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## **Determining the dimensions of organizational forgetting management and prioritizing them in university**

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### **Abstract**

This research seeks to determine the dimensions of organizational forgetting management and prioritize them in university. Current research in terms of purpose is applicable. In terms of data, it is quantitative. In terms of method, it is a descriptive-survey research. In this research, for determining the validity of measurement tool, content validity has been used and for calculating the reliability, Cronbach's Alpha method has been used. The population of this research includes the faculty members and employees of Islamic Azad University in region 8. Also the researcher-made questionnaire has been used for information collection. In this research, a framework consisting of quadratic dimensions of the process management, technology, culture and structure for evaluation of organizational forgetting management was considered. With regard to the comparison by using of the mean index, the quadratic dimensions were evaluated in two eligible and available situations. It is determined that with regard to the difference between two available and eligible situations, in fact the level of process dimension is low and it is in available situation, also it can be concluded that culture in available situation is very posterior than ideal and eligible situation. In two technology and structure dimensions, this mean difference is less than two other dimensions. In available situation, the most gaps and deficits at first exist in culture dimension and then in two technology and structure dimensions; and finally there is weakness in the process dimension. Totally in different dimensions, there is a relatively large difference and gap between the mean indexes of two eligible and available situations.

**Key words:** *organizational forgetting, organizational forgetting management, higher education*

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## Introduction

Global society is changing constantly. Universities and higher education institutions review their situations constantly in facing with the society demands. Having an excellent and clear identity is accounted a firm base for making decision about the manner of reacting to the changes. Therefore, higher education definitely needs an accurate and minute study in its different dimensions. One of the important parts which should be considered includes the functions and roles that university undertakes them (Rhodes, F.H.T, 2004).

With regard to the importance and position of knowledge in educational system and training institutions and accelerated changes of the modern world which lead to innovations, inventions, explorations and new knowledge and skills and rapidly cause the oldness and wear of knowledge, skill and expert knowledges of past and present and on one hand existence of problems in this field in educational systems which are the main resource and processor of knowledge, information and skill in the society and on the other hand proposing a factor called organizational forgetting, it can be said that by entering the organizational forgetting to the education system, we will witness modernization, updating, knowledge dynamism in this important and effective institution in the society in a manner that through eliminating, leaving and forgetting the worn-out, old and abolished knowledge, skill, expert knowledge and methods and replacing the new knowledge and skills in the field of conforming the organizational knowledge to today accelerated change, we can pace for optimizing the knowledge, updating and making more qualitative education aligned with better realization of educational purposes. Therefore, in this research we attempt to acquire the dimensions and components, prioritize them and determine the difference between available and eligible situation in organizational forgetting management so that with considering the different consequences of organizational forgetting,

organizational forgetting management can be accomplished in Islamic Azad University and this important can be achieved by extracting its dimensions.

## Statement of problem

Universities as a sub-system of higher education face with severe pressures through external forces of university (surroundings) that their effects on the main structures of university are unavoidable. These external pressures consisting of increasing of demand for entering to higher education have led to affect on educational function of university. Also increasing of the universities role in investigation and innovation has affected on investigative function (knowledge generation), and finally participation in constructing the social texture of external society has affected on services function of university (Foray, D, 2003). The purpose of higher education is to study, novitiate and guide for research which is after high school. Higher education not only includes the universities and higher schools courses but also long-term educations like polytechnic and history and like them which last two to three years are related to the higher education.

In the global conference manifesto in 1998, higher education is any kind of studies, education, education for research which is after high school course and it is held by university or scientific center. This definition is confirmed by Unisef and Undp (2003 a).

Therefore, responding to the incremental and sometimes contradict expectations is wanted from universities while significant foundation of the universities, institutions has been established for responding to the primary need namely training the expert human force. Survival, growth and development of each organization depend on having knowledge, skill and new and applicable content. According to this, organizational forgetting is considered as a new approach aligned with improvement of educational system. Organizational forgetting means forgetting old knowledge for creating

new space in order to acquire new knowledge which has this potential that can add a new and important dimension to our perception of organizational knowledge dynamism.

In other words, organizational forgetting is the consequence of a set of actions which can have root in intra-organizational or extra-organizational actions and decisions. The organizations should look to the organizational forgetting systematically, knowledgeably and with planning so that finally can achieve positive results. Organizational forgetting often imposes high costs on the organization, and many countries in the world annually spend many resources for acquiring knowledge and information (Ozdemir, 2010).

Also organizational forgetting management means organizational structure and absorption capacity in organizational learning theory that destroys improper knowledge by focusing on main and basic knowledge and pays less attention to the learning process domain (Goudarzvand Chegini, 2014).

One of the most evident properties of current era is wonderful and constant changes which are seen in the ideology, social values ideology, work methods and many other phenomena in the life. Organizations are not also exempt from these changes. As Angeli (1997) says, the organizations can not have a stable life in the society unless accept the changes and conform and synchronize themselves to the internal and external changes.

Among them, the educational institutions and centers also as other organizations are affected by unavoidable changes and they must have suitable reaction to it and conform themselves to it. Since the importance of educational organizations in training the young forces and their roles in growth and development of each society have been proved (Alagheband, 2001; Neler, 2010; Safavi, 2011, Wiles & Bondy, 2011; Naghibzadeh, 2011), regard to the concepts, content, knowledge, information, skill, expert knowledge, control and evaluation methods and generally physical and scientific

capitals of this important and effective system is necessary for evolution and elevation of each country. It seems that can be proposed to an applicable factor for improvement of performance and optimization of educational system. Organizational forgetting is defined as a process of leaving, replacing and declining of knowledge with emphasis on the knowledge change (Holan & Philips, 2004: 426).

Organizational forgetting has this potential that can add a new and important dimension to our perception of organizational knowledge dynamism. Theorists define the organizational forgetting as a process of learning change and relearning in organizational memory, a process of learning the intentional memory and a pathology process and reconstruction of a part of organization (Jiang & Fu, 2010:2). Hedberg (1981) used of forgetting word for describing such processes and emphasized that organizations without learning the past unrelated information, may not learn effectively. He reasoned that knowledge grows and becomes absolute and separated from any change. In the event that absolute knowledge must be renewed otherwise the organizations in today's environments which are changing constantly can not compete. In his study, forgetting has been described the process of clearing the performances and beliefs and this process is not compatible with current challenges anymore. Starbuck & Nystrom (1984) on going on process suggested to Hedberg « before organizations try to acquire new ideas of generation, should forget the old ideas when found out their inefficiency. They imagined the forgetting concept as a step before learning» (Wong & et al, 2012).

With regard to the proposed concepts and theoretical principals of the research, the researches related to the organizational forgetting are in two general groups. In the first years of 70s and 90s, organizational forgetting was accounted a negative phenomenon which should have been prevented; but in recent decades, another part of researches has paid at-



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tention to the organizational forgetting as the primary step for organizational learning. In other words, learning can occur after useful forgetting (unlearning). In this approach, the idea is that the procedures, provisions, roles, policies, values and strategies of organization should be forgotten before learning new knowledge (Fernandez & Sunne, 2009). This stage is an important step in the management of change in organization (Akgun & et al, 2007).

In the field of classifying the organizational forgetting, few study works have been accomplished. By reviewing the theoretical literature, it becomes clear that the pundits have paid attention to the organizational forgetting from two bases:

A) The relationship between the kind of forgotten knowledge (newly entered knowledge vs available and old knowledge) and forgetting consequence (positive consequence and negative consequence) (De Holan & et al, 2004).

B) The relationship between the forgetting method (knowledgeable forgetting vs unknowledgeable forgetting) and forgetting consequence (positive consequence of forgetting vs its negative consequences (Azmi, 2005).

The effect of organizational forgetting depends on the conditions and relies on the situation and it can be positive or negative according to the conditions. Forgetting should be studied from different views, cognitive view which emphasizes on the information processing; behavioral view which assumes that learning is to create habits, usual procedures and new methods; and social view which emphasizes on the interaction between the persons and groups in the organization, then these three views are collated with forgetting and indicate that how forgetting from the perspective of each one of these views affects on the performance of special parts of the organization and specified processes and establishes the possibility of changing and converting (Holan & et al, 2004).

The educational system which is accounted as

the main generator, processor and promoter of knowledge in each society like other institutions with regard to daily changes is affected by oldness and erosion in its all components such as knowledge, skill and expert knowledges existing in the organization and therefore, it should seek a solution to be able to synchronize its main nature and identity with environmental changes and can satisfy the needs of organization and persons. The research results indicate: education and training authorities by entering the organizational forgetting to the educational-training institutions in addition to reduce and eliminate the additional costs, forgetting and eliminating the knowledge and skills that haven't necessary efficiency for the organization anymore and have become abolished and old and targeted replacement of knowledge, skill, expert knowledge and new approaches and updating and synchronizing themselves with today's accelerated changes cause to increase the quality and optimize the organization knowledge for better realization of the educational system purposes and finally cause to grow, promote, progress and elevate the society. With regard to the importance and position of knowledge in educational system and training institutions and today's accelerated changes which lead to innovations, inventions, explorations and new knowledge and skills and rapidly cause the oldness and wear of knowledge, skill, expert knowledge of past and present and on one hand existence of problems in this field in the educational systems which are the main resource and process of knowledge, information and skill in the society and on the other hand proposing a factor called organizational forgetting which means forgetting the past knowledge for creating a new space in order to acquire new knowledge and successful experiences of this factor in other organizations and institutions (like commercial and industrial organizations in western world), it can be said that with entering the organizational forgetting to the education system, we will witness modernization, updating, dyna-

mism of knowledge and this important and effective institution in the society in a manner that by eliminating, leaving and forgetting the old, worn-out and abolished knowledge, skill, expert knowledge and methods and replacing the new knowledge and skills about conforming the organizational knowledge with today accelerated change, we can pace for optimizing the knowledge, updating and making more qualitative education aligned with better realization of educational purposes. Therefore as Holan & Philips (2004) believe, it can be said the organizational forgetting as a helpful and very applicable factor has this potential that can add a new and important dimension to our perception of the organizational knowledge dynamism (Mahmoudvand, 2014).

With regard to the above issues, doing the current research can be important from this view that by explaining the research, attempt for acquiring the dimensions and components, prioritizing the dimensions and components and determining the difference between the available and eligible situations, the organizational forgetting management is determined in Islamic Azad University. And by considering different consequences of organizational forgetting with suitable manner, organizational forgetting management is done in Islamic Azad University. And proportional with itself, wasting the resources is prevented and with organizing, different financial and human resources with regard to different dimensions can be used in optimal and efficient form. Also, with regard to the domain of doing this research in Islamic Azad University, all related educational institutions and executive institutions and management organizations of Islamic Azad University will enjoy of the results obtained from research and with constant control, they prevent from probable deviation from higher education purposes and they will create eligible qualitative affairs aligned with macro-purposes of the country. Also, this research as a suitable model can be applicable for other higher education centers.

## Methodology and research tool

Current research in terms of purpose is an applicable research. In terms of data, it is quantitative and in terms of method, it is a descriptive-survey research, and this research is the researcher-made and close-ended questionnaire.

## The research findings

### 1) Dimensions of organizational forgetting management in university

In order to detect the dimensions of organizational forgetting management with regard to the researches and studies accomplished in four dimensions, the organizational forgetting management was studied, study of these dimensions was accomplished according to the theoretical principals and dimensions of organizational forgetting management among professors, managers and employees of university, studying the researches accomplished in the studied domain and receiving the opinion of the higher education experts.

At first for formation of first framework, the organizational forgetting management with relying on theoretical principals and concepts related to the research variables was studied. For this purpose, different resources such as articles and books related to the organizational forgetting issue were studied. For compiling the framework of organizational forgetting management, research background, researches accomplished inside and outside the country in relation with organizational forgetting and organizational forgetting management were studied. From conclusion of the results obtained from these two stages (theoretical principals and research background), the primary framework of organizational forgetting management was formed consisting of four proposed general dimensions. Then a summary of compiled framework (based on theoretical principal and research background) consisting of its dimensions, components and indexes plus questionnaire was studied, evaluation of face and content validity and the complementary and specialized opinions of experts and

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also their written suggestions hereunder of questionnaire were collected, discussed, studied and pursued. On going on this process, the model of the organizational forgetting management was compiled in university by referring and searching again (complementary) in theoretical principals and investigative records and referring again and interviewing. Table one indicates its dimensions.

### 1-1) Studying the validity and reliability of dimensions and indexes of organizational forgetting management

In order to evaluate the validity of framework dimension, item analysis and confirmatory factorial analysis were used and in order to evaluate its reliability, Cronbach's Alpha method was used and indicates its suitable reliability.

### 1-2) Processing tool and method and information analysis

In data collection, field method with questionnaire was used. For suitable explaining, researcher-made questionnaire was used. With regard to the main question of the research, theoretical and library studies for developing the theoretical knowledge were started and then the exploratory study according to study the available documents, questionnaire and interview with pundits of studied domain was accomplished by using of different methods. The questionnaire has been provided according to the indexes extracted from literature and by distributing the mentioned questionnaire, the available and eligible situations were detected. Meantime providing the related statistical tables and describing it by using of descriptive statistic, inferential statistic methods like confirmatory factorial analysis, variance analysis, correlation matrix, quantitative and qualitative

analysis by helping of SPSS and Lisrel programs were used; for evaluating the variables relationship and presenting the model according to prioritize the variables, TOPSIS & AHP programs were used. The statistical population of the research is Islamic Azad University of region 8. In a classification, generally there are two statistical population in university: educational population includes faculty members and administrative population (non-educational) includes employees, the research sample includes managers and persons who are working in universities and subset branches of Islamic Azad University in region 8 and they are familiar with higher education and executive domains and also the managers of the studied domain who had knowledge about execution and education were selected. Each one of these groups was used for information collection and sampling.

### 2) Prioritizing the dimensions of organizational forgetting management in university

The priority of dimensions and components of organizational forgetting management in Islamic Azad University in two eligible and available situations has been obtained by using of TOPSIS program and hierarchical technique of AHP and Entropy ranking. Whatever the estimate amount is more, that variable has higher priority, and these estimates are in fact scores which have been obtained by hierarchical method.

According to table 2, the dimensions of organizational forgetting management in eligible situation in order of priority are culture, technology, structure and process which means that the culture dimension with coefficient of

Row	Dimensions
1	Process
2	Culture
3	Structure
4	Technology

▲ Table 1. dimensions of organizational forgetting management

Rank	Estimate	Forgetting	No
1	1.45	Culture	1
2	0.639	Technology	2
3	0.39	Structure	3
4	0.05	Process	4

▲ Table 2. prioritizing the dimensions of organizational forgetting management in eligible situation

1.45 has the most effect for explaining the organizational forgetting and the process dimension with coefficient of 0.05 has the least effect among the dimensions.

According to table3, the dimensions of organizational forgetting management in available situation in order of priority are structure, culture, process and technology. The structure dimension with coefficient of 1.024 has the most effect for explaining the organizational forgetting and technology dimension with coefficient of 0.495 has the least effect between quadratic dimensions.

### 3) Available situation of organizational forgetting in university

According to table5, t-statistic has been obtained equal to -151.62. As it is observed in meaningfulness level of 95% of test, the equality of the sample and society means is rejected namely the sample and society means are different with each other. In this test, the society mean has been considered 3 and according to the confidence distances, the means difference of sample (available situation) and society is between (-1.17, -1.20). Since this range has become negative, indicates that the mean of available situation of organizational forgetting management in university is less than the society mean. As it is observed, the mean of available situation of organizational forgetting in Islamic Azad University has been obtained

1.81 and it is observed that its difference with the society mean is 1.19 and this indicates the low level of available situation of organizational forgetting management in university.

### 4) What is the difference between the dimensions of available and eligible situations of organizational forgetting management in university?

With regard to the table 14, the mean of available situation of organizational forgetting management is 1.81 and the mean of eligible situation of organizational forgetting management is 4.5 and the mean difference in two available and eligible situations is evident. As it is observed in the table 15, the differences mean of eligible situation from available situation is -2.69 which indicates that the mean of eligible situation is more than the available situation. With regard to the obtained meaningfulness (0.00) the assumption of mean equality of two available and eligible situations in meaningfulness level of 95% is rejected.

### Discussion and conclusion

The following shape indicates the comparison between the eligible and available situations in dimensions of organizational forgetting management.

Larger shape indicates eligible situation and smaller shape indicates available situation of organizational forgetting management in university. With regard to the comparison which

Rank	Estimate	Forgetting	No
1	1.024	Structure	1
2	0.761	Culture	2
3	0.673	Process	3
4	0.495	Technology	4

▲ Table 3. prioritizing the dimensions of organizational forgetting management in available situation

Single-sample statistic				
	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
Available situation	375	1.81	0.15	0.007

▲ Table 4. descriptive indexes of available situation of organizational forgetting

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	t-statistic	Freedom degree	Meaningfulness	Changes mean	Confidence distance of 95%	
					Low limit	High limit
Available situation	-151.62	374	0.00	-1.18	-1.20	-1.17

▲ Table 5. single-sample t-test of available situation of organizational forgetting

Standard error mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Available/eligible situation
0.007	0.15	1.81	Available situation
0.016	0.31	4.5	Eligible situation

▲ Table 6. descriptive indexes of available and eligible situation

Avail- able/ eligible situa- tion	Paired difference					t-stat- tic	Freedom degree	sig
	Mean	Standard devia- tion	Standard error mean	Confidence dis- tance				
				Low limit	High limit			
	-2.69	0.28	0.01	-2.72	-2.66	-184.09	374	0

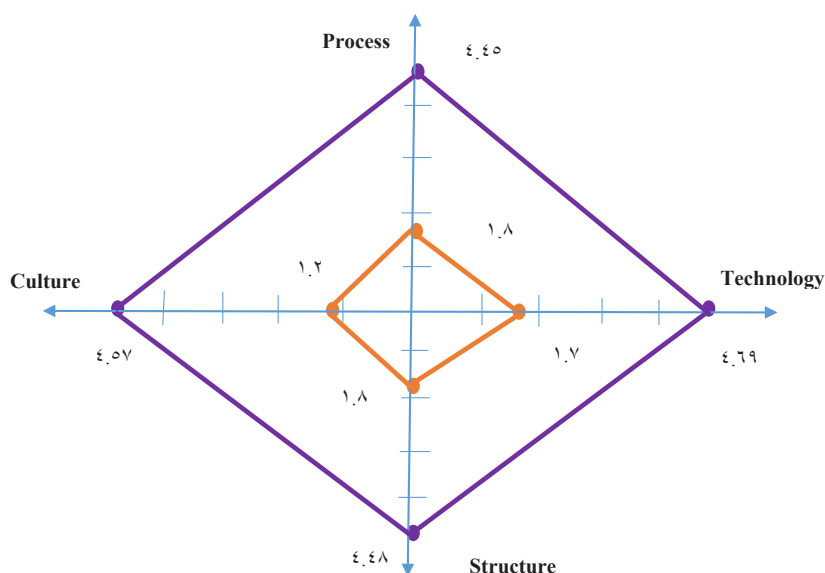
▲ Table 7. paired samples test

has been accomplished by using of the mean index, we find out: in process dimension, there are about two units difference between the mean indexes of two eligible and available situations that indicates the low level of process dimension in available situation; in culture dimension, this difference reaches to more than 4 units that with regard to this difference amount, it can be concluded that the culture in available situation is very posterior than ideal and eligible situation. But in two technology and structure dimensions, this mean difference reaches to 3. In fact, with regard to the mentioned issues, it can be acknowledged that the most gaps and deficits exist at first in culture dimension and then in two technology and structure dimensions and finally there is weakness in process dimension in available situation. Generally, it can be said there is large gap between the dimensions of organizational forgetting management in available and eligible situations in university, and with considering the effective deals, this situation should be im-

proved to lessen the gap.

Larger shape indicates eligible situation and smaller shape indicates the available situation of organizational forgetting management in university. With regard to the comparison which has been accomplished by using of the mean index, we find out: in process dimension, there are about two units difference between the mean indexes of two eligible and available situations and in fact this difference indicates the low level of the process dimension in available situation, in culture dimension, this difference reaches to more than 4 units that with regard to this difference amount, it can be concluded that culture in available situation is very posterior than ideal and eligible situation. But in two technology and structure dimensions, this mean difference reaches to 3. In fact with regard to the mentioned issues, it can be acknowledged that the mast gaps and deficits exist at first in culture dimension and then in two technology and structure dimensions and finally there is weakness in process dimension





▲ Shape 1. comparing the eligible and available situations with separating the dimensions of organizational forgetting management

in available situation. Generally, it can be said there is large gap between the dimensions of organizational forgetting management in available and eligible situations in university and with considering the effective deals, this situation should be improved to lessen the gap with organizational forgetting management.

#### Limitations

- The research limitation to the branches of Islamic Azad University in region 8.
- Limitation of statistical population to the faculty members and administrative employees;
- Limitation of the similar research with the issue close to this research inside and outside the country and especially lack of similar research in higher education;
- Difficulty of inviting the faculty members to cooperate due to the executive business and responsibilities;
- Data collection has been limited to the closed-ended questionnaire which has its special responsibilities (not having enough depth, probability of error in responding and unreal responses)

#### Suggestions based on findings

- Attempt for creating a relationship between educational and administrative activities of university in horizontal and vertical levels.

- Designing the policies and functions in order to enable different university levels like university, college, educational group, administrative and executive managers and different administrative and executive levels and supporting the organizational forgetting management

- Using of available documents extracted from feedback and evaluation of organizational forgetting management in decisions-making and explaining the organizational policies and improving the processes

- Having supportive plans of effective behaviors and activities in the domain of organizational forgetting management and entering the eligible cultural norms about nature of organizational forgetting management

- Applying university capacities in structural integration about organizational forgetting management

- Creating technical capacities in the higher education and university domains in strengthening the technology about organizational forgetting management

- Since the organizations increasingly try to create new ideas, at first the ideas which are old and inefficient should be detected, forgotten and replaced, therefore the organizations managers can facilitate the organizational for-

getting by extracting some plans.

• Since the organizational forgetting is effective on organizations competitiveness, therefore the managers should focus on the planning for executing and the manner of operating out the targeted organizational forgetting management and also they should prevent from lack of random organizational forgetting.

• For entering to the competitive space and using of market deals for survival, the need to change is felt more than before. For executing successful change, the managers should consider the subordinates, feelings and emotions in executing the change and obviate their fear from this issue that the situation change will endanger them, so that their resistance against change to be reduced.

• For creating the changes and decision making the managers should use of subordinates, opinions as the persons who undertake special duty and feel the problems closely. Also in the change plan the organizational persons should be consulted and they should be participated in decision-making so that with knowledge to the change plan purposes, they can accept and execute it.

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