The importance of applying the Governance Principles at the University of Baghdad from the perspective of Heads of Departments and Academic Staff

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the significance of applying the governance principles at the University of Baghdad according to the governance concepts (university independence, transparency and disclosure, administrative oversight and accountability, and the participation in decision-making). It also identified whether there are statistical differences between the participants' responses in regards to two variables (occupation and designation). The research employed a descriptive method. The sample of the study involved 107 (91 academic staff, and 16 heads of departments) who are chosen randomly from four faculties at the University of Baghdad. A questionnaire consisted of 30 items divided on the previous four governance concepts has been applied as an instrument for collecting data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences program (SPSS) utilized to organize and compile the collected data. The findings of the study showed that the governance principle and its four concepts were highly significant for all participants and there was no statistical significance for the two variables (occupation and designation).

Keywords: Governance, Independence, Transparency and Disclosure, Administrative Oversight and Accountability, Participation in decision-making.

Introduction

Nowadays, the application of the governance at universities has become one of the necessities in remapping the policies of that university and its methods of management. The importance of university governance is for achieving the missions of the university in the higher education and scientific research field. It has also contributed to the economic, social, cultural and political development of the society through the continuous support of accountability, transparency, participation and independence. The implementation of the university governance concept strengthens the value of the university and its competitiveness and determines the strategic direction of that university to preserve the material and moral sources as well as to produce a good atmosphere for teamwork in order to reach the goals of the university.

The integration of the university governance principles mainly depends on a set of interactive human and material elements which creates harmony and balance within the university. Losing one of the elements causes a major imbalance in the operations of the university and then in its outputs. Thus, this study identifies the importance of applying the governance principles at the University of Baghdad from the perspective of the heads of departments and the academic staff as they are the main part of the educational system.

The present study is an important contribution to the current discussion of the governance and its application as well as the benefits of it for obtaining the quality of its outputs by the employee in the university. Additionally, the implementation of the governance principles contributes as a tool for the achievement of the desired educational goals ensuring the efficiency of the university administration. Therefore, this research also reveals the advantages of the resources of this concept in order to obtain the quality of its outputs.

Hence, the objective of the research is to identify the importance of the principles of governance at the University of Baghdad from the perspectives of the heads of departments and the academic staff.

Research Questions

This study answered the following questions:

1- What degree of importance is the application of governance for the respondents in accordance to the main four principles: university independence, transparency and disclosure, administrative oversight and accountability, and the participation in university decision-making?
2- What degree of importance is the application of governance for the respondents in accordance with the university independence?
3- What degree of importance is the application of governance for the respondents in accordance with the transparency and disclosure?
4- What degree of importance is the application of governance for the respondents in accordance with the administrative oversight and accountability?
5- What degree of importance is the application of governance for the respondents in accordance with the participation in university decision-making?
6- Are there any statistical significance differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) of the study samples' responses of the four principles in accordance with the occupation and academic designations?

Theoretical framework

Many universities in the world, including Iraqi universities, are seeking high international ranking in their performance. For achieving this purpose, universities have to apply governance to achieve this excellence in performance. Universities with high international classifications are linked to the appropriate applied governance as it

is the key to access high-value, high-level; and high-content education (Salmi, 2009). Thus, the advancement of the educational process at any university requires the development of governance and the institutional performance to guarantee independence. Independence university means the resistance against any kind of forces of society (Muborakshoeva, 2013). It also refers to making a decision in regards to the internal workflow, finance and management, and the adoption of policies for education, research and other related activities. Additionally, it indicates to the commitment of the public sectors to respect the independence of the scientific community with its three components faculty, students and administrators, and to avoid the external pressure of any political interventions that may undermine the freedom of the academic bodies. Thus, the independence university is important for the success of the educational process and the development of scientific research (Amman Centre for Human Right Studies, 2004).

The recommendations of the Conference of Academic Freedom in Arabic Universities (2004) referred to the needs of abolishing the political tutelage from the academic association and the commitment of the public sectors to respect the independence of the scholarly society including academic staff, students, and administrators. The program of the conference also referred to the necessity to prevent any external pressure or political interventions that undermine the educational bodies towards the success of the educational process and the development of scientific research (Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies, 2004). Therefore, the independence of the university should not contradict the principle of disclosure and transparency such as the clarity of legislation and the ease of understanding, stability and the harmony with each other. It also aims at simplifying the procedures, dissemination and disclosing the information and making it accessible to everyone.

Additionally, Corcoran (2004) stated that transparency at work and the application of regulations and instructions with transparency and accountability to all employees and students of the university are important for better performance and results. Furthermore, Klatt (2002) added that applying the governance in the university will promote a form of support and partnership among the members of professional bodies; provide a clear picture of the expected and desirable results of work to the employees in the educational institutions, support strategic thinking at the level of individuals and groups, strengthen the relations between managers and employees in terms of each party's duties and obligations towards the success of the educational institution for accomplishing objectives.

Transparency and Accountability are two independent and mutually reinforcing concepts. Accountability and administrative oversight mean to enable the competent individuals inside or outside the university to monitor the work without any kind of disturbance or harm (Khurshid and Yusuf, 2008), and applying the regulations and instructions in a transparent manner into all the employees and students of the university (Corcoran, 2004). Accountability cannot be applied in the absence of transparency. Transparency provides the prerequisites and requirements for effective accountability systems to achieve the desired goals of the university. Thus, the presence of these two concepts contributed to effective and efficient management which performs its role providing the services needed by all citizens (Harb, 2011).

Furthermore, the role of participation is crucial in the university as it provides the opportunities to the governance boards, administrative bodies, academia, students and the community to participate in forming the policies and work rules of the university in order to achieve the desired objectives of the academy. Al-Hajj (1993) pointed out that participation is one of the main important aspects of any organization according to the modern management concepts which emphasizes the necessity of the participation of all parties within the organization in decision-making. The involvement of all faculty parties such as staff and students in effective and meaningful participation and decision making helps to benefit these individuals, implements and operates the decisions well.

Similarly, Harb (2011) showed the importance of providing an opportunity to all the employees to participate and become involved in finding solutions, encourage the spirit of initiative and innovation to solve workplace issues. Harb appended that the significant impacts of increasing the involvement of the employees in making decisions will foster their creative thinking, make them have faith in their abilities; and raise their spirits and satisfy the need for self-realization by enhancing their sense of belonging in the university's success and development. Participation in decision-making contributes to better decision-making and problem- solving skills, helps to commit to its efficient implementation, unifies the group or organization; and links the individual's goals to those of the organization (Dhahawi, 2011).

The Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (2013) launched the Iraqi Universities Governance Program in cooperation with international organizations such as the World Bank and UNESCO for improving the performance of the educational institutions in Iraq after visualizing many problems the educational system has been faced in the Strategic Plan for Education and Higher Education (2011-2020) such as the administrative problems. It has been pointed out that the organizational structure of the higher education system is facing administrative problems following the vertical and central structure. Following such structure causes the difficulty of communication and information transmission and the slow decision-making as well as the reduction of the organizational climate in which the administrative and organizational problems are concentrated in multiple sources of decision, the routine and other inappropriate management practices, overlap, inconsistencies; and lack of clarity about the roles and the managerial authority of each level of management (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2012).

Wang (2010) conducted a study entitled 'Higher education governance and university autonomy in China' aims at examining the scope of university autonomy (independency) and extent of government control on higher education through mapping out the complexity of centralized decentralization of higher education. The study also examines the controlling mechanisms of the government over higher education. Furthermore, the researcher discussed the shifting of the university's identity and its impact on the independence of the university. Conclusion of the study reveals by applying the governance principles (transparency, participation, and accountability) and arguing that, the co-existence of the dual controlling mechanism demonstrates an innovative scope of state capacity.

In the same way, Al-Farra's (2013) study ''Governance and its application in universities'' defined the concept, justification, the importance and forms of governance through analysis of relevant studies and literature. The findings of the study identified the basic elements of the governance application in universities including the definition to corporate governance through which to clarify its nature, features and aspects, and to determine the dimensions and concepts of it. The study recommended greater transparency, credibility, accountability, and the use of laws to ensure the effectiveness of colleges and universities.

A study of Abu Karim and Thuwaini (2014) explored the degree of application of the governance principles by the members of the faculty of education at the University of Hail and King Saud. The study indicated that the degree of the application of governance concept in the two universities was on a medium level. The findings of the research also showed that there were no significant differences between the sample responses to the academic designations.

Another study accomplished by Al-Nouri (2016) aimed to analyze the level of the development and trends of the practice of the governance dimensions and the university leadership in higher education. It also covers the possibility of applying the governance concept in Iraq showing the important role towards the success of some universities.

More recently, Sawalha's (2017) study examined the importance of implementing the principles of university governance focusing on five main aspects (participation, transparency, accountability, equality, and effectiveness). The study reveals that the application of the principles of governance at Al-Bayt University was at an average level whereas the main concepts of the importance of implementation were drawn as follows (equality, accountability, efficiency, transparency, and participation). The study urges to review and amend the system of the university's legislation to comply with the principles of governance, activate the concept of participation, and adopt the principle of transparency in the administrative transactions.

Finally, Sabandar et al.'s (2018) study explored the impact of the university governance application on the quality of higher education in Indonesia. The outcomes of the study showed that the application of the governance principles has a significant impact on the quality of higher education.

Materials and method

Research design

The study follows the analytical descriptive method which is an appropriate design in such studies.

Research population and sample

The total population of this study consists of (29 heads of scientific departments and 888 academic staff members) of four Scientific and Humanitarian colleges at the University of Baghdad for the academic year 2018/2019. Only 16 heads of

departments (55.17%) and 91 academic staff members (10.25%) were randomly chosen as the sample of the present study. The use of a sample about 10% size of the total population was recommended by Roscoe (1975) and Hill (1998).

Instrumentation

A questionnaire with 30 items into four concepts (university independence, disclosure and transparency, administrative oversight and accountability, and participation), was used as the instrument for collecting data in this study. A Likert-type 5-point scale was used to analyze the collected data while the grades of the participants were calculated using the following statistical standard:

$$\text{Range: } \frac{\text{High mark- low mark}}{\text{Number of levels}} = \frac{5\text{-}1}{3} = 1.33$$

Accordingly, scales were identified to determine the level of importance of the governance principles implementation based on the responses of the sample which were as follows (Al-Sayegh, 2018):

From 5-less than 3.68= highly important, from 3.67-less than 2.44= moderately important, and from 2.43-1= slightly important.

Validity of instrument

The Internal Consistency Method and Pearson correlation formula were adopted as the two methods to compute the validity of the questionnaire in the present study. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the correlation between the degree of each instrument and the total score. Table 1 below showed that the correlation between the total scores and the items are significant at 0.05 (df= 106). The results revealed that the lowest Pearson correlation was 0.313 and the highest one was 0.704.

Table 1

Correlations between items scores and the total scores

No.	Pearson Correlation	No.	Pearson Correlation	No.	Pearson Correlation	No.	Pearson Correlation	No.	Pearson Correlation
1	.313	7	.630	13	.631	19	.661	25	.533
2	.371	8	.688	14	.661	20	.555	26	.567
3	.451	9	.449	15	.704	21	.682	27	.569
4	.405	10	.464	16	.560	22	.689	28	.524
5	.541	11	.418	17	.460	23	.377	29	.488
6	.644	12	.478	18	.601	24	.581	30	.622

Reliability of instrument

The Coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha was selected as a suitable way to estimate the face reliability of the questionnaire in this study. The reliability correlation coefficient (0.915) was considered significant to achieve the objectives of the study.

Statistical tools

In this study, all collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as the most appropriate software.

Results

This section reports the findings related to the five research questions of the present study. These findings were generated from the participants' responses to the questionnaire showing the importance of applying the governance principles at the University of Baghdad according to the governance concepts (university independency, transparency and disclosure, administrative oversight and accountability, and the participation in decision-making).

The first research question aims to find out what degree of importance is the application of governance for the respondents in terms of four main principles (the independence of the university, transparency and disclosure, administrative oversight and accountability, and the participation in decision-making). The results of the average score of all items, in table 2 below, show that there are statistically significant differences in applying the principles of governance and its four categories at the universities by the heads of the departments and the academic staff. The outcomes of the analyzed data show that the first principle is the administrative oversight and accountability with the average scores 4.35, whereas the second principle is the participation in decision-making, and transparency and disclosure with an average score 4.32, respectively. Ultimately, the independence of the university ranked as the last concept with an average score 4.20.

Table 2
Importance of the Governance Principles Application

No.	Principle No.	Main principles	Average	Degree of importance
1	3	Administrative oversight and accountability	4.35	High
2	4	Participation in decision-making	4.32	High
3	2	Transparency and disclosure	4.32	High
4	1	Independency	4.20	High
Average of all items			4.30	High

The second research question is to find out the importance of applying the accountability and administrative oversight process from the perspective of heads of departments and academic staff at the University of Baghdad. The results of the

average scores in table 3 below reveal that the total average score of all items is 4.35. The analyzed results in the table illustrate that all items are with a high importance level of implementation based on the answers of the participants. Item number 19 ''a set of laws that ensure the accountability of the poor performance employees at different levels' is at the first level with an average of 4.52, while item number 24 ''developing the university work mechanisms in according with the proposals of the beneficiaries' receives an important level is at the last level with an average score 4.17.

Table 3

Importance of Administrative Oversight and Accountability Principle Items

No.	Item No.	Item	Average	Degree of importance
1	19	A set of laws for ensuring the accountability of the defaulted employees at different levels	4.52	High
2	18	A tool to combat the financial and administrative corruption	4.45	High
3	20	Using the democratic approach in managing the university which suits the needs of the society	4.45	High
4	22	A system that helps to achieve the satisfaction of the employees and the students	4.39	High
5	21	A system that achieves quality assurance and education accreditation of the university	4.26	High
6	23	Administrative behaviors that reflects the practice of authority in the university	4.23	High
7	24	Developing the university work mechanisms according to the beneficiaries' proposals	4.17	High
		Average of all items	4.35	High

The third question of this current research seeks to find out the level of importance of the transparency and disclosure principle by the responses. The results of the average scores in table 4 below reveal that the total average score of all items is 4.32. The analyzed data also indicates that all items are at high levels of importance of application with the average scores 3.80-4.57. Item number 17 ''information and data related to the goals, plans and future projects of the university'' is at first level with an average score of 4.57, while item number 11 ''representing the private sector in the University Council'' has ranked as the last item with the lowest importance.

Table 4

Importance of Transparency and Disclosure Principle Items

No.	Item No.	Item	Average	Degree of Importance
1	17	Information and data related to the University's goals, plans and future projects	4.57	High
2	8	A system that promotes justice and transparency in the university work environment	4.44	High

3	9	A system which helps in achieving the external beneficiaries' satisfaction of the university services	4.44	High
4	16	Specific standards and criteria for assessing employees' job performance objectively	4.43	High
5	10	A strategic plan to accomplish university institutional reform	4.42	High
6	7	Applying laws, regulations and legislations to achieve excellence in university performance	4.39	High
7	14	Defining the authorities and responsibilities of the university employees at different levels	4.36	High
8	15	Utilizing a clear system of positive and negative incentives	4.30	High
9	13	A system which supports the strengthening of relations between the university and the beneficiaries in the society	4.26	High
10	12	Instructions which support the implementation of university decisions at work environment	4.13	High
11	11	Representing the private sector in the University Council	3.80	High
Average of all items			4.32	High

The following research question is presented to investigate the importance of applying the participation in decision-making process as a main principle of the university governance. In light of the analyzed data in table 5 below, it is shown that the total average score is 4.32 of all the items in regard to the importance of applying the participation in making decisions by employees. All items have received a high level of importance with average scores 4.14- 4.44. Item number 29 which reads as follows ''complying with the ethical standards of the university work'' is with the highest level of importance, while item number 27 ''utilizing a decentralized method in the university decision-making'' has become with the lowest importance.

Table 5

Importance of participation in decision-making Principle items

No.	Item No.	Item	Average	Degree of Importance
1	29	Complying with the ethical standards of university work	4.44	High
2	26	Involving academics and students in various university activities	4.39	High
3	28	A set of rules and regulations that determine how decisions are made within the university	4.37	High
4	30	Evaluating the proposals of the employees to develop the university work	4.37	High
5	25	Engaging academics and teachers in university decision- making process	4.22	High

6	27	Utilizing of decentralized method in university decision-making	4.14	High
		Average of all items	4.32	High

The fifth question in the present study discovers the significance of applying the independence in the University of Baghdad based on the responses of the study. In table 6 below, the outcomes summarized that the total average score of all the items in terms of independence is 4.20. The data analysis refers that the average scores of these items are 3.89 to 4.35, respectively. According to the answers of the participants, item number 4 which is ''a system that supports the independence of the university'' obtains a high level of importance, whereas the lowest level of importance was for item number 3 ''delegate authorities to a middle and lower level in an effective manner''.

Table 6

Importance of independence Principle Items

No.	Item No.	Item	Average	Degree of Importance
1	4	A system that supports the university independency	4.35	High
2	2	Enhancing the participation of the Academic Staff member in providing advice to other institutions outside the university	4.33	High
3	5	Participating the managerial and academic functions by the university without external interference	4.23	High
4	1	Special regulations governing academic freedom at the university	4.20	High
5	6	An independent financial system which covers the needs of the university and its members	4.19	High
6	3	Delegate authorities to middling and lower level in an effective manner	3.89	High
		Average of all items	4.32	High

Finally, the sixth research question is designed to examine whether there are any statistically significant differences of the four principles in accordance with the responses of the sample used in this study with regard to the two variables (occupation and designation). The Two-way Analysis of Variance is used in order to analyze the collected data. The findings in table 7 below reveal that there was no significant difference in terms of the two variables, as the f-value is smaller than Tabular value3.10 (α= 0.05and degree of freedom 2/100).

Table 7

Significant Difference of Two Variables (Occupation and Designation)

Source of Variance	Sum of squares (SS)	Degree of freedom (df)	Mean squares (MS)	f- Value	Level of significant
Occupation	526.103	1	526.103	3.328	Not significant
Designation	1137.073	3	379.024	2.397	Not significant
Occupation and designation	72.235	2	36.118	.228	Not significant
Error	15810.656	100	158.107		
Total	17598.897	106			

Discussion of Results

The first question is designed to explore the importance of implementing the governance in the University of Baghdad from the teaching staff and head of the departments' viewpoint. By analyzing the data, it is revealed that applying the principles of governance from the perspectives of the participants to all the items were at a high level of importance. The outcomes showed that the administrative oversight and accountability was the first important principle with an average score of 4.35, while the participation in making decisions, and transparency and disclosure were placed as the second principles with the average scores 4.32, respectively. However, independence of the university item resulted in the lowest average score of 4.20. The significant results indicated that all participants in the present study recognized the importance of integrating the concept of governance with its four principles at the University of Baghdad. All of them agreed that it is important to promote practices that serve the governance role while performing their academic jobs in order to enlighten the community. Overall, these findings were in agreement with the conclusions of Wang (2010) and Sawalha's (2017) study. It is crystal clear that all participants of the present study were concerned about the administrative oversight and accountability principles as they were the mechanisms of any action which reduce the shortcomings may occur by employees at work. They provided the appropriate and quick resolutions for the obstacles which prevent the given principles of being implemented at work at different stages. They also contributed to modify and reorganize the functions if any diagnosis of imbalance may appear at work at any time. Besides, they helped in the evaluation of the decisions taken in accordance with the work and the effects of its application in the field.

Secondly, in spite of the fact that the independence of the university was the last item, it has relatively obtained high importance from the participants. This means that the sample in the present study felt that the absence of financial and administrative independence is tutelage for the governmental authorities on the university performance. It may represent a violation of the university's rights and be subject to various pressures.

In terms of administrative oversight and accountability, the results showed governance as a set of rules that guarantee the accountability of the defaulted employees at different levels as the first item. However, the development of the university work mechanisms in accordance with the beneficiaries' proposals came as the last item. This indicated that all participants considered accountability as necessary and obligatory in order to achieve the effectiveness of the educational systems. This practice can be through the existence and the application of the laws that work in order to account for the defaulters. It also can be accomplished through the existence of the criteria that govern the process of accountability and are used to measure the performance of the individual being held accountable. Furthermore, there should be the imposition of sanctions using the rewarding and punishment systems which are in agreement with the findings of Al-Farra's (2013) research.

In the dimension of transparency and disclosure, an examination of the findings in this research also demonstrated that ''information and data related to the goals, plans and future projects of the university'' was with the highest level of average score while the ''representing the private sector in the University Council'' is with the lowest average score. The objectives of the university are the main guidelines for any work. The participants believed that clarity of information and data with regard to the goals, plan and the project of any university helped teaching staff and administrators to understand and implement the governance concept. Participants confirmed that the concept of governance is not important in the private sector of the Council of the University of Baghdad as a beneficiary of the outputs. Nevertheless, they agreed that all existent information and data should be linked to the objectives, plans and future projects of the university in order to perform the work effectively as mentioned in Al-Farra's (2013) study.

In favor of participation in decision- making university, complying with the ethics standards of university work was with the highest average score, while utilizing of the decentralized method in university decision-making receives the lowest average scores. The ethics of the university is one of the quality guidelines that are mentioned in the qualitative and comprehensive quality indicators in Arab universities. The high agreement made by the participants on the act in accordance with the ethics of the university considers as a standard in which the university has to adhere and apply at workplace.

With regard to the independence, the analyzed data revealed that the first item with the highest average score reads as follows ''a system that supports the independence of the university'', and the last item with the lowest average score was ''the delegation of the authorities to the middle and lower level in an effective manner''. The absence of financial and administrative independence is tutelage for the authorities. Besides, the practices of a violation of the rights of the university to perform the academic function and being exposed to pressure do not serve its role in the process of enlightening the society. Therefore, the results of the study indicated that participants have a strong conviction that it is very important for the governance to be in the independence of the university in order to fulfill its role.

Finally, the last research question asks whether there are any statistically significance differences of the four principles participants in terms of the two variables (occupation and designation). As revealed in the results, there are no statistically

significant differences in the opinion of the participants in favor of the concept of governance and the two variables (occupation and designation) at the level of significance (α <0.05). This can be attributed to the fact that all participants felt the importance of implying the concept of governance in spite of their occupations or designations. The university work requires some efforts from all the employees at various levels to achieve the desired goals. Moreover, both of the academic staff and heads of the department comprehend the nature, the importance, the dimensions, the field and the achievement of the objectives of the work. They have the prevalence of the quality concepts that lead them to have accurate and specific perceptions of mechanisms that control that work in order to accomplish the goals. The obtained result was in the agreement of Abu Karim and Thuwaini (2014) showing no significant differences of the academic designations on the application of the governance.

Recommendations

As a consequence of the study results, the researcher considered some of the recommendations as follows:

1- Enhance the concept of governance, its principles, objectives and mechanisms among the academic staff and administrators, as well as in the Iraqi universities in general and at the University of Baghdad in specific as this university is always the first one through holding seminars and educational workshops.

2- Enhance the ethics of university work among employees as a principle based on the adoption of integrity and transparency in professional performance contributed to achieving the educational goals.

3- Work to delegate more authorities to the middle and lower administrative levels for greater independence in work performance.

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