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IDENTIFYING FUNDRAISING EFFORTS IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This research intends to identify different fundraising methods in public high schools and to prioritize them based on important criteria assisting principals to choose sustainable options. To collect data, firstly, through semi-structured interviews, schools' fundraising efforts and criteria were identified with the participation of 9 high school principals. Then, a pairwise comparison questionnaire was designed based on the findings of the qualitative phase. The questionnaires were analysed via the hierarchical analysis process, and taking in to account all criteria, the results indicate different fundraising methods prioritized as follows, 1. extra-curricular classes, 2. school bus services, 3. field trip, 4. taking advantage of discounts in group purchases, 5. tuition, 6. charging for services offered by using school facilities, 7. exhibitions and 8. accepting donations. The criteria used for assessment are 1. compatibility with school goals 2. monitorability 3. educational justice 4. ease of access 5. stability and 6. Parents' satisfaction.

Keywords: School Funding, School Fundraising Efforts, Analytical Hierarchy Process, Multi Criteria Decision Making Model AHP

INTRODUCTION

The funding and economic crisis in education has been discussed in all countries, and expenditure is rising rapidly. This rapid growth of costs and the increasing day-to-day funding problems are not limited to the least developed countries; it is a problem that is faced at different levels in all countries funding (Lebady and Safiee pour, 2017). Increasing population growth, community's growing demand for education, more attention to the quantity and quality improvement of educational activities, the shift of school services from labour intensive to capital intensive services due to the advancements and functions of technology in the educational context, with severe restrictions on government funding are the most important factors in the growth of costs and the emergence of educational problems (Fadai Keyvani and Pour Mohamad, 2017). While education generally has an important contribution to the development of countries, it attracts high attention. Education has a prime importance as both a tool for development and as a development goal (Hajitabar Firuzjaee et al., 2015).

Economic problems and shortage of financial resources are one of the challenges facing educational system. Also, education is faced with the growing demand of citizens to provide qualitative and sufficient education with shortage of funding and inefficiencies in spending a small amount of funding, which itself faces major challenges such as a lack of 100% education coverage, inadequate infrastructure and Non-standard as well as low quality educational elements (Azizi et al., 2012). Clearly, schools are no longer confronted with financial problems

and face funding deficits to achieve their goals. Therefore, nowadays we observe the growing funding concerns of school principals and their involvement in fundraising affairs to such an extent that to them, paying attention to the current necessary costs of schools has become more vital than the issue of education itself. The continuing shortage of school funding over the years has led them to serious problems and funding constraints regarding their mission and achieving their goals. Many of the goals of the schools can be achieved in the light of funding, and the lack of attention to the funding of education will ultimately lead to a decrease in the quality and efficiency of resources and their waste (Abbasi and pakari, 2016).

Schools are the main context for education to achieve its ultimate purpose and responsibilities. Thus, all issues that hinder the best of school activities should be identified and resolved. Public schools have a heavy responsibility because they must accept all of the society's children, with every background and condition, and make it possible to start in life, teach them the required skills, recognize and develop the unique strengths of each individuals, motivate children when they feeling down and not to give them up because without schooling, their chances of success in life are greatly diminished (Terman and Behrman, 1997). Undoubtedly, such educational activities, in the same way as other activities, require financial resources. Without financial resources, it is not possible to prepare or make the best of the educational factors (Naderi, 2015). Financial capability can be considered as an organizational fuel and making any decision without considering financial resources is useless. Schools need different resources to support them (Betof, 2011; Thayer and Shortt, 1994). Although only more money cannot guarantee the quality of education, the lack of adequate funding for education certainly reduces the possibility of continuing education and quality education for students (Reschovsky, 2006). The basis of funding is to support the advancement of education and learning. Thus, through funding improved new educational methods, facilitating the transformation of teaching and learning practices, and enhancing student achievement can be reached (Ferguson, 2012). As a result, achieving the possible ways of funding schools will improve the quality of services offered and facilitate the achievement of their goals.

Currently, due to the lack of timely and complete admission of approved per capita budget to schools, their ongoing activities indicate that there are uncertain and unclear incomes flowing in the school system. The revenues that school principals achieve in a number of ways, though limited, still are not clearly defined for everyone. Each principal chooses different ways of fundraising based on their own experience and recognition, as well as their specific criteria, and each of them seeks to improve their school's current situation. Obviously, given the current economic conditions, principals must pay attention to fundraising programs so that they can provide their schools with the educational needs (Thayer and Shortt, 1994).

In this research, the methods of high school fundraising in Tehran have been identified and prioritized through the use of important identified criteria. The results of prioritizing school fundraising methods based on comprehensive criteria makes it easier for principals to make decisions, thus, allowing them to have better choices and combine more appropriate methods of fundraising. It would be helpful to eliminate funding deficits and achieve school goals.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The issue of funding education has attracted many researchers and has also been studied from



different perspectives. Ahmadi et al. (2016), in their research, while emphasizing the global funding crisis related to educational funding and the shortage of educational funds in Iran, considered the lack of freedom of choice and inefficiency in spending the funds as the main issue of education and described the implementation of management contracts as the most important mechanism for solving this problem. Sheikh Zadeh (2010) mentioned that the special taxes plan and indirect taxes are effective factors influencing the attraction of financial revenues and identified the use of other ministries' facilities and raising the level of public awareness as the main indicators of attracting resources. In another study, it was mentioned that one of the ways of moving facilities and resources to increase educational capacity is the increase of private sector investment (Sepehri, 1997). Nategh Golestan and Zarei Hossein Abad (2016) prioritized the most influential factors in the education funding. In their study, according to principals, these factors were the parents' financial participation factors, funds allocation factors from the government, entailment factors in education and factors establishing private schools and privatizing, respectively.

The results of the research indicate the existence of a positive relationship between the increase of the state budget in the education sector and the increase in quality, the reduction of the student-teacher ratio, the increase in the attraction of students and their drop out (Kazemi and Yaghoobi, 2016). Noury et al. (2015) also found a meaningful relationship between principals' creativity and their financial performance. Rahim (2015) considered the timely availability of parent-teacher associations budget to be significantly related to the maintenance of students until the final level of elementary school. Dolloff (2015) demonstrates in his research that more efficient schools devote more resources to educational activity and the most expenditure on special training programs and curricular activities. Betof (2011) has raised financial capability as an organizational fuel and one of the highlight points of managing independent schools. On the other hand, researches have confirmed the positive relationship between educational costs and the results of tests and students' performance, and increased costs and financial reforms have been expressed as ways of combating inefficiency (Chaudhary, 2009; Reyes and Rodriguez 2004; West et al., 2001). Thayer and Shortt (1994) expresses the main responsibility of principals to be planning to increase budget, and Palmer (2015) believes the decision-making processes of school leaders and attention to contextual factors such as the economy and the school mission and also the existence of strategic financial plans, and the use of various financial instruments to be influential in school financial sustainability.



METHODOLOGY

The mixed methods research was capitalized on in this study. Initially, the methods and criteria for fundraising were identified through a semi-structured interview with open answered questions with school principals and deputies who had adequate experience in this field. In the next step, the Hierarchy Analysis (AHP) for prioritization the methods and obtained criteria was used.

Participants

In the qualitative phase of the study, semi-structured interviews with open answered questions were used to identify the methods and criteria for fundraising schools with 9 high schools' principals and deputies in Tehran with extensive managerial backgrounds and experiences in

this regard. From the seventh interview, the findings indicated repetition and saturation, and after the ninth interview, the adequacy of the data was sufficiently detected. The profile summary of the participants in the qualitative phase is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant's profile summary in the interview

Code	1	2	3	4	5
Organizational post	Deputy	Principal	Deputy	Deputy	Principal
Work experience	25	26	25	17	30
District	7	7	4	3	7

code	6	7	8	9
Organizational post	Deputy	Deputy	Principal	Principal
Work experience	23	12	20	24
District	8	4	1	7

Decisions in organizations are generally difficult and complex; the use of different opinions can reduce the decision error and improve the speed of the work. It is better to prevent the occurrence of some issues, and all those participating in the decision-making group should be on the same level responsibility (Ghodsi Pour, 2016); therefore, in the quantitative research phase, questionnaires, designed based on findings of the interviews, were distributed among all the principals and deputies of public schools in the 7th district of Tehran, who numbered 40 people. After several follow-ups, we succeeded in collecting 33 questionnaires, two of which were invalid, hence, finally 31 questionnaires (77% completion rate) were used for data analysis. A summary of the demographic characteristics of individuals is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic information of the participants in the quantitative phase

Personal information		Total
Gender	Male	9
	Female	22
Work experience	30 or above	2
	25 to 30 years	17
	20 to 25 years	10
	15 to 20 years	2
Organizational post	School principal	9
	School deputy	22
Educational degree	Ph.D.	1
	M.S.	10
	B.S.	18
	Associate's degree	2

Instruments

Some part of the information needed for this study to identify school funding methods and related criteria was collected through a semi-structured interview with principals and deputies. The interview included four open-ended questions: 1. How do schools earn money? 2. What characteristics should different school fundraising effort have? 3. Are school's fundraising effort proportionate with school's goals? 4. How can educational and service capabilities of schools be converted to fund? All questions were designed to answer research questions and were followed up by respondents during the interview with the sub-questions.

To determine the priority of fundraising effort and to determine the importance of criteria to one another, information was collected by pairwise comparison questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on the findings from the interviews and according to the decision hierarchy. Performing a pairwise comparison between the decision elements with the allocation of numerical privileges is indicative of the preference or importance of the comparison between the two elements of the decision. Each questionnaire consisted of 8 tables, of which 6 were paired comparisons of decision alternatives for each criterion. Each of these tables has 28 rows and in each row, the two decision alternatives were compared with each other under the specified criteria. A table also compared the decision criteria. The table contained 15 rows and in each row, two of the criteria for decision-making were compared under the target. Finally, a table was designed to ensure the legality of the extracted alternatives so that they would be eliminated from the decision alternatives in case the legality of each of the methods of earning was not met. Respondents completed the questionnaire according to Table 3, which was based on the mathematical basis of weighting the options.

Table 3. Scale of relative importance for correspondence table

Intensity	Verbal judgment	Explanation
1	Equal importance	Two activities contribute equally to the object
3	Moderate importance	Slight favors one over another
5	Strong importance	Strongly favors one over another
7	Very strong importance	very strongly over another
9	Extreme importance	Evidence favoring one over another of highest possible order of affirmation
2,4,6,8	Intermediate	When compromise is needed

Source: Saaty (2008)



Validity and Reliability

To evaluate the validity of the findings, we used the members' reviews. Again the codes and the interview text were given to the participants. We asked them to examine the text of the interview and the codes to be reviewed, and specify the amendments that they consider necessary. Corrective comments from the participants were included in the interview text and the codes obtained. The questionnaire was also designed according to the qualitative findings and its content validity was approved by the supervisors and counselors.

The hierarchical analysis process requires filling out the questionnaire with a lot of questions by the experts, which often results in boredom, and reduces the quality of the judgments. For this reason, the consistency ratio of the responses in the pairwise comparison questionnaire was calculated which shows the consistency of the validity, reliability and opinions in the questionnaire. If the consistency ratio is less than or equal to 0.1, it indicates the consistency of the decision maker's evaluations and the validity of the responses is confirmed (Ghodsi pour, 2016). In this study, all comparative matrices are coherent to the upper ceiling of the coefficients (less than the numerical value of 0.1) and the validity of the responses is confirmed.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Findings of the qualitative research phase

After recording and preparing the text of the interviews conducted with the principals and

deputies of schools, the repeated analysis of the quality data was conducted at both sentence and clause levels, using the content analysis method and grounded theory method in two phases of open and axial coding. We then extracted 14 methods and 12 criteria for funding that principals used in their schools. After classification of open codes obtained based on common attributes, finally, 6 criteria of fundraising and 8 of the most important methods for school fundraising were identified. Tables 4 and 5 provide the related information.

Table 4. Categorization of the fundraising efforts

Number	Fundraising efforts
1	Tuition: The tuition fee approved by the department of education or board of trustees of the school
2	Accepting donations: Donations to schools through community contributions, philanthropy and teachers
3	Holding exhibitions: Income from rent or revenue sharing of product sales at exhibitions for charity, scientific, student handicrafts, books, martyr's festivals and ... held at school.
4	Extra-curricular classes: Income from extracurricular classes, test classes, compensatory classes and ... at school
5	Out of school visits or field trip: Revenues from scientific visits, amusements and etc.
6	Taking advantage of discounts in group purchases: Revenues from taking advantage of discounts in group purchases with educational institutions, educational help books, tests, magazines, insurance, physician, photographer, clothing manufacturer, sportswear and etc.
7	Charging for services offered by using school facilities: Income from the school buffet sales, use of copy machine, library subscription fee and ...
8	School bus services: Income from school bus services

Tables 5. Categorize the criteria for fundraising

Number	Criteria for fundraising
1	Maintaining the nobility of the educational environment and compatibility with school goals: It does not harm the educational environment and is consistent with the school's educational goals.
2	Monitoring: It is possible to monitor the revenue.
3	Adherence to educational justice: Do not discriminate between students.
4	Ease of access: Earning money is not difficult.
5	Parents' satisfaction: Parents trust and are satisfied, and they feel no obligation or pressure to comply.
6	Stability: The method of earning money has a relative stability.

Findings of the quantitative research phase

Analytical hierarchy analysis was used to prioritize methods and criteria for fundraising efforts. For this purpose, the geometric mean of the participants' responses was used for comparisons and after entering all the questionnaire tables into the expert choice software, this software used a paired comparison matrix containing the geometric mean

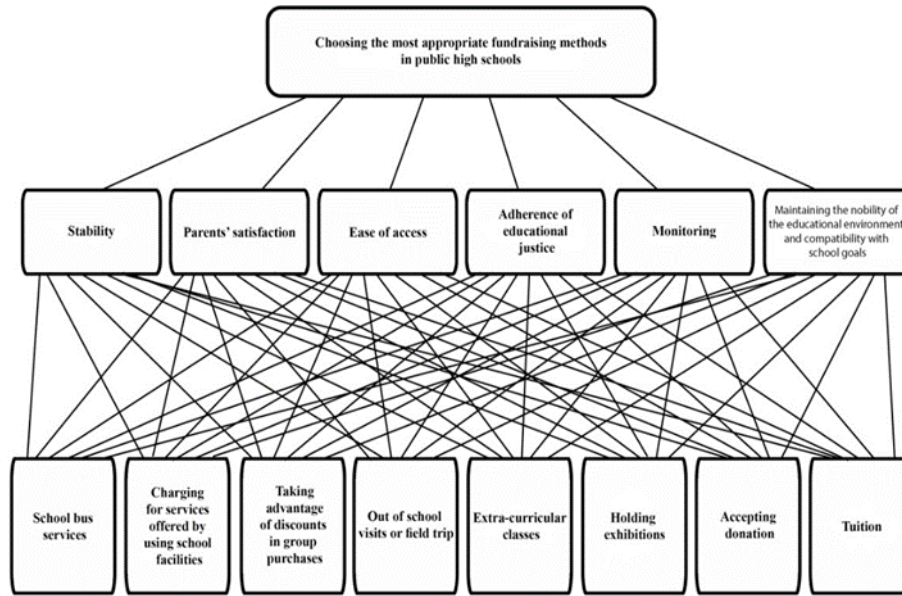


Figure 1. Criteria and methods for fundraising efforts

of respondent's comments as inputs for data analysis. At this stage, the weight of the criteria with regards to the target (Table 6) and also the weight of the alternatives with regards to the criteria were calculated. The weight of the criteria reflects their importance in determining the target and the weight of each alternative in reference to the criteria is the share of that option in the relevant criterion. As a result, the final weight of each option is obtained by multiplying the weight of each criterion in the weight of the corresponding alternative from that criterion. Table 6 presents the final ranking of school fundraising efforts.



Table 6. Relative weight (rankings) of school fundraising criteria

Criteria	Weight	Priority
Adherence to educational justice	0.306	1
Stability	0.174	2
Maintaining the nobility of the educational environment and compatibility with school goals	0.166	3
Parents' satisfaction	0.149	4
Ease of access	0.104	5
Monitoring	0.101	6

Based on the findings of Table 6, according to the participants, the most important criterion in financing schools is educational justice and fundraising efforts should not discriminate against some students.

Table 7. Ranking of school fundraising efforts

Fundraising efforts	Weight	Priority
Extra-curricular classes	0.193	1
School bus services	0.153	2
Out of school visits or field trip	0.142	3
Taking advantage of discounts in group purchases	0.130	4
Tuition	0.121	5

Charging for services offered by using school facilities	0.120	6
Holding exhibitions	0.081	7
Accepting donations	0.058	8

The results of Table 7 show that among the eight alternatives of fundraising identified in the qualitative research process, principals and deputies state that, holding extracurricular classes, test and extra-curricular preparation classes are preferred as means of fundraising since they believe they are more consistent with the above criteria.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Schools affected by financial crisis are faced with financial challenges, which have led principals to use multiple methods to fund their schools. While the methods used at schools are limited because of the rules of the education arena, principals and deputies select the methods appropriate to their own circumstances, interest, opinions, and school context. Based on interviews, these methods are: tuition, accepting donations, holding exhibitions, extra-curricular classes, out of school visits or field trip, taking advantage of discounts in group purchases, charging for services offered by using school facilities, and school bus services. Principals focus on the criteria they consider to be more important for choosing funding methods, and in some cases, they select their own individual preferences. Using the data extracted from the interviews, a set of criteria regarded by the principals were: maintaining the nobility of the educational environment and adapting to the school goals, monitoring, adherence to educational justice, ease of access, stability, and Parents' satisfaction. By synthesizing all the identified funding criteria and by using the hierarchical analysis process, priority was given to the schools' fundraising methods. The final results of the research suggest the use of 1. Extra-curricular classes, 2. School bus services, 3. Out of school visits or field trip, 4. Taking advantage of discounts in group purchases, 5. Tuition, 6. Charging for services offered by using school facilities, 7. Holding exhibitions, and 8. Accepting donations for principals wishing to finance their schools. However, in terms of how schools implement and select fundraising methods, there seem to be ambiguities regarding the observance of legal cases. It appears that the study of this issue requires further research. There is a need for further research since in the present study, due to the sensitivity of the subject and scope of research, the issue was not dealt with.

Given the lack of the public education budget, many principals rely on nongovernmental resources, including parent budgets for school fundraising (Posey-Maddox, 2016). Schools provide a significant portion of their expenses through tuition. In addition to private schools in public schools, tuition is also provided for other forms of assistance and public participation, although they are not compulsory, in practice parents have to pay the other forms of assistance and public participation. Receiving tuition can help solve many of the problems, when education is faced with financial problems. Reschovsky (2006) believes that although the policy of studying without tuition initially appears logical, there are at least three reasons why this policy may not be desirable. First, in a developing country with limited resources, income from school tuition can be an important and effective provision of school services to children from poor families; second, the ban on tuition leads many families to send their children to private schools, while children from lower-income families will be left with less resources in schools, and third, schools



that receive tuition can lead to providing the society with many educated youth who can contribute significantly to economic growth and economic prosperity in the country.

In recent decades, with changes in funding and moving towards private and market-based financial models, school management and funding methods have also changed. However, paying governmental budget to schools is still essential, but the changes that have taken place create conditions for the participation of other people, attracting funds, collecting humanitarian donations, and increasing parental involvement in school fundraising (Gerrard et al., 2017). Today, due to the raising awareness and the level of parents' knowledge and concern about the future of their children, families have played a greater role in educating their children and have a greater willingness to participate financially (Yahyavi and Ranjdust, 2015). In addition, schools also benefit from revenues, such as income from training costs and services they provide. Holding the necessary classes for students is one of the most important curriculum activities in the school, which can be considered as an important source of income for all schools. Supply of food and drink services, use of copy machine, books, consulting services, transportation services, out of school visits and exhibitions, are services that schools provide other than the educational activities that are undoubtedly an income. Although not a significant contribution, because of the diversification of non-teaching services, the non-educational services can contribute to the financing of core activities, i.e. education (Naderi, 2015; Malouni et al., 2013).

The relationship between the budget and the school goals is an important part of the public debate on educational topics (Aubry Kradolfer and Geiss, 2016). But it should not be used to offset school financial deficits in any way and render the school environment like economic environments. School principals, while using different financing methods, must ensure that the educational environment remains unharmed and ensure that it does not turn in to a business. To prevent corruption, it is essential to monitor school revenues and prevent the possibility of abuse. The principal of one of the schools said: "The lack of proper supervision of school resources will spoil and waste money." One of the most important issues in any educational system is the adherence to justice. Because a fair educational system allows individuals, regardless of their context (personal or social-economic conditions) and without any obstacles, to be fully educated and achieve academic achievement (OECD, 2012). As parents choose the schools and send their children to become educated, their satisfaction and trust is important. Parents' satisfaction with school is not just about the success of their children, but also the costs they pay to schools play a significant role in their satisfaction and trust. The transparency of costs and their effectiveness in achieving goals are crucial for building parents' trust. Betof (2011) recommends that schools must work on long-term financial security. Betof describes financial sustainability as the longitudinal ability of the school to survive and grow from a financial perspective over the short and long term. Palmer (2015) also considers the financial sustainability of schools in the 21st century vital for their survival. It is important to note that the school financing methods used to continuously influence school curricula should be predictable and sustainable in order to guarantee the financial sustainability of the school.

The research findings make it possible for school principals to make informed choices about the fundraising methods, and make school revenues somewhat foreseeable and pave the way for their management. Principals can set up a funding plan that will ensure the school's financial stability. By reducing financial deficits, it will be possible to improve the quality of educational services and the agility of schools will be improved in order to achieve their goals. It is suggested



that several public high school principals select their funding methods at the beginning of the school year according to prioritization and review the results at the end of the school year. If deemed necessary, they will be modified during the year or reprioritized, also recommendations can be shared with other schools if positive outcomes are witnessed.

The lack of similar research does not allow us to compare our findings with other studies and to obtain more and better interpretations of the research results. The difficulty of coordinating interviews due to the high concern of school principals and deputies, and their caution in expressing their own earnings methods due to ambiguity in the legality of the methods, is one of the problems of the research process. A large number of comparisons in the questionnaire have also caused the fatigue of the people and the newness of the questionnaire and the lack of familiarity with how to fill it out (despite the full explanation) increased the likelihood of an error during the completion of the questionnaires.

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