The Functions of Boards of Trustees and their Role in the Autonomy of Public Universities Affiliated to Iran Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology from the Point of View of their Members

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Background & objective: The responsibilities of boards of trustees in Iranian universities are more restricted comparing to those in the developed countries. Therefore, doing a comprehensive study in order to develop the functions and authorities of boards of trustees in Iranian universities is of a great importance. The aim of the present study was to find the opinions of members of universities’ boards of trustees and councils about the domain of their responsibilities and their role in the autonomy of public universities affiliated to Iran Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology.

Methods: First, a questionnaire consisted of 66 items listing the responsibilities of boards of trustees in the universities of some other countries was prepared. Then, by using stratified random sampling 20 universities were selected and their members of boards of trustees and councils were asked to indicate their level of agreement for the 66 listed items of the prepared questionnaire as well as their opinions about the universities’ autonomy and role of boards of trustees in this regard.

Results: From 230 respondents, 83% agreed with the appropriateness of 55 functions for boards of trustees in Iranian universities. Means (±SD) of agreement with listed functions, universities autonomy and role of boards of trustees in it were respectively 3.60 (±0.59), 3.49 (±0.65), and 3.18 (±0.72) that all are significantly higher than the accepted levels (p<0.001). There was no significant difference between the members of boards of trustees and councils in regard to the appropriateness of the listed functions. In whole, the appropriateness of the listed functions for boards of trustees in Iranian universities, autonomy of universities and role of boards of trustees in this relation were approved respectively by 83%, 86.7% and 76.5% of the respondents.

Conclusion: In order to give more autonomy to the universities, it is recommended that the functions of boards of trustees in Iran universities to be reviewed and modified by using the appropriate agreed functions yielded in this research.

Key words: Board of trustees, Functions, University autonomy

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