



## Investigation of Students' Attitudes about the Status of the Payame Noor University (Case Study: Saghez Branch)

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### Abstract

The current paper was aimed at examining the Payame Noor University situation from the view of students which was administered in a descriptive and analytical way. The statistical population consisted of all PNU students, Saghez branch in the year 2014, and the statistical sample was 309 people based on the Cochran formula. The tool for gathering data was a standard questionnaire. To measure the validity of the questionnaire, its content validity was examined and the reliability was estimated to be 0.91% by using the Spearman correlation coefficient, while the Spearman Brown reliability coefficient was estimated to be 0.87%. Data were analyzed at two descriptive and inferential statistical ways. Research findings revealed that the respondents evaluated faculty members, self-teaching books, examinations and equipment as moderate, time at which classrooms were held as positive and hours of practical lessons, physical space and research facilities as weak. The findings were found to be consistent with those of researches and theories provided in the area of distance learning.

**Keywords:** PNU; faculty member; self-teaching books; electronic equipment; student; saghez.

### Introduction

Expert and efficient human workforce is thought to be the main source of capital in any society. Universities contribute significantly to educating committed and effectual workforce in societies. As the most important developing institutions of the expert human resources, "universities play a critical role in the path of attaining sustainable development" (Araste&Sobhani,2009). In accordance with the key role of university in

Promoting human force, the quality of the academic education is a fundamental strategy in materializing sustained development.

Rapid and continued developments, access to knowledge, and an ever-increasing need of the societies to education and skills for expert force have all added to the number of the volunteers of the universities" (Groff and Mouza, 2008). In most countries, to meet the rising trend of volunteers for entering the universities, distance education universities have been developed. Because, the distance learning education system, via creating some conducive conditions for removing temporal and spatial limitations has prepared the situation for education. In Iran a large part of admitting the volunteers has been assigned to the Payame Noor University. The Payame Noor University has been formed as the largest state nationwide university through its own special education system with expanding boundaries of knowledge to the farthest points of the country and has managed to cover around a million students in its own branches inside and outside of the country with the educational motto of education for all, anywhere, anytime.

This university in addition to attracting students and increasing the quality of the educations provided should play a determining role at the national and international levels. Thus, a scientific empowerment of the university is of high importance. Hence, for development and survival of any university it is required some researches to be done and in the current paper in accordance with the views of the students some guidelines are provided.

### Statement of the problem

The rising trend of the volunteers entering universities has made significant the necessity for the development of academic centers. The capabilities of the societies for covering all the potentials in accordance with some facilities like

experienced teaching staff, books, scientific journal, space and welfare facilities will not be sufficient to meet ever expanding needs of the students . Because, in line with increased demand for education and rise of welfare-scientific expectations at different educational levels in the long run, some challenges will appear within the academic association structure. The University of Payame Noor like the other universities is no exception .The Payame Noor University came into the academic arena with an innovative

Attitude in 1988. Currently, it has covered in some forms all the people of the country under education disrespect of age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, thinking, and political, social and cultural classification. Attention to such characteristics as: Technical-technological communication infrastructure, faculty staff, policies, learning methods and systems of assessment and evaluation in educating and learning the clients and enhancement of scientific structure of the university in order to develop expert human force are of main components that should be fulfilled based on predetermined planning.

The educational system of state universities are mostly teacher-oriented and educate the students by way of students participation in the class while the PNU by considering student orientation and book orientation has prepared the situation for education through providing educational facilities, i.e. books, and printing and distributing them for hundreds of thousands of students. Student orientation and book orientation are of main reasons why PNUs have to be organized in the country. According to the rising demand of the books, limited scientific work, scientific sources, and physical equipment and space within the educational space universities will face challenges in the course of time. According to the goals set for academic education in Iran, it becomes clear why we should address the scientific structure of the PNU. The educational system should through coordination profession and curricular courses prepare the educational arena more appropriately. Eliminating the challenges ahead of the university , validating the teaching staff , textbooks, educational equipment and courses presented at the university all require a comprehensive definition of guaranteeing the quality for the scientific structure .

The present validation mechanisms of traditional universities cannot be applied to the assessment of the PNU. According to the academic educational system, such issues as the professor's ability, content of the book, authors, design and presentation of the courses, examinations, electronic equipment and educational facilities are of paramount significance.

The Payame Noor University, in spite of a shortage of educational spaces, equipment, and necessary budget and facilities has encountered with a capacity of one million students and given high capacity and pioneering in

Breaking the barrier of Konkoor, it has not yet achieved the support for a special organizational position in the Ministry of Sciences. To eliminate a static position and to maintain dynamism, establishment of an active and mutual communication between this university and the Ministry of Sciences, the very educational system should be redefined. Hence, the PNU as the largest state national university will need futuristic strategies and innovative plans for materializing and flourishing its programs.

## **Theoretical framework**

Holmberg considers the main core of education in personal learning and sees distance education as a fully proportionate system for learning and argues this system relies on individual work by the students who have been left away from the direct supervision and guidance of their professors. (Holmberg, B, 1996) The theory of individualizing learning through distance education was developed by VIDIMIR and Michel Moore in 1977(Moore, 1989). In fact, distance education has a special characteristic that would make it appropriate for continued developing of education. One of these characteristics is the education material being permanent and universal used in this system. Curricular material will lead to a comprehensive plan of the curricular courses." Moore has pointed out that the distance education cannot meet the needs of the learner; rather it strengthens his mental immaturity and dependence" (Moore, 2009). Robinson reaffirms this point that learners at distance education have strong motivation and comprehend the concept of independent learning. SEWART maintains that distance education institutions are dependent more than anything else on printed material .Hence; little attention is paid to personal needs of the students in relation with educational institution" (SEWART, 1981). In 1971 Otto Peters held that distance education phases are like industrialization phases during operation from individual work to mass production and from simple wok tools to the phase of machination. Establishment of communication with mechanical tools and production of education for mass consumption will not automatically suffice for meeting the personal needs. The result of this is distance between the professor and the students.(peters,1994)

According to a theory by Johnston and Glicher, one of the three main grounds that are effective in success or failure of the descriptive –auditory

Network is the way students make use of this system and how satisfied they are with it"(Johnston & Gilcher, 1988)

The most important feature of the distance education is the separation of professor from students and" Smith argues that emphasis in the aspect of distance learning will require the elimination of distance aspect by applying technology. Amundsen and Bernard, hold that promotion of education, creation of self-confidence and improvement of education quality will require communication to be established between the professor and students. '(Amundsen and Bernard, 1989). "Kember and Deckkers maintain that education learners need to be supported by the teaching staff. Participation

classes not only will eliminate textbooks-related problems, but they are also effective in understanding textbooks themes" (Kember and Deckkers, 1987). A mutual communication between students and professor will involve facilitated learning trends because styles like teaching, elimination of problems by way of the students, presence at the class and participation at scientific centers will aid the students.

Distance education is cheaper than other academic systems, because distance education could involve higher number of students in different places .Distance education can be administered for working and interested people. On this basis, the realm of distance education is on the rise in developing countries. "The proportion of curricular programs contents in areas of appropriate choice and organization in order to promote knowledge, insight and competency of the students are of main topics introduced in the improvement of the academic quality". (Smith, 2007). The presence of competent and scientifically authoritative professors are thought of Efforts for attracting and maintaining competent professors are some critical necessities for the academic decision makers" (Tofighi and Farasatkah, 2002)." Teachers' teaching styles are effective factors in the education quality of the universities (Harvey, et al, 2008; Kuh , 2007).

Leading universities have become interested in different approaches for improving teaching-learning methods as well as methods for strengthening

The process of thinking and problem solving so that students are aided in the process of skill and theoretical learning' (Franz, et al, 2007). The way students' academic achievement is assessed by professors is an element that affects the quality and efficacy of academic courses" (Struyven et al, 2005; Smith, 2007). One of the features of the PNU educational system is the centralized end term examinations. These examinations are highly effective on qualitative improvement of the education. The administration problems of the centralized examinations are challenges resulting in discontent of the students because of a million student capacities and the fact the students have to take three exams in one single day or two exams in one hour. "The prevalence of multi choice examinations in assessing knowledge progress and students' skills are categories that have affected academic achievement, thus, encouraging the universities to formulate modern standards in this arena (Gullickson , 2005).

"Quality of physical spaces and respect for stipulated international standards by the rating academic institutions for establishing different scientific disciplines, software and hardware equipment and facilities along with types of workshops, advanced labs , modern accessories and access to information banks and welfare services are main and necessary elements of a university' (Stephen , 2006).

Based on theories related with distance education , this sort of educational system due to placing people under education , establishing students in a living place and referring to the university only in some special cases for eliminating problems is quite cheaper than other universities in terms of per capita costs. Promotion of the social scientific level, facilitation of equal access of academic education all the time, reduction of limitations and provision of the possibility for continuing academic education for people interested specifically in deprived areas , preparation of a situation for using the potential facilities , rearing a large part of expert forces needed by the society , creation of a conducive context for permanent and up to date promotion of social efficient human force , attention to expanding knowledge boundaries and access to new theories and production of science for accounting social needs all require fundamental developments and changes to the PNU status.

## Literature review

Few researches have been done on distance education systems and some of.

The researches have mentioned the advantages of the distance learning over other systems. Researches in the areas of comparison of different educational methods like speech (oration), debate, and independent study without participating in the class based on year-end examination scores, particularly at academic levels have been performed. ' Most of these researches , specifically researches by Taveggia and Dubin have demonstrated that there is no statistically significant difference between the students year-end examination scores in different topics and different educational methods ( Taveggia and Dubin ,1968) .Various researches too, have been carried out by people like McCullough and Atta Van in which they have compared speech method with independent study and here, they have found out that the independent study method is advantageous over speeches at academic courses." Atherton and Milton compared the examination scores of 188 students majoring in psychology with those of 733 other miscellaneous students , without participation in the class who were entitled to take part on the end term examinations of the same courses and found no major difference in their scores"(Farasatkah.2008) . The major problem of this research was the ignorance of previous learners' studies and their access to different sources and textbooks that resulted in such balanced exam scores , abilities and the quality of using students' different sources in different educational courses . Distance education method could very well be considered at least as synonymous with common educational methods and becomes effective in learning as much as the same.

Results of information and behavioral examination of students by Tuber Ka indicated that distance education students need educational information related with courses, educational system and counseling and students have greater

dependence and interest in participation classes (cases they must attend), visiting students, educational officials, professors and teachers. Various researches in developing countries in the 60s (Fowler and Hinman 1989) indicated that increased time of education, textbooks and educational and writing material had a significant effect in the educational achievement of the learners. Although a reduced number of learners could affect the

Quality of education, the subject is highly complicated. Dwatt and (1976) and Biswall (1979) have demonstrated in their researches that all distance education institutions have in their own programs considered individual problems elimination sessions. Saho (1985) considers such factors as choice of the place of attendance classes, professional state, financial problems, welfare services like housing, and lack of previous information affect the non-attendance of the students. While class attendance became compulsory,

As much as 70% to 80% of the students participated in the classes, but in other conditions only 33% of the students did participate. The studies have further revealed the complexity of distance education, indicating the many variables involved in the concept. Starting with the core issue of instructional interaction and grounded on the theory of transactional distance, a new strand of research using methods related to systems dynamics, hierarchy and complexity theories, promises a more comprehensive understanding. (SAbA.f& Twitchell. David, 1988)

Researches by Arasteh and Mahmoodi suggested that "specialized skills play roles in effective training" (Arasteh and Mahmoodi Rad, 2004). "One of the major differences of academic education center with other departments and organizations is the professional responsibility of the experts of these centers. The control of the faculty staff on professional subjects are considered as important in promotion of education and university" (Arasteh and Mahmoodi Rad, 2004)

According to above researches, we can infer that distance education, due to appropriate textbook designing, lack of limitation in the education timeline have been effective in the educational performance and achievement of learners particularly the third world students. It is obvious that creation of relatively appropriate conditions in distance education centers will contribute significantly to learning and their educational achievement.

## Methodology

The method used in the research was descriptive and given the theoretical discussion and previous researches, the standard questionnaire technic for data collection was applied. To evaluate the validity of the measurement tools, the thematic validity method based on the views of the experts and for reliability, the Spearman and Brown formula were applied. Statistical methods at two descriptive and inferential levels were used for data analysis. 9

The Spearman correlation coefficient was 0.91 while the reliability Spearman and Brown coefficient was estimated 0.87. The statistical population was the PNU students, Saghez branch and using the Cochran formula, 349 people were selected.

## Data analysis

Based on the data of one dimensional table, 77% of the sample populations were single, 77.1% jobless, 52.1% non indigenious, 54.2% male while 89.7%.

Studying in Humanities group. Meanwhile, the two age groups of 27-29 and 30-32 were assigned the highest percentage rates of 24.1% and 22.6%.

Data analysis of class participation were measured in the form of five elements of attendance, semi attendance, non-attendance, compulsory and.

Optional attendance. of a sum of 349 answers given, 34.3% considered as positive the attendance style, 24.6% considers non-attendance as very weak, 29.9% regarded as average the semi attendance style, 31.9% believed compulsory attendance as very positive while 23.4% considered operational participation as very weak. Despite the academic educational system amid the young population of the admitted, most respondents maintained that the compulsory attendance is effective in learning and enhancing the learners. Examinations were evaluated by means of a eight element spectrum of the questions' proportion to the book, the questions being unrepeated, concentration of the test, multi choice test, expository tests, homogeneity of questions and answers, proportion of multi choice items, and the timeline for answering. Of a sum of 349 answers presented to the elements of examinations spectrum, 53.3% considered the proportion of question with the books as very positive, 26.5% regarded as average the exam questions being unrepeated, 27.4% called as positive the concentration of the test, 26.3% considered as average the multi choice test, 27.3% regarded as positive the expository test, 31.9% believed the proportion of multi choice items as positive, 31.4% maintained as very positive the homogeneity of multi choice items and questions while the remaining 33.3% held that timeline for answering the questions was very positive.

Analyzing tutorial books has been evaluated in the form of five elements of content, new material, size of the books and the volumes, writing and the

Author of the book. Of the aggregate of 349 presented answers to the items and elements, 36.4% have considered as positive the content, 34.3% have said that the new material has been average, 38.8 % regarded the size of the books as positive while 39/2% believed the authors to be average, 29.8 % positive Writing of the book and 39/2% authors have evaluated the positive.

The teaching cadre has been appraised by six elements of skills in teaching, abilities, innovation, and regular attendance, creation of motivation and proportion of teaching with the objectives of the university. Of the answers presented to the elements of teaching cadre, 23.2% of skills is average, 31.1%of the ability to teach is average, 37.3% of innovation in teaching is average, 38.2% of the regular attendance in the class is weak while 31.4% of motivation is average and in the end, 31.5%of the proportion of teaching with the goals of the university is average.

Analyzing the library was performed in the form of six elements of scientific journals, new books, credible domestic journals, credible foreign based journals, scientific sites and information banks. Of the aggregate of answers given to the element of library, 34.9% of scientific journals have been analyzed as weak, 26.8% of the new books has been appraised on average, 36.6% of the credible domestic journals were evaluated as average, 49.6% of the foreign based journals were assessed as weak, 51.1% of the scientific sites were regarded as weak while the 51.3% of the information bank was analyzed as very weak.

Courses timeline was measured by means of five practical, theoretical, specialized, general and basic elements. Of a sum of the answers given , 42.8%evaluated the practical courses as very weak, 30.1%considered theoretical courses as weak, 34.4% regarded as weak the specialized courses, 41.6% believed general courses to be average, while 32.1% assessed the basic course as average.

The physical environment of the university was measured by seven elements of class, saloon of gatherings, labs, library, sports saloon, restaurant and dormitory. Of the sum of 349 answers given , 40.9% believed that the classes are weak 52.7 % maintained that saloon of gatherings is very weak, 29.2% held that the lab is average , 31.3% thought the library is weak, 66.3%considered the spots saloon as very weak, while 31.3% and 51.6%

Concluded that the restaurant and dormitory are average and weak respectively.

The measurement of welfare services was done by five elements of tuition loans, students' insurance, marriage loans, treatment services, and sports stadium. 26.6% measured the loan for the tuition as average , 45.4% rated the insurance as average , 41.3% rated the marriage loan as weak , 53.9% regarded as very weak treatment services while 47.1%assess sports facilities as very weak .

### Describing and explaining the data

Enhancing the scientific structure for the advancement of the countries is steadily on the rise and all the societies, while being aware of the valuable role of scientific centers, particularly universities have directed their

Attention to expansion and enhancement of scientific indices. Because, there is a direct relationship between the scientific structure and advancement and expansion extent of any society. As briefly seen in the theoretical part, almost all the theories and researches will explain some of the features of the subject in question and each is based on special hypotheses and hence, they have considered as effective factors on the status of the distance education.

**Table, 1.View of theorists on distance education**

Theorist	Year	Theory
Holmberg	1996	A fully proportionate system for learners Reliance on individual work and staying away from professors
Vidimir and Michel Moore	1977	Appropriate for continued educational development Educational material being permanent and universal Not meeting the needs of the learners Enhancement of mental immaturity and dependence
Robinson	1989	Strong motivation of learners Comprehension of the sense of independent learning
Sewart	1983	Reliance on attractive printed material Little attention to the individual needs of the students

Otto Peters	1971	Product of creation of communication by mechanical tools and product of education and staying away from professors
Johnson and Glicher	1988	Effects of the students' satisfaction on success and failures of an auditory-descriptive network
Smith	2007	Emphasis on distance education requires elimination of distance Proportion of curricular courses in improving the quality of the university
Kember and Deckkers	1987	Learners' need for the support of the faculty staff Attendance classes effective on understanding the courses
Wichit	2007	Distance education being cheaper

Views of the theorists are an affirmation on the students' theories. In accordance with the views of the theorists and answers presented for each of the element raised (tutorial books, teaching staff, examinations, timeline for holding cases, textbooks timelines, library, electronic equipment, physical

Space and welfare facilities). Respondents were grouped into five based on their views towards different topics and theories were rated as totally negative to totally positive views .On the basis of research approaches and data , it is imperative that access to facilities so as to empower the scientific structure of the PNU be made . Attitudes and assessments of the students towards

Parameters and indices raised at the universities are of main parameters for investigating the academic structure that should be performed by the academic staff.

**Table, 2.Average scores of the students at PNU**

Variable	Very positive	Positive	Average	Weak	Very weak
Teaching staff	8.5	17.4	34.9	20.3	18.9
Tutorial books	17.7	26.5	31.3	14.9	9.6
Exams	25.4	27.5	24.5	14.7	7.9
Class timelines	20.9	23.2	19.1	20.7	16.1
Hours of textbook presentation	7.4	12.3	17.9	26.3	36.1
Library	5.6	7.1	12.6	35.8	38.9
Electronic equipment	16.7	22.6	35.5	14.7	10.5
Physical space	6.1	8.6	16.3	29.5	39.5
Welfare services	5.8	7.9	11.6	35.6	39.1

Given the data of table, 2.from among attitude based variables, 34.9% of the students considered the teaching staff as average, 31.3% rated as average the tutorial books, 27.5% rated as positive the exams, 23.3% considered the class timelines as positive, 36.1% rated as very weak the hours of courses, 38.9% rated as weak the library, 35.5% rated as average the electronics, while 39.5% and 39.1% regarded the physical space and welfare service as very weak quite respectively. Analysis of data reaffirms the point that the teaching

Staff, tutorial books, exams and electronic, timeline of classes, are positive while library and welfare services and physical space are very weak.

## Conclusion

Because the PNU assumes a large part of the provision of scientific needs in the country and based on research data it faces such problems as scientific cadre, hours of course, library, physical space and welfare services, the elimination of the existing problems could be a fundamental step in the path of enhancing the scientific structure of the country, because by applying scientific forces, the university can obtain a prominent position within the structure of the ministry of science. Paying serious attention to the category of science for attaining knowledge and reaching the objectives desired is one of the main indices in a social structure. In macro policies, the officials should take steps for the development of the society by applying scientific accomplishments. In this regard, institutionalization at different levels in political, cultural and social areas is of high importance. The presentation of scientific achievements should be paced in the national programs. Attention to technology and research for strengthening the academic structure should be at the focal point because enhancing the scientific structure not only will provide advancement and technology, but also, it will result in satisfaction of the students.

The Payame Noor University should while defining the course of challenges attain an enabling structure, hence, creation of a guardian for disseminating scientific findings, policy making for promotion of the state of the students and teaching staff and, review of electronic equipment, researches, facilities, creation of appropriate transactions between administrative and scientific sections could be effective in strengthening the scientific structure.

Making use of usable and unsaturated capacities of the academic education including educational centers depending on administrative organizations, state and non-state universities, private sector for developing PNU.

Developing electronic education capacity of the semi centralized education system of PNU Creating and expanding new scientific majors in proportion to the scientific cadre, physical spaces, and facilities and unites.

Expanding international PNU centers in free zones and outside of the country and applying scientific cadre enabled for teaching research.

Equipping libraries with electronic systems for the students to get scientific achievements.

Reviewing the educational, welfare programs with forming a committee of the ministry of sciences and professors for strengthening the scientific structure of the university.

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