

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

Shahram Sedghi¹, Iman Tahamtan^{2*}

¹Department of Librarianship and Medical Information, School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

²Research Centre for Health Information Management, Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences, Bandar Abbas, Iran

ARTICLE INFO

Article Type:

Original Research

Article History:

Received: 27 May 2013

Revised: 15 Jun 2013

Accepted: 4 Sept 2013

ePublished: 15 Oct 2013

Keywords:

Content analysis

Minutes

Meetings

Educational council

ABSTRACT

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

Introduction

Meetings have many characteristics and one of them is a set of minutes as the meeting output and outcome. Minutes should indicate a list of actions and produce valuable information for the improvement of institutions and members.¹ Meeting is an event consisting of individuals, content, and processes organized for one or more purposes. There are many types of meetings.² For example; consistent education meetings and workshops are the ones that improve patients' health care.³ Effective meetings produce results, leave members feeling that a valuable process has been followed and the feeling that they have really accomplished something more than interesting conversation with other members.⁴

Universities have been always trying to reach high educational and scientific quality in different ways such as organizing meetings with the participation of faculty members. In the last two decades, extensive attempts have been carried out to enhance the quality of higher education to achieve the university goals. To do this desirably, universities should constantly evaluate their activities and outcomes. Evaluation is necessary for the sustainable development of higher education.⁵ Evaluation helps departments to know their weaknesses and strengths, allowing departments to promote their performance.⁶ Faculty members of academic departments usually

conduct regular meetings on various subjects. Important discussions and decisions are made by faculty members in such meetings. Thus, it is necessary to evaluate meetings to know their weaknesses and strengths. Discussions and decisions are the outcome of meetings. Therefore, the outcomes need to be evaluated.¹

These decisions are documented on minutes and can be extracted and evaluated through minutes. These documents illustrate the decisions and activities of departments reflecting the concerns and interests of the faculty members. Systematic and scientific investigation of minutes and identifying their messages can be used in the future planning and decision makings.⁴

A number of studies have been carried out to evaluate the performances of departments. They mostly have done internal or external evaluations of faculty members to know their educational and scientific situation. In this study for the first time we used a new method to evaluate the educational council and departments in the School of Health Management and Information Sciences at Iran University of Medical Sciences. In this method, we evaluated meetings of departments and educational council with the content analysis of minutes.

Content analysis is one of the most applicable research methods in humanities, social and behavioral sciences, used to systematically and quantitatively describe,

*Corresponding authors: Iman Tahamtan, Email: Iman.Tahamtan@Gmail.com

determine and interpret the internal attitude of content of documents, messages, etc.⁷

Thus, the main goal of this study was to evaluate the performances of departments and educational council in the School of Health Management and information sciences in the weekly and monthly meetings and to know the strengths and weaknesses of these meetings. This study would help to know the weaknesses to eliminate and the strengths to improve, as this is a valuable step in the quantitative and qualitative promotion of this school.

Materials and methods

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

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

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

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

We chose the below code and category for this subject:

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

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

Results

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

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

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

Table 1 . Subjects discussed in the meetings of educational council

Subjects	Frequency of codes	percent	Example of codes
Proposal and thesis	64	36	Assigning supervisor and statistic advisor; verifying proposals
Educational issues	50	28	Better organization of classes, educational problems, educational regulations
Faculties	20	11.6	Activities of Faculty members outside of college, new faculties
Final exams	13	7.5	planning for final exams, students cheating in final exams, cooperation with education office in final exams
Postgraduates	10	5.8	Full time position of PHD students, the process of enrolling and graduation of postgraduates
Departments	8	4.6	Minutes of each department, the practical plan of departments, department problems
Other subjects	8	6.4	Selling unusable instruments, students request for going to camp
total	173	100	

had a better performance and has been more active in promoting the quality of educational services. In the minutes of HSMD, organizing student congresses was also highlighted and it was the only department which has discussed about it. Writing the strategic plan of the department and surveying weaknesses and strengths of the department were other subjects discussed more in their meetings rather than other departments (Table 2).

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

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

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

Table 2. Subjects discussed in meetings of HSMD

Subjects	Frequency of codes	percent
Proposal and thesis	50	47.2
Educational issues	26	24.5
Workshops, Congresses and seminars	12	11.3
Students	9	8.5
Department	6	5.7
Other subjects	3	2.8
Total	106	100

Table 3. Subjects discussed in the meetings of MLISD

Subjects	Frequency of codes	percent
Proposal and thesis	36	38
Educational issues	20	21.5
Department	20	21.5
Bachelor period	6	6.5
Students	6	6.5
PH Dprogram	4	4
Research projects	2	2
total	94	100

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

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

Table 4. Subjects discussed in the meetings of BSD department

Subjects	Frequency of codes	percent
Educational issues	26	25.24
Proposal and thesis	26	25.24
Department	25	24.27
Research projects	14	13.59
Workshops	6	5.82
Students	6	5.82
total	108	100

Discussion

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

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

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

Biostatistics department was the only one that had a suitable performance both in scientific and educational issues. One duty of faculty members is to do researches related to their field of studies. However, the performance of departments in research projects was not acceptable.

Findings indicated that only in BSD, research projects had a high frequency and in MLISD and HSMD its frequency was low. Moreover, HSMD and BSD were better in organizing workshops and seminars.

Educational workshops, scientific meeting and journal clubs provide faculty members and students with opportunities to develop skills in various aspects. Therefore, we suggest that each department plan to organize more workshops by paying attention to the students and faculty members' needs. For instance, the MLISD can be effective in improving faculty members and students "information literacy" or the BSD can organize statistic workshops.

Doing research is one of the main duties of faculty members, however content analysis of minutes indicated less attention to research in the meetings. Thus, more attention should be paid to research projects since its frequency was low in the minutes of meetings.

As a limitation, we didn't have access to the minutes of other departments. Other departments should document their Minutes, as these are valuable resources, giving them the opportunity to evaluate the departments' performance. Further investigation is required to evaluate the departments in this school and investigate the satisfaction level of students from the services given in the School.¹

Conclusion

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

Acknowledgment

This study was supported by Iran University of Medical Sciences, School of Health Management and Information Sciences (Grant No: 957).

Ethical issues

Participants' information was kept confidential.

Conflict of interests

No competing interests to be declared.

References

1. Arnold M. Effective Meetings – Output. [Internet]. Takanomi Ltd. Company; 2012 [cited 2013 January 12]. Available from: <http://articles.submityourarticle.com/effective-meetings-output-275132>.
2. Streibel BJ, Formisano RA. The manager's guide to effective meetings. New York: McGraw-Hill; 2003.
3. Forsetlund L, Bjørndal A, Rashidian A, Jamtvedt G, O'Brien MA, Wolf F, Davis D, Odgaard-Jensen J, Oxman AD. Continuing education meetings and workshops: effects on professional practice and health care outcomes. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2009;(2):CD003030

4. Tropman JE. Effective meetings: Improving group decision making. USA: Sage Publications, Incorporated; 1995.
5. Bazargan A, Fatehabadi J, Ainollahi B. An Appropriate Internal Evaluation Approach to Continuous Quality Improvement in Medical Sciences Universities. *Journal of Psychology and Education* 2001;5(2):1-26.
6. Seifuashemi M, Amin Beydokhti ME, Yazdiha MS, Nabavi M, Faranoosh M. [Internal evaluation as a means of promoting the quality of education in the department of pediatrics of Semnan university of medical sciences]. *Journal of Semnan University of Medical Sciences* 2001;2(3):167-75.
7. Fazlullahi S, Maleki Tawana M. [Methodology of Content analysis with an Approach to Techniques for Readability Assessment and Coefficient of Text Engagement]. *Pazhuhesh* 2010;2(1):71-94.