

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF HUMAN RESOURCE CAPABILITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF BASRA

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—Abstract—

This study paper examines and defines the organizational structure, university environment, culture, and the components and aspects that create the foundation of human resource capabilities. In addition, this study attempts to organize the aspects mentioned according to their significance to establish core competencies that might enhance human resource performance and the university's overall competitive advantage. This study surveyed fifty academic and administrative personnel. It utilized two methods for data collecting and analysis, namely arranging the relative importance of the factors and analyzing the fundamental components and elements using exploratory factor analysis to determine the capabilities of university human resources. The results indicated that the university's environment, organizational structure, and culture impact the development of human resource skills. This analysis has revealed that the institution has to enhance its human resource management approach and standards. Therefore, a comprehensive human resources strategy is essential to identify distinct capabilities that serve as the foundation for constructing core competencies. To get a competitive edge at the university level, the researcher determined the level of component response. This study contributes significantly to our understanding of the university human resource capabilities at Basra University.

Keywords: Capabilities, Building Capabilities, Core Competency, Human Resource.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Uniquely, capability development is an ongoing procedure based on interacting with diverse resources and talents. It enhances the capacities of an organization's personnel and the organization's ability to absorb new events and adapt to changes (Li & Fleury, 2020). Improving skills in both dimensions (people & organization) requires the training, development, and favorable investment of key organizational and environmental elements and pressures (Nguyen, 2020). This implies enhancing the organization's critical competencies. It enhances the competitive advantage of a university's teaching and scientific research. Capability development encompasses all procedures that improve the practice, efficacy, and well-being of persons, activities, and organizations (Lundan & Li, 2019). It should be conducted strategically, with the ability to adjust flexibly and effectively to change.

In addition, the current conditions under which all Iraqi institutions function have become complex and challenging due to the scientific environment's rapid development and change (Jabbar, 2018). This circumstance necessitates specialized scientific research to assist Iraqi universities in catching up with the scientific process and perhaps enhance the capabilities of institutions, notably the University of Basra. The difficulty is the lack of interest in university capabilities, the limited means and services that contribute to activating and developing their energy, and the small number of studies on this subject (Figueiredo, Larsen, & Hansen, 2020). As a result, inadequate management of human resources and their talents is becoming a pressing concern. The strategic direction of human resources is one technique for coping with environmental change and resource depletion (Ngoc Su, Luc Tra, Thi Huynh, Nguyen, & O'Mahony, 2021). Consequently, this study identified two solutions for effectively addressing the issue: utilizing the strategic HRM approach and aligning capabilities around key competencies.

The university must continuously evolve and improve to stay up with scientific and technological advances and advancements. Moreover, the extensive and crucial function of the university is enhancing the state's economic, institutional, and administrative framework through delivering numerous community services. In this aspect, a defined plan for managing human resources is lacking. In addition, human resource management at the university, the subject of study, is still conducted from the standpoint of personal management. Lastly, there is a lack of clarity in the university HRM curriculum regarding the meaning of capabilities and core competencies.

Therefore, the fundamental objective of this study is to enhance the competitive advantage of the University of Basra's human resource core capabilities. The selection of Basra University was based on the fact that it is one of the oldest universities in Iraq and offers superior academic and scientific capabilities. However, many of its human resource capabilities have been lost due to Iraq's troubled history, and it needs studies that contribute to developing its human resource capacities.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the research problem, the current paper desires to answer the following questions:

- 1-To what extent can the strategic perspective of human resources capabilities be described at Basra University?
- 2-To when can the core competency of human resources capabilities be built at Basra University?

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This paper aims to achieve the following research objectives:

- 1- Developing a strategic perspective of human resources capabilities at Basra University.
- 2-Building human resource core competency to attain university competitive advantages.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

First, the rapidity of environmental changes, the difficulty of predicting them, and the intensity of competition need universities to be adaptable and quick to respond. As [Braga et al. \(2021\)](#) proposed, they must expand the concept and requirements of their human resource management (HRM), emphasizing the limited perspective of employee management and the larger perspective of human resource management. According to [Liu et al. \(2007\)](#) and [Hadiyanto \(2010\)](#), the field of human resource management is evolving and expanding, necessitating the development of a comprehensive HRM strategy and the disclosure of the most influential and dynamic aspects of human resource management, particularly human resource capabilities. Second, according to [Wilton \(2022\)](#), competencies, abilities, talents, and strategic assets are sources of a sustainable competitive advantage. [Barney \(1991\)](#) noted that these resources are irreplaceable due to their rarity, inability to be replicated, and failure to be traded. According to [Kamoche \(1996\)](#), a company's ability to acquire, cultivate, preserve, and produce human resources is contingent on its human resource policies and practices. According to [Saa-Perez and Garcia-Falcon \(2002\)](#) and [Alshammari \(2020\)](#), human resource skills are contingent on human capital development and information interchange. Thirdly, [Dierickx and Cool \(1989\)](#) and [Keshavarz \(2021\)](#) found that core competency growth in one or more capacity domains constitutes a strategic resource accumulation that is difficult to mimic. This adds to the enhancement of capabilities, especially university capacities. Capability development encompasses all processes that improve practice and the efficiency, effectiveness, and well-being of individuals and businesses. It should be conducted strategically, with the ability to adjust flexibly and

effectively to change. [Davey et al. \(2016\)](#) showed that leadership, administration, and staff development are necessary to improve educational development's quality assurance. The following conclusion can be drawn from prior studies:

1. The performance of human resources is the foundation for enhancing and developing the performance of all companies, including educational institutions.
2. It is expected that university human resource management will be conducted strategically.
3. The assumption is that university capability development will be based on core competency.
4. This leads to the continual and integrated enhancement of human resource performance.

4.1 The Concept of University Human Resources Capabilities and Core Competency

Abilities are a collection of knowledge, skills, and "tendencies and behaviors" that obviously impact an individual's performance. This can be monitored, compared to predetermined performance levels, and enhanced through training and growth ([Nguyen, 2020](#)). The function that mediates the organization's policies and the means of their implementation, as well as the role that people can play through their knowledge and skills to mobilize, organize, and direct the organization's resources to meet organizational and social needs, can be used to conceptualize capabilities ([Yu, Chen, & Liu, 2022](#))

Consequently, key capabilities encompass human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional, and additional resources ([Midhat Ali, Qureshi, Memon, Mari, & Ramzan, 2021](#)). It is a constant and long-term process concerned with developing coordination and integration between administrative choices and actual practices based on people's skills and knowledge, which aims to enhance the management's and employees' capacities ([Hamouche, 2021](#)). As the performance of the person is determined by the group's performance and integrates with it to achieve the organization's performance, the capability comprises the skills utilized in coordinating and making efficient use of resources ([Munene, 2021; Tarigan, Mochtar, Basana, & Siagian, 2021](#)).

The organizational structure and control systems interact with capabilities and resources ([Garcia-Quevedo, Martinez-Ros, & Tchorzewska, 2022](#)). This implies that capabilities are not just a collection of knowledge and skills unique to the individual but are also built by investing in organizational resources to meet the organization's objectives. Competencies are defined by placing organizational capabilities inside a broader, more ordered framework ([Shet, Patil, & Chandawarkar, 2019](#)). This means that the

administrative and technical subsystems integrate the various technologies, processes, resources, experiences, and knowledge skills to produce a product or service that provides the organization with distinctive sustainable and value-added competitive advantages (Peiró, Martínez-Tur, Nagorny-Koring, & Auch, 2021). Students require core abilities to become successful learners and productive employees in their academic, professional, and personal endeavors.

Consequently, they are a necessary result of university education (Hadiyanto, 2010). The university's core competencies include intellectual, personal, social, and emotional qualities. The primary goal of core competency is to improve the ability to identify questions related to the organization's policy and to define implementation models through development options based on explicit knowledge of the potential for change in the environment and the determinants and needs of the country's citizens.

4.2 Justifications for Building the Core Competency of University Human Resources

First, the capability is one of the limiting factors at the level of the organization. The degree of an organization's skills is crucial to its ability to exist, continue, and achieve its objectives (Bezerra, Gohr, and Morioka (2020).. Alternative techniques for uncovering university skills, identifying their priorities, and identifying their distinctive talents. Developing them to build core competencies is still unknown or unclear to many colleges in Iraq and Arab states (Hamdany, 2021). The university's human resources focus on the capability-building procedure's many facets (Kareem & Alameer, 2019).

Human capacity development is the fundamental rule for constructing and enhancing academic and administrative capacities at the university level. Education and training are vital to creating and growing university capabilities, the concept upon which dealing with capacities is built (Dosi, Guarascio, Ricci, & Virgillito, 2021). This needs a series of procedures that support and direct human resource personnel in enhancing their knowledge, abilities, and sensitivity (Nadeem, Abedin, Cerpa, & Chew, 2018). This also contributes to forming the foundational direction in the sphere of change and development, necessitating knowledge of the targeted capabilities and the strategies for enhancing their performance (Khathi, 2013; Nadeem et al., 2018). Teaching, the student, the curriculum, the teaching methods, the evaluation of the learning process, scientific research, administration, and the educational environment are the primary components of the educational process. Therefore, they are structured for research purposes in each of the academic competencies oriented on teaching and research competences, as well as the administrative competencies concentrated on university leadership.

4.3 Competency Determinants of the University Human Resources Core

In reality, capabilities are crucial in strengthening an organization's performance and competencies in pursuing its objectives. They offer a solid foundation upon which the

firm builds its competitive advantages (Mikalef, Krogstie, Pappas, & Pavlou, 2020). As a thorough and ongoing process that seeks to match an organization's structure and resources with the skills of its employees, capability serves as a framework that unifies the outcome of the interaction toward attaining the goals (Cao, Duan, & Cadden, 2019). It necessitates development and improvement by identifying the constituent factors and network of interrelationships. The method of competency development is based on three essential components:

- Human resource development, i.e., providing individuals with the means and procedures that assist them in realizing and acquiring skills, gaining access to information and knowledge, and training for effective performance.
- Organizational development, i.e., the process concerned with the structures, processes, and procedures of management from within the organization, as well as managing the interactions between different organizations, sectors (private and public), and the local community (Cao et al., 2019).
- Developing the institutional and legal framework, i.e., modifying legislation and laws to allow organizations, institutions, and agencies at all levels and sectors to increase their capacities (Fainshmidt, Wenger, Pezeshkan, & Mallon, 2019).

In addition, the university's strengths are concentrated on the teaching and research processes as the institution's primary operating process. The university's outcomes mainly depend on the awareness of and compliance with these protocols (Mahdi, Nassar, & Almsafir, 2019). Therefore, the areas of university capabilities include providing scientific materials (method and source), delivering scientific materials (method and means), promoting scientific research (field and facilities), managing the university process (planning and implementation), and providing qualitative and quantitative support services (Najafi-Tavani, Najafi-Tavani, Naudé, Oghazi, & Zeynaloo, 2018). All of these depend on the university's human resource skills. Building and enhancing university skills should therefore be regarded from two perspectives. The first focuses on identifying the capabilities of human resources and methods for improving them. The second discusses diagnosing and measuring (factors) that serve as university human resources faculty determinants. The growth of capabilities has a favorable effect on enhancing the university's abilities as a whole. Thus, university capacities (i.e., constructing and improving) are evaluated. Hameed and Raheem's (2020) work focused on building standards and requirements for meeting them.

Amidon (2009), on the other hand, was interested in the human resource investment paradigm. Regarding Victor (2020), the requirements for developing human resources were emphasized (i.e., organizational, training, and environmental conditions). Table 1 summarizes the author's opinions mentioned above.

Table 1: Summary of Author's Views

No	Hameed and Raheem (2020)	Najafi-Tavani et al. (2018)	Victor (2020)
1	Setting high standards for performance	Attracting human capital	Developing new employees in higher education
2	Staff development through job rotation	Human capital formation	Organizing workshops
3	Modifying each work environment interface	Activating human capital	Providing aids for writing the curriculum
4	Providing the administrative levels of the organization with new talents	Retaining human capital	Supporting progress of activities
5	Participation in the change process		Improving the training and education environment

Table 1. has concluded the following:

- Human resources are the most crucial aspect of establishing university skills, as it is where the institution's core competencies are developed.
- It enhances other aspects of the university's organization, including the organizational structure, university procedures, university administration, and legal system.
- Strategies and programs are established to enhance the knowledge and abilities of the university's human resources, which support university activities.
- Systems and processes are implemented to maintain human resources and activate their present and latent potentials.

The above ideas and perceptions provide a solid foundation for diagnosing and identifying the factors contributing to developing core skills. All stakeholders participate in a mediation process between the organization's plans and implementation requirements that is mediated by its capabilities. It seeks to build and enhance human resources skills, knowledge, and practices in areas that promote the university's potential to invest diverse resources and strengthen outcomes. Consequently, all aspects of its operations influence the university's capabilities, including human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional, and other resources. Therefore, growing capacities and establishing core competencies necessitates various internal and external university elements. These variables may serve as opportunities or determinants for the operation of constructing and enhancing the capabilities. Numerous perspectives were evaluated to measure the level of interest in the university's faculty and organize them

in a manner that helps define the fundamental skills that contribute to the development of core competencies; numerous perspectives were evaluated, as stated in [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Views of Authors

No	Yan et al. (2020)	Fuertes et al. (2020)	Sinkovics, Hoque, and Sinkovics (2018)	Nguyen (2020)
1	Network of organizational and institutional relationships	The people	Personal characteristics (physical, mental, and biological)	Human resource development
2	Strategic assets	The culture	Environmental characteristics (organizational climate, physical environment, supporting technological structure)	Organizational development
3	Reputation	The skills	Social and institutional characteristics (social habits, legal rules, government policies)	Institutional framework development
4	Innovation			Development of the legal framework

Based on those mentioned above, the variables that will be utilized to develop core competencies are as follows:

- Human Resources: Recruitment, retention, and growth.
- Organizational Structure: Positions, connections, and communications
- Institutional Structure: External contacts and stakeholder network
- Legislation and Laws: Regulations, regulations, and instructions governing the university process.
- University Environment: The university's internal environment, external environment, and the level of engagement emerging from it.

- University Culture: the shared values of university members and the influence of values from outside the university.

- Partnership: The sort of partnership and cooperation with universities and other relevant entities.

Consequently, these elements will be employed to measure the reality of the capabilities at Basra University.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Study Design and Method

This study employed the descriptive, inductive method for data presentation, analysis, discussion, and theoretical abstraction. Statistical tools in the field of research supported the deductive methodology, notably the quantitative analysis. Human resources, organizational structure, institutional structure, legislation and laws, university environment, university culture, and partnerships were recognized as the human resource capabilities contributing to the development of core competencies.

5.2 Study Population and Sample

The scope of the study included all levels of human resources at Basra University. As it was difficult for the researcher to ascertain the total population of the study, a sample of fifty (50) academic and administrative staff members was chosen. The University of Basra was selected as the focus of the research since it is one of the oldest in Iraq and offers superior educational and scientific capabilities. However, many of its human resource capabilities have been lost due to Iraq's challenging situations. Therefore, it requires studies that could aid in reconstructing its human capacities. The researcher employed two ways to collect and evaluate data: arranging the relative importance of the aspects and investigating the necessary components and factors for developing the university's human resources capabilities. For purposes of measurement, the five-point Likert scale was utilized. The scale's accuracy and level of confidence were evaluated per the requirements for reliability and confidence tests. Using the mean, standard deviation, t-test, and component analysis, significance values were determined.

5.3 Statistical Tools and Methods

Testing the Study's Measuring Tool and Its Data

Table 3: Testing the Study's Measuring Tool and its Data

Code	Variable	Explained question	Mean	Standard deviation	t-test	sig
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C1	Accuracy	The level of the scale's ability to measure aspects to be measured	3.2	1.08	11.4	0.00
C2	Clarify	The level of understanding of the scale questions	3.13	0.80	19	0.00
C3	Content	The level of disclosure of what is intended by the question	3.87	0.74	20	0.00
C4	Goal	The level of answer for which the question is specified for	3.67	0.99	15.8	0.00

(T) Scheduled with a significance level (0.01), a degree of freedom (15) = 2.95

Alpha for scale = 94 %, standard alpha= 70 %

In two distinct techniques, the validity and dependability of the scale were evaluated. The first method involves surveying the opinions of fifteen academic specialists. Based on [Table 3](#), the results indicate that the average views of the sample members range between 3.2 and 3.93, with minor standard deviations and an acceptable level of significance confirmed by the (t) values, which are all more significant than the (t) threshold value of 2.95 and the level of significance of 001. In addition, the Alpha test was utilized to determine the confidence level on the scale. The computed Alpha value is 94%, which exceeds the minimum threshold of 70%. The results above illustrate the scale's validity, reliability, and precision and its suitability for measuring its intended goals.

6. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

Following the research's principal purpose, which is to establish university capabilities and describe their significance, two methodologies were used to assess the importance of university capabilities. These skills include human resources, organizational structure, institutional structure, legislation, laws, university environment, university culture, and partnerships. Based on the indicated degrees of importance, the priorities of the capabilities were first determined by the mean and standard deviation and then by factor analysis.

6.1 Estimating the Importance of University Capabilities Using the Mean and Standard Deviation

This measurement is after determining the university's capabilities' importance from the sampled members' viewpoint. [Table 4](#) presents the descriptive statistics.

Table 4: Reflects The Results of The Mean And Standard Deviation

Variable	t-test	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. error	Precedence
First: Human resource		2.53			
1 - Polarization		2.60			
2 - Retention	7.70	2.10	0.95	0.24	
3 - Development	6.60	2.90	1.20	0.33	
	11.00		1.00	0.27	
Second: Organizational Structure	11.00	3.80	0.90	0.25	Second
Third: Institutional Structure	9.70	3.00	1.10	0.31	Third
Fourth: Legislation and Laws	9.80	2.90	1.10	0.29	
Fifth: University Environment	7.10	2.25	1.20	0.31	
Sixth: University Culture	13.80	3.90	1.00	0.25	First
Seventh: Partnership	7.80	2.65	1.30	0.33	

The results of the mean, standard deviation, and t-test for the university ability components are shown in [Table 4](#).

The mean values for all variables ranged between 2.0 and 3.8, which is 20% higher than the projected mean value of 3. The T-test, standard deviation, and typical error values suggest that the sample members accept the mean as a measure of the importance of the main components. Human resources, regulations and policies, university environment, and partnerships all have mean values below the hypothetical mean of 3. This leads to the conclusion that the sample members' interest in them is low. Hence they were eliminated from the research examples.

Moreover, the component means (i.e., organizational culture, organizational structure, and institutional structure) are more significant than the hypothetical mean. Therefore, they were categorized as tangible examples for the sample members. The order of priority is as follows: (1) organizational culture, (2) organizational structure, and (3) institutional structure. Factor analysis was utilized to support the research methodologies and precisely define the components contributing to skill building (core competency).

6.2 Estimating the Importance of the University Capabilities Using the Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is typically employed to uncover a measure's factor structure and analyze its internal reliability. When researchers have no theories regarding the underlying factor structure of their standard, EFA is frequently advised. Additionally, it is employed to determine the nature of the link between the variable and

the respondent. Explained variation is the portion of the model's total variance attributed to variables other than error variance. If the Eigenvalue is greater than 1, the statistical relevance of the analysis model is assumed. Components are provided in detail in [Table 5](#).

Table 5: The Results of the Factor Analysis

Components	Explained variation ratio	Eigenvalue	Component saturation	Name of the factor with higher saturation
Human resource	50%	2.01	55%	Recourse pool 94%
Organizational structure	74%	2.95	85%	Duties 89%
Legislation and laws	69%	2.75	61%	Government laws 76%
University environment	82%	3.30	90%	Pursuing scientific development 98%
University culture	54%	2.15	73%	University culture values 83%
Partnership	70%	2.80	90%	Joint venture 93%

Note: Standard Eigenvalue = 1

The Eigenvalue for all the components and their factors ranged between 2.0 and 3.3, i.e., more significant than the standard Eigenvalue, thus indicating the significance of all the ingredients and their characteristics. The percentage of explained variance for all the components and their factors ranged between 50% and 82%. The proportions of the main components of capacity building (i.e., human resources, organizational structure, legislation and laws, university environment, university culture, and partnership) are sequenced as follows: 55%, 85 %, 61%, 90%, 73%, and 90% respectively. The percentage of the most important factor for each major component based on the sequences above are as follows: resource pool = 93%, duties = 89%, government rule = 61%, pursuing scientific development = 98%, culture values = 83%, joint venture = 93%. The results of the factor analysis of the main components of capability building (which measure the importance of the components of the human resources strategy) showed that they are sequenced according to the following: (the university environment: first precedence, partnership: second precedence, organizational structure: third precedence,

university culture: fourth precedence, legislation, and laws: Fifth precedence, and the Human Resources Department: Sixth precedence).

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There was a little discrepancy between the relevance of the components according to the sample members and their importance according to the factor analysis results. This is because members of the sample consider what they believe to be the significance of the components. Moreover, the factor analysis exposes the actual characteristics of Basra University. Therefore, we shall depend on the outcomes of the factor analysis more than the sample members' predictions. In addition, the results indicated that the components (i.e., university environment, organizational structure, and culture) are the most essential for constructing human resource capabilities. However, this relationship was eliminated despite its significance because it had nothing to do with human resource capabilities.

The interaction of these components appears to be more in establishing human resource skills through their aspects based on a clear definition of the responsibilities of university personnel, the pursuit of scientific progress, and the institution's cultural values. The aspects of these components are addressed from a comprehensive strategic perspective to provide a broad foundation for developing core competencies that contribute to the human resources strategy's accomplishment of competitive advantage. In light of the preceding, the core competencies consist of a clear description of the responsibilities of all university-level human resource personnel, supported by cultural, scientific, and professional university values. These are all geared toward advancing scientific progress at the national and international levels.

University human resources exemplified by (university competencies and university management leadership) are the core of university capabilities and how university energy is enhanced and maximized. In addition, the other components (organizational structure, university environment, and culture) serve as the foundation for constructing university capabilities and improving outcomes. In addition, the primary aspects of university capacities, namely human resources, provide a solid foundation for articulating the significance of these components. In addition, the level of reaction for each component (the organizational structure, the university environment, and the university culture) and its sub-factors revealed the capabilities upon which it is based (core competency). In addition, the measurement results indicated that the human resources department at Basra University did not adequately respond to the needs for constructing and enhancing university capabilities. Due to the absence of methods that contribute to, retain, and improve efficient human resources, the university of Basra has made limited attempts to establish and enhance its human capabilities.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Compiling an inventory of the university's human resources that serve as the foundation for creating and enhancing the university's capabilities, as well as other elements influencing these capabilities, by:

1. A diagnosis of the university's current human resources, particularly the academic and administrative leadership.
2. Identifying the strengths and limitations of the university of Basra's current HRM system. In every respect (organization, documentation, training, and clarity of job description).
3. identify and diagnose the components that support human resources and enhance their skills by:
4. The effectiveness of the current human capabilities and the extent to which they contribute to the university's objectives and basic operations (teaching and research).
5. Identify the most significant components of the level of human resources capabilities. For this purpose, it is prepared during the scaling.
6. Detecting and identifying the primary actions contributing to determining the overall performance of university human resources.
7. Establishing (core competency) following the components and aspects that confer competitive advantages on the university's overall performance level through:
 - a) Developing a comprehensive plan that drives university-level human resources.
 - b) Defining and defining the actual university activities collectively serve as the foundation for constructing (Core competency).
 - c) Using a specific scale to assess the adequacy of these operations and the level of outcomes they provide.

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