Evaluating the Meetings Output of Educational Council and Departments in School of Health Management and Information Sciences: Content Analysis of Minutes

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study analyzes the minutes of departments and educational council in Tehran University of Medical Sciences, School of Health Management and Information Sciences and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the departments meetings. Methods: This was a descriptive study. The study population was all minutes of departments in School of Health Management and Information Sciences in TUMS in 2004-2010. Minutes were transformed into digital format with a scanner. We used NVivo 8 software to codify and analyze the data. Results: Findings showed that in the meetings of both educational council and departments more attention was paid to the “thesis and proposal” and “educational issues”. Furthermore, each department had its own unique subjects which were not discussed in other departments. Conclusion: The chancellor at this school, deputy of dean and head of departments can use findings of current study to know the weaknesses of departments meetings and plan for better organization of weekly and monthly meetings in order to achieve the school goals and serve students better.
Thus, the main goal of this study was to evaluate the performances of departments and educational council in the School of Health Management and information sciences in the weekly and monthly meetings and to know the strengths and weaknesses of these meetings. This study would help to know the weaknesses to eliminate and the strengths to improve, as this is a valuable step in the quantitative and qualitative promotion of this school.

**Materials and methods**

This was a descriptive study conducted in School of Health Management and Medical Information Sciences at Iran University of Medical Sciences. The population of the study was all available minutes of 9 departments and educational council in this school between the years 2004-2010.

To conduct this study, we first contacted the school deputy of education and the departments’ secretaries to collect the necessary data. All data were collected with the permission letter of the deputy dean. We collected the minutes from the educational council, Health Services Management department (HSMID), librarianship and Medical Information Science department (MLISD) and Biostatistics department (BSD). Other departments didn’t have any organized and documented minutes. Minutes were codified and analyzed with the qualitative data analysis software; NVivo. The below example illustrates the analysis method:

Minutes of educational council in 23/10/2010, No. 89/3:

subject: “Full time position of PHD students: Conclusion: it was approved that based on educational regulations of PHD period (no. 50), all PHD students should be full time present at the School”.

We chose the below code and category for this subject:

**Code:** “full time position of PHD students” and the main category that the code belonged to, was “postgraduates”.

We omitted all secret and individuals’ personal information such as names from our analysis.

**Results**

We investigated 83 documents form HSMD, 56 from health BSD, 63 form MLISD and 43 from educational council.

As indicated in table 1, the subject discussed the most in meetings of educational council was related to “proposal and thesis” (36 percent of codes). Therefore, surveying, modifying and confirming proposals and issues related to dissertations and thesis were one of the most important subjects in the council minutes. After that, “educational issues” such as educational regulations, eliminating educational restrictions and problems were other important subjects. As educational councils have an important and serious role in surveying postgraduate students’ educational and scientific problems, then it was logical that these two subjects had higher frequencies. Issues related to "faculties" such as their activities out of college and attracting new faculties was another important subject the council paid attention to, following “final exams”, “postgraduates”, “departments” and “other subjects”. The last category included the subjects that didn’t belong to the main categories.

The main subjects in the minutes of HSMD were ”proposal and thesis”, ”educational issues”, ”congress and seminars”, ”students”, ”department” and other subjects, respectively. In HSMD, like educational council, more attention was paid to students’ proposals and thesis. The ”educational issues” that investigated in this department, included: long period educations, respecting educational regulations and promoting educational quality. Furthermore, special attention was paid to organizing congresses, seminars, workshops, meetings and journal clubs. This department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Frequency of codes</th>
<th>percent</th>
<th>Example of codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal and thesis</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Assigning supervisor and statistic advisor; verifying proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational issues</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Better organization of classes, educational problems, educational regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculties</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>Activities of Faculty members outside of college, new faculties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exams</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>planning for final exams, students cheating in final exams, cooperation with education office in final exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduates</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Full time position of PHD students, the process of enrolling and graduation of postgraduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departments</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Minutes of each department, the practical plan of departments, department problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other subjects</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Selling unusable instruments, students request for going to camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
had a better performance and has been more active in promoting the quality of educational services. In the minutes of HSMD, organizing student congresses was also highlighted and it was the only department which has discussed about it. Writing the strategic plan of the department and surveying weaknesses and strengths of the department were other subjects discussed more in their meetings rather than other departments (Table 2).

The most important subjects of the minutes of MLISD included; "proposals and thesis", "educational issues", "department", "bachelor period", "students", "PHD program" and "scientific projects", respectively.

In this department, curriculum revisions of Master of Science and PHD periods, revision of research methodology course and some courses in bachelor period were discussed more than other departments. Furthermore, issues related to the omission of bachelor periods and establishing PHD degree program were other important subjects. Choosing head of department, interactions of faculty members, internal evaluation of department, timetable for organizing department meetings and doing research projects were also discussed in the minutes of MLISD (Table 3).

Unlike the two previous departments, "educational issues" and "proposal and thesis" had the same frequencies in BSD, followed by "department", "research projects" and "workshops" and "students.

### Table 2. Subjects discussed in meetings of HSMD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Frequency of codes</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal and thesis</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational issues</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops, Congresses and seminars</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other subjects</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3. Subjects discussed in the meetings of MLISD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Frequency of codes</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal and thesis</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational issues</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor period</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PH D program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research projects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In minutes of BSD, subjects related to the department and faculty members had a higher frequency than previous departments. Some issues related to the department included: preparing rooms for new faculty members, the transportation problems of faculty members from one college to others and exchanging the department name from "statistic and mathematic" to biostatistics. Furthermore, this department has paid more attention to scientific projects (Table 4).

Content analysis of minutes of all departments indicated that four categories including; "proposal and thesis", "Educational issues", "department" and "students" were common in all departments and some subjects were also unique in their minutes.

### Table 4. Subjects discussed in the meetings of BSD department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Frequency of codes</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational issues</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal and thesis</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research projects</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Discussion

This study provided insight into the weaknesses and strengths of the meetings of departments and educational council in School of Health Management and Information Sciences at IUMS. These departments can use findings of current study to plan for systematic organization of the weekly and monthly meetings to achieve their main goals and serve students and faculties better.

This study indicated that in the minutes, "proposal and thesis" had the highest frequency, following "educational issues". MLIS and HSMD had also their unique subject/subjects, mentioned in findings. For instance, in MLISD "establishing PHD degree program" and "Bachelor period" were unique subjects. HSMD was the only one that had paid attention to organizing congresses, seminars and journal clubs.

Content analysis of minutes indicated that the performance of this school was good in most subjects, particularly educational issues. For example, most of the time the educational council and the three departments investigated issues related to education such as better organization of classes, removing educational problems of students’ and PHD students issues. This means, departments and educational meetings usually discussed about issues related to students.

Biostatistics department was the only one that had a suitable performance both in scientific and educational issues. One duty of faculty members is to do researches related to their field of studies. However, the performance of departments in research projects was not acceptable.
Findings indicated that only in BSD, research projects had a high frequency and in MLISD and HSMD its frequency was low. Moreover, HSMD and BSD were better in organizing workshops and seminars. Educational workshops, scientific meetings, and journal clubs provide faculty members and students with opportunities to develop skills in various aspects. Therefore, we suggest that each department plan to organize more workshops by paying attention to the students and faculty members’ needs. For instance, the MLISD can be effective in improving faculty members and students’ “information literacy” or the BSD can organize statistic workshops. Doing research is one of the main duties of faculty members, however, content analysis of minutes indicated less attention to research in the meetings. Thus, more attention should be paid to research projects since its frequency was low in the minutes of meetings. As a limitation, we didn't have access to the minutes of other departments. Other departments should document their Minutes, as these are valuable resources, giving them the opportunity to evaluate the departments’ performance. Further investigation is required to evaluate the departments in this school and investigate the satisfaction level of students from the services given in the School.¹

Conclusion
The school should be sure that the decisions made in the meetings are not ignored, as this is a key component of effective meetings. The chancellor at this school, deputy dean and head of departments can use findings of current study to know the weaknesses of departments meetings and plan for better organization of weekly and monthly meetings in order to achieve the school goals and serve students, faculty members and staffs better.

Acknowledgment
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Ethical issues
Participants’ information was kept confidential.

Conflict of interests
No competing interests to be declared.

References