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# Examining a paradigm for cultural development at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences

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## Abstract

**Background:** Culture plays an important role in social changes; cultural development is essential for social development. The main objective of this research was to determine the current status and optimal state of cultural development and propose a better paradigm at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. For doing so, eight cultural development components were examined using Georges' theory.

**Methods:** The statistical population consisted of all 270 employees and managers of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. The participants of the present descriptive study consisted of 160 employees and managers (104 managers and 56 employees) of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. The sample size was chosen via cluster random sampling method calculated by Morgan table. A questionnaire assessing participants' current and optimal status was completed. The questionnaire's reliability was confirmed by Cronbach alpha with a coefficient of 90. The content validity of the questionnaire was measured by employees' opinions. SPSS 16 was used for the statistical analysis.

**Results:** Assessing the effective factors on cultural development indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between current and optimal status ( $p < 0.001$ ) (95% CI: 1.43-5.00). Results indicated that there is a significant difference in cultural development between current status and optimal state among the staff of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

**Conclusion:** The results of the research show that cultural education in its optimal state is of higher rank than other indicators. Thus it seems necessary to pay more attention to cultural development and sustainable development.

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## Introduction

Knowledge and technology have changed our lives tremendously in the last few centuries and societies have shown tendencies towards changes, evaluation, and development in the information and technology era. Thus, it seems that development is the only logical direction towards a progressive society. Development is defined as transferring from a lower level to a higher level and occurs when the current state loses its mobility and exhilaration, and structural and fundamental changes seem imperative and vital.<sup>1</sup>

Nowadays economic, political and social development is achieved by focusing on culture. Cultural development changes human perception, vision, capabilities and beliefs, resulting in specific behaviors and reactions to de-

velopment.<sup>2</sup> Culture includes common life styles,<sup>3</sup> beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols and behaviors of a group of people or a system.<sup>4</sup> Behavior and social interaction is affected by culture.

It has long been believed that universities are detached from the community. They have been linked to international and national academic and research communities, and have enjoyed high levels of institutional autonomy by nationally regulated, assessed, and funded systems of higher education.<sup>5</sup>

Examining the relationship between university culture and cultural development is important in two dimensions: first, there is a mutual relationship between science and technology and culture. If the appropriate culture for developing knowledge and technology in a society has not

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been generated, science and knowledge will not be expanded. Additionally, we cannot assess their feedback and the society's fundamental problems will not be resolved.<sup>6</sup> Academic and cultural structures are closely related to each other and each one is necessary for the function of the other. Secondly, universities and higher education institutes have been affected by western countries without comprehending the appropriate culture and values. Mismatches between universities and historical and cultural traditions have caused serious problems. On one hand universities must preserve society's cultural values and traditions yet on the other hand they are obliged to propagate new values and require science and technology. Universities should be able to understand these two important aspects; otherwise they will suffer from internal and external conflicts.<sup>7</sup>

Cultural development is one of the main aspects of economic progress. A country must adjust itself to and keep pace with technology in order to progress.<sup>8</sup> In order to understand changes in the new world, people must be able to express their feelings and communicate with each other. Therefore, people need continuous training, which is the main condition of development. Individuals must be able to adjust themselves to such changes in order to understand occupational changes. This ability is obtained by establishing a set of processes via gaining information, taking occupational training responsibilities, and learning expression techniques.<sup>9</sup>

Considering the interactions between cultural developments in our society and universities and understanding the importance and obligations of cultural development for knowledge and technology,<sup>10</sup> we formulated an important question. The question is, "What is the appropriate paradigm for cultural development in the management era of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences?" Thus the objective of this study is to assess the current status of cultural development and then offer a proper paradigm for improving this status at the Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

### Materials and Methods

This research was conducted via survey, and applied and conducted at a micro level.<sup>11</sup> The statistical population consisted of all 270 employees and managers of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. The participants of the present descriptive study consisted of 160 employees and managers (104 managers and 56 employees) of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. The sample size was chosen via cluster random sampling method calculated using Krejcie & Morgan's table. Inclusion criteria were working in the Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, being willing to participate in the study, having an academic education (at least associate's degree), and being a manager or employee. Exclusion criteria were not willing to participate in the study, fired or retired staff, not having an academic education and not being a manager or employee. Data was collected using a questionnaire prepared by the

authors. This questionnaire was designed based on theoretical foundations and literature reviews and studies. The Delphi method was used to design the questionnaire. This questionnaire included 80 Likert-type items to assess the staff's current status and optimal state. Using the Likert scale decreased potential sources of bias. The questionnaire measured the research octoploid variables (eight Georges' cultural development components). For assessing questionnaire validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three professors and then their judgment was taken into account and certain changes were implemented. For assessing reliability, the questionnaire was distributed to 20 individuals based on our sample size. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was 90.

The variables assessed in this study are cultural education, creativity promotion and innovation, definite attitudes regarding culture, cultural identity, public culture and traditional culture, promotion of culture exchange, cultural heritage preservation and access to culture in current status and optimal status among the Tabriz University of Medical Sciences staff. In order to decrease potential sources of bias such as individual's refusal to answer questions, the study objectives were precisely described to individuals.

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 16 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) software. Data normality was evaluated by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and expressed by mean and standard deviation or median (minimum and maximum) in tables. An independent samples *t* test was performed to compare means and median values between two groups. Additionally, the Friedman test was used to prioritize the effective factors for cultural development. The Pearson correlation test was used for assessing the correlation of study variables between the current and optimal states. All statistical tests were two-tailed, with a *P* value of <0.05 considered statistically significant.

In this study, 69.4% of staff are men and 30.6% are women. The staff's education level was also assessed: 66.3% had bachelor's degrees, 33.1% had master's degrees and 10.6% had associate's degrees. The staff's mean time in employment was  $14.13 \pm 7.25$ .

### Results

Here we review the findings regarding the questions mentioned in this study:

The current status of cultural development at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences variables and its components in the health management of East Azerbaijan are shown in Table 1. Table shows the highest and lowest means and standard deviation with maximum and minimum levels. The optimal status of cultural development at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences and statistical indicators of cultural development and its components are summarized in Table 2.

Table 3 shows the mean scores, current and optimal statuses of the effective factors of cultural development at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

**Table 1.** Mean of current cultural status and its components in the health management

Variable (n = 160)	Mean	SD	Conversion	Max.	Min.
Cultural development	272.17	30.794	157	324	167
Cultural education	37.43	8.578	40	57	17
Creativity promotion and innovation	32.13	6.666	30	45	15
Definite attitudes on culture	42.69	7.268	38	58	20
Empowerment of cultural identity	35.49	6.653	33	50	17
Public and traditional culture Encouragement	27.08	5.625	27	38	11
Promotion of culture exchange	36.24	6.770	33	51	18
Cultural heritage preservation	27.06	7.134	29	40	11
Access to culture	34.04	6.600	30	50	20

**Table 2.** Mean of optimal status of cultural development

Variable (n = 160)	Mean	SD	Conversion	Max.	Min.
Cultural development	323.57	19.298	130	373	243
Cultural education	50.65	5.456	25	60	35
Creativity promotion and innovation	36.09	4.553	23	45	22
Definite attitudes on culture	49.14	5.346	26	59	33
Empowerment of cultural identity	39.69	4.937	26	50	24
Public and traditional culture Encouragement	32.16	3.712	22	40	18
Promotion of culture exchange	42.49	5.535	28	54	26
Cultural heritage preservation	32.76	3.595	19	40	21
Access to culture	40.59	4.400	25	50	25

**Table 3.** Mean of effective factors on cultural development

Variable	Current statue	Optimal statue
Cultural education	3.40	5.47
Creativity Promotion and innovation	4.95	4.41
Definite attitudes on culture	4.94	4.88
Empowerment of cultural identity	5.04	4.29
Public and traditional culture encouragement	4.43	4.33
Promotion of culture exchange	4.03	3.51
Cultural heritage preservation	4.70	4.70
Access to culture	4.50	4.40

Table 3 demonstrates the mean scores of the Friedman non-parametric test results. Assessing the effective factors on cultural development indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between current and optimal states ( $P < 0.001$ ) (95% CI: 1.43-5.00); thus the null hypothesis was rejected and the research hypothesis was accepted. It means that there is a difference among the effective factors on cultural development at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

In the current status variables were prioritized as following:

- 1- Empowerment of cultural identity
- 2- Promotion and innovation of creativity
- 3- Expansion of definite attitudes on culture
- 4- Preservation of cultural heritage
- 5- Access to culture
- 6- Encouragement of public culture and traditional culture

7- Promotion of cultural exchange

8- Cultural education.

In the optimal condition variables were prioritized as following:

- 1- Cultural education
- 2- Expansion of definite attitudes on culture
- 3- Preservation of cultural heritage
- 4- Promotion of cultural exchange
- 5- Promotion and innovation of creativity
- 6- Access to culture
- 7- Encouragement of public culture and traditional culture
- 8- Empowerment of cultural identity

In Table 4 the effective factors of cultural development of the Tabriz University of Medical Sciences are compared. According to a chi-square test, there is a statistically significant difference between cultural development in the current and optimal states ( $P < 0.001$ ).

A significant difference among the effective factors of cultural development was observed. There were significant differences in study variables between the current and optimal states among the Tabriz University of Medical Sciences staff. For comparing these variables between the two states, an independent samples t test was used. Afterwards, we used the Pearson correlation test for assessing the correlation of study variables between the current and optimal states. Findings are presented in Table 5.

According to Table 5, the correlation between study variables was confirmed between the current and optimal states. Therefore, the paired t test was indicated in order

**Table 4.** Comparing effective factors of cultural development of the Tabriz University of Medical Sciences

	Cultural development in current status	Cultural development in optimal status
Mean	58.300	59.017
df	7	7
P value	<0.001	<0.001

Chi-square test; 95% CI: 1.43-5.00.

to assess the differences between the two states. Table 6 indicates these differences.

### Discussion

As the results of the research indicate, cultural education in an optimal state is of a higher rank than other indicators. Thus it seems necessary to pay more attention to cultural development and sustainable development.

After analyzing the role of cultural development on creativity and innovation, it can be said that cultural development plays a fundamental role in all cultural issues. Therefore, providing basic changes and increasing public awareness and promoting public culture in order to add the importance of creativity and innovation is vital. On the other hand, cultural development should help us follow our beliefs.

It can be concluded that the results of this research on cultural education are in consistent with the results of Zahedil<sup>12</sup> and Lahasaeizadeh's<sup>2</sup> studies regarding design-

ing a cultural development model. In other studies by Mohammad Nejad Alizamini<sup>13</sup> and Taeibi,<sup>14</sup> results showed that independent variables such as education level, income level, practical religious commitment, political participation, and consumption of media such as television and radio have significant effects on dependent variables of cultural identity.

The results of our study's main hypothesis showed that there is a difference between cultural development in its current status and its optimal state among Tabriz University of Medical Sciences staff. There is also a difference between effective factors of cultural development among Tabriz University of Medical Sciences staff.

### Limitations

- There is a deficiency of powerful similar studies on the related topic; cultural development is diverse and it depends on different conditions.
- There are difficulties in determining indicators and converting qualitative categories to quantitative categories because cultural indicators are mostly qualitative.
- Not having easy access to all the cities of East Azerbaijan faculties, employees and managers in the universities decreased the sample size and variety.
- Design effect were not considered in this study; this was another limitation in this study.

**Table 5.** Comparing the correlation of study variables between the current and optimal status (n = 160)

Variable	Current status Mean ± SD	Optimal status Mean ± SD	r <sup>a</sup>	P value <sup>b</sup>
Cultural development	272.17 ± 3.79	323.57 ± 19.29	0.323	<0.001
Cultural education	37.43 ± 8.57	50.65 ± 5.45	0.371	<0.001
Creativity promotion and innovation	32.13 ± 6.66	36.09 ± 4.55	0.303	<0.001
Definite attitudes on culture	42.69 ± 7.26	49.14 ± 5.34	0.262	<0.001
Cultural identity	35.49 ± 6.65	39.69 ± 4.93	0.395	<0.001
Cultural heritage preservation	27.08 ± 5.62	32.16 ± 3.71	0.323	<0.001
Promotion of culture exchange	36.24 ± 6.77	42.49 ± 5.35	0.299	<0.001
Cultural heritage preservation	27.06 ± 7.13	32.76 ± 3.59	0.365	<0.001
Access to culture	34.04 ± 6.60	40.59 ± 4.40	0.461	<0.001

<sup>a</sup>Pearson correlation test; <sup>b</sup>Independent sample t test.

**Table 6.** Comparing the differences of study variables in the current and optimal status

Variable (n = 160)	Current status-Optimal status Mean ± SD	t	P value <sup>a</sup>
Cultural development	-51.40 ± 30.56	-21.27	<0.001
Cultural education	-13.21 ± 8.28	-20.18	<0.001
Creativity promotion and innovation	-3.96 ± 6.84	-7.32	<0.001
Definite attitudes on culture	-6.44 ± 7.83	-10.43	0.001
Cultural identity	-4.20 ± 6.53	-8.13	<0.001
Cultural heritage preservation	-5.08 ± 5.57	-11.53	<0.001
Promotion of culture exchange	-6.24 ± 7.27	-10.86	<0.001
Cultural heritage preservation	-5.70 ± 6.71	-10.74	<0.001
Access to culture	-6.54 ± 5.99	-13.80	<0.001

<sup>a</sup>Paired t test.

## Conclusion

Making any changes to culture requires preparing appropriate situations, and training and helping individuals accept change. In organizations, in addition to personal creativity, other cultural factors are stressed. It is recommended that organizational culture become aligned with organizational strategies so managers can take action with perception and succeed in production of high quality products as well as serve customers; since culture is one of the most effective factors in staff behavior and is considered a key factor for development. Thus, it is better to take action toward the following by proposing proper solutions for promotion and perfection:

1. Creating and developing required flexibility for work and staff duties.
2. Increasing staff's authority for their responsibilities and pursuing creative thinking in organizations while supporting creative and talented individuals.
3. Providing research tools and facilities such as laboratories, libraries, and information centers.
4. Converting cultural democracy to reality and adjusting cultural programs with current methods.
5. Providing cultural training and information dissemination and occupational training; coordinating educational, cultural and free time activities.
6. Setting general and specific goals, policies, plans, and programs for preservation and efficient management of historical and cultural resources
7. Assurances on compatibility and coordination or preventing incompatibility in diverse cultural policies.
8. Identifying various cultural needs and supporting opportunities for cultural expression; persuasion and encouragement of people to participate in cultural innovations, cultural values, and establishing cultural development process.
9. Protecting, preserving and respecting cultural heritage areas.

In order to increase staff's perception on the importance of cultural dimensions, it is necessary to consider the staff's performance alignment with the organization mission to coordinate and unify such activities. Therefore, behavioral alignment in cultural scopes and values and skills should be considered as competitive organizational strategies. These strategies help the staff compete with each other at organizational levels and pay attention to ethical values.

## Ethical approval

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. The study protocol was approved by the ethics committee of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

## Competing interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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