and division of higher education (Science ,Research and Technology Ministry).

- we should pay more attention to native and national needs and circumstances.

- we should prepare appropriate opportunity for students to go abroad and study foreign universities and achieve new experiences in the higher education.

- After graduating the students, we should recruite them to administer colleges and universities and this idea needs many changes in rules and regulations in higher education domain.

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