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## Designing Strategic Competencies Model of Directors of Lorestan Province Education Department

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The main purpose of this study was to design a model of strategic competencies of education managers in Lorestan province.

**Methodology:** The present study was applied in terms of purpose and combined (qualitative / quantitative) in terms of implementation. The qualitative statistical population was 17 experts familiar with the subject of research who were selected by purposive sampling method and the statistical population was the quantitative section of all heads, deputies and managers of different education districts in 2019-20. Categories were selected. The research instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire whose validity was obtained from the perspective of professors and reliability was obtained by Cronbach's alpha test (0.92). Delphi method with Kendall coefficient was used to analyze the data and confirmatory factor analysis and structural equations in Spss and PLs Smart software were used for model validity and fit ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Findings:** Data analysis showed that concerning significance of the model aspects, management was prioritized as factor loading (.98), organizational loading (.93), and individual loading (.90) ( $P < 0.001$ ). Based on t amounts, the significance of factor loadings (route coefficients) of the relationships among the components and strategic competencies aspects was above 2.57 which suggested that factor loadings of all components related to the "individual", "management", and "organizational" aspects were meaningful in the level of error  $\alpha = 0.01$  ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $t > 2.57$ ). Finally, the suggested model of strategic competencies of directors of education department was 0.61 based on Goodness of Fit (GOF) standard, which was more than 0.35.

**Conclusion:** Based on the present findings, the indigenous model of strategic competencies of managers in the education system can be considered significant.

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### Keywords:

Competencies, Strategic  
Competencies, Directors of  
Education Department

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## 1. Introduction

One of the important issues that has been raised in relation to the ability of managers is the issue of competence of managers. Competencies are defined as a set of related knowledge, characteristics, attitudes and skills that have a great impact on people's jobs and are correlated with people's performance at work and can be assessed with acceptable standards and through development and improvement training (Brelík & Zuchowski, 2017). Paying attention to the competencies of managers and turning it into organizational competencies can lead to sustainable organizational competitive advantage. In an environment that is constantly changing and managers are facing business globalization, rapid technological change and competency-based competition, the need for competencies appropriate to the new situation will be inevitable (Popescu et al, 2020). Lack of competence leads to reduced efficiency and effectiveness and irreparable damage. In contrast, the competence of principals and the employment of qualified individuals are considered important predictors of any changes and reforms in schools and organizational changes (Welch & Hodge, 2018). Many researchers believe that having specific competencies for managers today is very important, especially when managerial roles are evolving and can help them improve and improve organizational performance (Faramarzi et al, 2019). Kay & Moncarz (2007) believe that managers' competencies include internal and external management of native and non-native people in the organization, which internal management skills refer to resolving conflicts between native and non-native employees and maintaining a close relationship between them (Velu & Manxhari, 2017). In fact, competent managers by combining their knowledge, skills and abilities can perform their duties and responsibilities in a way that is consistent with the strategic goals of the organization (Pham et al, 2019).

Competence is a fluid concept and encompasses many types. Steers et al (2013); Ryan et al (2009) and Rossouw (2004) consider the most important competencies of managers in the present age to include communication competencies, strategic action competencies, multicultural competencies, intelligence competencies, planning and management competencies, knowledge competencies and strategic competencies. Strategic competencies show that managers with a long-term vision, committed to the organization's vision, knowledge of the operational and strategic reality of the organization, adaptation to market requirements and also with systemic thinking can understand the relationship between them with a holistic view of activities (Rangriz et al, 2018). Strategic competencies of managers are defined as leadership, the ability to anticipate, maintain flexibility, think innovatively, and work with others to initiate change to create a bright future. In fact, strategic competencies are especially emphasized in the scientific work of managers (Adamoniene & Petrauskiene, 2014). Sparrow & Hodgkinson (2006) argue that managers' strategic competencies are the extent to which managers' ability and effort to obtain information about the organization's missions and goals, create a dynamic environment, engage with technical levels to make informed decisions, and have a proper knowledge of resources. Human capital is used to respond appropriately to turbulent environmental situations (Sparrow & Hodgkinson, 2006).

Regarding the research background, so far no research has been done to design a model of strategic competencies of education managers. Rangriz et al (2018) concluded in a study that managers' strategic competencies in the three themes of strategic leadership, empowerment and steadfastness are on the path to success and accountability. Allahyari et al (2016) in a study have identified the competencies of managers in three dimensions of general competence (individual-perceptual), interpersonal (communication-social) and specialized competencies. Mohammadi & Torkzadeh (2016) concluded in a study that the three dimensions of value-secretary, knowledge-insight and skill-method are among the important competencies of managers. Abdollahi et al (2016) in a study concluded that general competencies include (personality and moral characteristics, perceptual competence, transcendence and interpersonal competence); Special competencies (technical and professional) and organizational competencies (business, leadership, performance management, strategic thinking and decision making) are the competencies of training managers and human resource development. Kin & Kareem (2019) concluded that being a leader in

learning, honesty and responsiveness, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and innovation, decision making, problem management, change management, entrepreneurship, digital literacy and emotional intelligence are the most important competencies they are managers. Pham et al (2019) concluded in a study that the five thematic areas of program management, human resource management, external communications, resource and budget management and administrative management are the most important competencies of school principals. Arhipova et al (2018) concluded in a study that in the new era for school principals, staff management, communication and financial management are considered as the most important competencies for principals to succeed. Moldazhanova et al (2018) concluded in a study that communication, psychological, organizational, educational, entrepreneurial and political competencies are the seven most important competencies of school principals. Shyan (2011) in a study entitled Competency Analysis of Senior Managers in Taiwan Industrial Hotel, showed that the competencies required of senior managers in hotels include two dimensions of general and specialized competencies. Edwards (2009) concluded in a study that staff development, communication, problem solving, change management, technical and task skills, team building, performance management, personal awareness, and the integration of perspectives are all managerial competencies.

Regarding the necessity of research, it should be said that a review of studies shows that so far no significant effort has been made to update and identify the strategic competencies required by education managers in Iran, and this creates a research vacuum. In Lorestan province, there is no model for recognizing and using strategic competencies. Based on this, the results of the study can be provided to education and used in management planning. In the macro dimension, the results of the study of the province can be useful as a scientific document for comparing and using researchers and completing and criticizing the results. Therefore, according to what was stated, the main purpose of this study is to design a model of strategic competencies of education managers in Lorestan province.

## 2. Methodology

The method of the present study was applied in terms of purpose and combined-exploratory (qualitative-quantitative) in terms of implementation. The statistical population of the study consisted of two parts: a) Qualitative part: There were experts who were aware of the research topic (strategic competencies of education managers) and the criteria for identifying them were obtained based on their resumes and administrative. 17 people were selected to form a Delphi panel by purposive sampling. It should be noted that the sample size in the Delphi method does not depend on the number of participants in the study but on the scientific validity of the experts participating in the study (Salek Ranjbarzadeh, 2010).

B) Quantitative section: Education directors of Lorestan province, including the general director and deputies and managers and deputies of districts and regions, which according to the inquiry from Lorestan province education number were 106 people, which according to Cochran's formula 87 people by stratified sampling method were chosen. The tools for collecting information in the qualitative section were theoretical foundations and interviews with experts. 103 indicators were extracted. After organizing them, comments similar to the composition and duplicate and marginal topics were removed. The research tool was a researcher-made questionnaire in the form of 3 main dimensions, 9 components and 89 indicators in the 9-point Likert scale, strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (9) and included: 1- Individual dimension with personality, value and cognitive components and 25 indicators, 2- management dimension with communication, functional, technical, technical, skill and strategic thinking components and 43 indicators and 3- organizational dimension with intra-organizational and extra-organizational components and 21 indicators. To validate the questionnaire, the views of some professors were used to cover the questions and the reliability was obtained by Cronbach's alpha test of 0.91. Kendall coefficient was used to analyze the data in the qualitative part of the Delphi group. The Kendall agreement coefficient

is a number between 0 and 1, which exists if the disagreement coefficient is zero and the complete agreement coefficient between the members is zero. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equations in SPSS and PLS software were used to analyze the data and validate the model.

### 3. Findings

Participants in the quality section included 10 men and 7 women, all of whom had doctorates in the fields of educational management, human resource management, and writing in the subject or conducting various courses for managers. In a small sample of the study, 10 (equivalent to 11%) were female and 77 (equivalent to 89%) were male. 14% had a bachelor's degree, 68% had a master's degree and another 18% had a doctorate. 1% were in the age group of 20 to 30 years, 16% were in the age range of 31 to 40 years, 68% were in the age range of 41 to 50 years and 15% were in the age group of over 50 years. In terms of managerial-deputy history (city, districts and general administration), records up to 5 years were 6%, records between 6 to 10 years were 6%. Records between 11 and 15 were 14%, between 16 and 20 years 25%, between 21 and 25 years 34% and managerial records over 25 years were 15%. Three rounds of questionnaires were distributed among the participants. There was no strong consensus in the first round. Therefore, after removing the indicators that scored lower, the questionnaire was redistributed and at this stage, a strong consensus was formed among the experts (Table 1).

**Table1.** Kendall test statistics in the final round

Variable	the amount of
N	17
Kendall coefficient	0/717
Chi-square	285/886
Degrees of freedom	75
Significance level	0/001

The statistical coefficient of Kendall test (0.717) is significant at the error level of  $\alpha = 0.01$  (Sig <0.01) which indicates that there is a significant agreement between the respondents. Table (2) also reports the results of 3 rounds of distribution of questionnaires among experts.

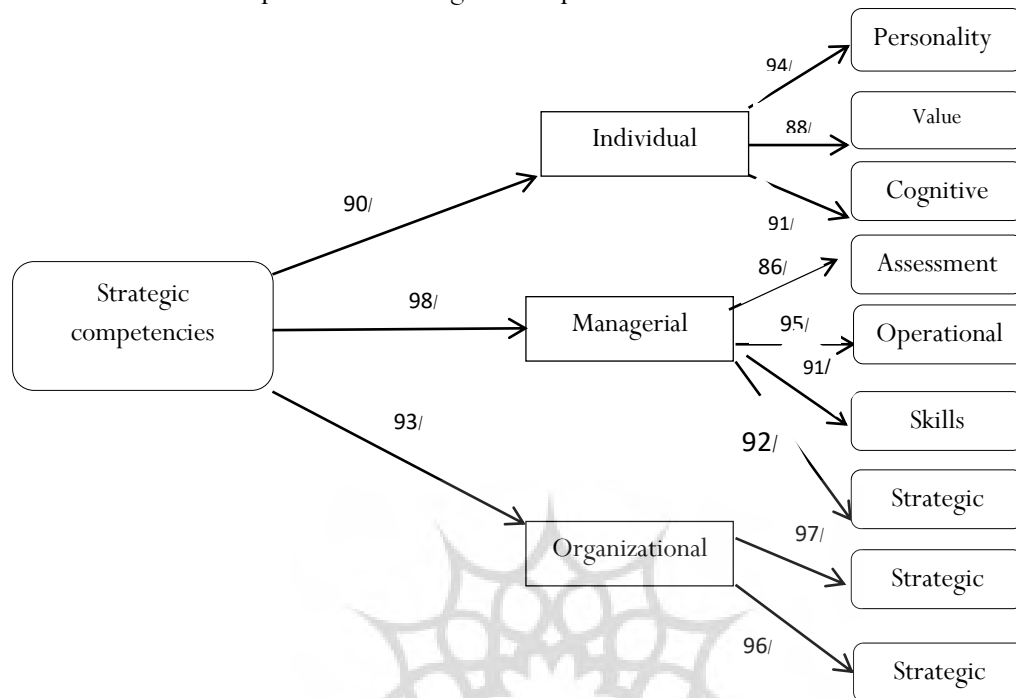
**Table2.** Delphi Results - Dimensions, components and indicators of strategic competencies of managers

Row	Dimensions	Components	The first round	Second round results		Third round results	
			Number of comments agree	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation
1	Individual	Personality	13	8/11	0/74	8/25	0/64
2		Value	12	8/26	0/72	8/06	0/69
3		Cognitive	13	8/11	0/70	8/26	0/63
4	Managerial	communicational	14	8/15	0/66	8/08	0/63
5		operational	13	8/21	0/67	8/13	0/62
6		Technical and skill	14	8/08	0/65	8/25	0/67
7	Organizational	Strategic thinking	15	8/37	0/69	8/44	0/61
8		Intra-organizational	13	8/19	0/74	8/18	0/64
9		External	13	8/13	0/71	8/07	0/66
Mean standard deviation				0/69		0/64	

Based on the results of the three courses of the Delphi method, for the following reasons, a consensus was reached among the members of the panel of experts and the repetition of the courses can be terminated. The standard deviation decreased from 0.69 in the second round to 0.64 in the third round, the Kendall coefficient for member response increased from 0.14 in the second round to 0.71 in the third round, indicating a strong consensus among expert members.

After identifying the dimensions and components of strategic competencies of managers, the relationships between indicators, components and dimensions of the strategic competencies model of managers were examined with Smart PLS3 statistical software. Prior to the model fit, the hypothesis of

normal data distribution was examined. The results of non-parametric Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the data did not have a normal distribution. Therefore, in modeling structural equations, the partial least squares method was used. Figure (1) and Table (3) present the path coefficients and significance level of the dimensions and components of managers' competence.



**figure1.** Factor loads and level of significance of dimensions and components of strategic competencies of managers

Figure (1) shows that all path coefficients calculated at the level of error of the first type are significant  $= \alpha = 0.01$  ( $P < 0.01$ ).

**Table3.** Factor loads and significant t values of relationships between individual, managerial and organizational dimensions with components

Relationships between components and dimensions	Factor load	Amara t	Significance level
Individual -> Personality	0/94	68/79	0/000
Individual -> Value	0/88	35/78	0/000
Individual -> Cognitive	0/91	58/35	0/000
Managerial -> Communication	0/86	16/58	0/000
Managerial -> Functional	0/95	71/42	0/000
Managerial -> Technical and skill	0/91	51/19	0/000
Managerial -> Strategic Thinking	0/92	47/03	0/000
Organizational -> Intra-organizational	0/97	109/72	0/000
Organizational -> Extra-organizational	0/97	133/40	0/000

Based on the results of Table (3), the significant t-values of the factor loads (path coefficients) related to the relationships between the components and the dimensions of strategic competencies are more than 2.57; Therefore, it is inferred that the factor loads of all components related to individual, managerial and organizational dimensions are significant at the error level of  $\alpha = 0.01$  ( $P < 0.01$ ,  $t < 2.57$ ).

**Table4.** Factor loads and significant t values of structural model of dimensions with strategic competencies

Relationships between dimensions and components with strategic competencies	Factor load	Amara t	Significance level
Strategic competencies -> Individual -> Personality	0/85	20/68	0/000
Strategic competencies -> Individual -> Value	0/80	19/10	0/000
Strategic competencies -> Individual -> Cognitive	0/82	20/37	0/000
Strategic competencies -> Managerial -> Communication	0/84	16/05	0/000

Strategic competencies -> managerial -> functional	0/93	57/67	0/000
Strategic competencies -> managerial -> technical and skill	0/90	45/00	0/000
Strategic competencies -> Managerial -> Strategic thinking	/90	41/02	0/000
Strategic competencies -> organizational -> intra-organizational	/90	44/78	0/000
Strategic competencies -> organizational -> extra-organizational	/90	48/66	0/000

Based on the information in Table (4), the significant values of factor loads (path coefficients) related to the relationships between components, dimensions and strategic competencies are more than 2.57; Therefore, it is inferred that the factor loads of all structural model relationships are significant at the error level of  $\alpha = 0.01$  ( $P < 0.01$ ,  $t < 2.57$ ).

**Table5.** Model fit evaluation indicators

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Mean Extraction Variance (AVE)	The coefficient Q <sup>2</sup>	Determination coefficient R <sup>2</sup>	Index (GOF)
Personality	0/87	0/90	0/59	0/34	0/89	0/61
Value	0/85	0/88	0/52	0/35	0/78	
Cognitive	0/88	0/91	0/58	0/42	0/83	
communicational	0/88	0/90	0/54	0/40	0/74	
operational	0/92	0/93	0/55	0/44	0/89	
Technical and skill	/90	0/92	0/60	0/45	0/84	
Strategic thinking	0/92	0/96	0/77	0/64	0/84	
Intra-organizational	0/91	0/93	0/63	0/49	0/93	
External	0/93	0/94	0/66	0/53	0/94	
Individual	0/94	0/95	0/54	0/36	0/81	
Managerial	0/90	0/97	0/51	0/44	0/96	
Organizational	0/89	0/88	0/60	0/51	0/87	
Strategic competencies	0/91	0/86	0/55	0/40	-	
Average index	0/91	0/90	0/59	0/44	0/86	

Based on the results of Tables 5, the average coefficient of determination index ( $R^2 = 86$ ) is more than 0.67 and also Q<sup>2</sup> index whose average value (0.44) is more than 0.35, the structural model has a suitable fit and predictive power. Has it. On the other hand, based on the good fit criterion (GOF), the calculated value of the index was 0.61, which is more than 0.35, so the overall model has a high fit. As a result, the model of strategic competencies of education managers has 3 dimensions (individual, managerial and organizational), 9 components (personality, value, cognitive, communication, functional, technical-skill, strategic thinking, internal and external) and 74 indicators. Among the dimensions of strategic competencies, the managerial dimension with a factor load of 0.98 has the most roles, the organizational dimension with a factor load of 0.93 is in the second place and the individual dimension with a factor load of 0.90 is in the third place.

#### 4. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to provide a model of strategic competencies of education managers in Lorestan province in 2019-20. First, during three rounds of distribution of the questionnaire among the experts, an acceptable coefficient of 0.71 was obtained. Number of main dimensions of strategic competencies: 3 dimensions, 9 components and 76 indicators (individual with three components of personality, value and cognition), managerial dimension (with four components of communication, function, technical and skill and strategic thinking) and organizational dimension (with two components and extra-organizational) was formed.

The results showed that among the dimensions of strategic competencies of education managers, respectively, the managerial dimension with a factor load of 0.98 has the most roles in the strategic

competencies of education managers. Factor 0.92, technical and skill with factor load of 0.91 and relationship with factor load of 0.86 were also confirmed using the above test. Organizational dimension with a factor load of 0.93 and components (intra-organizational with a factor load of 0.97 and extra-organizational with a factor load of 0.97) and individual dimension with a factor load of 0.90 and components (personality with a factor load of 0.94, Cognitive with a factor load of 0.91 and value with a factor load (0.88) were confirmed.

The findings of the present study are consistent with the results of the following studies: Rangriz et al (2018) who showed that strategic competencies of managers include the theme of strategic leadership, empowerment and accountability; According to the research of Allahyari et al (2016) who concluded that managers' competencies are in three dimensions of general competence (individual-perceptual), interpersonal (communication-social) and specialized competencies; According to the research of Abdollahi et al (2016) who concluded that general competencies, special competencies and organizational competencies are important pillars of managers' competencies; According to Kin & Kareem (2019) who concluded that critical thinking, creativity and innovation, decision making and change management are elements of the strategic competencies model of managers; According to Pham et al (2019) who showed that program management, human resource management, external communications, resource and budget management and administrative management are the most important competencies of school principals and Moldazhanova, et al (2018) who concluded that competencies Communication, psychological and organizational are important competencies of school principals, align and confirm their results.

In explaining the results, it can be said that in models such as the competency model (Abdullah & Sentosa, 2012), the individual dimension was somewhat more important, but in the present model, organizational and extra-organizational competencies were more important than individual and personality competencies. Another feature of the model that is different from previous models is that in the present study, the component of strategic thinking has been independently examined and also attention to the environment around the organization and the role of external factors on the process of management and leadership of the organization has been neglected in previous research. In the management dimension, which was also recognized as the most important model dimension in terms of factor load (0.98), it creates a suitable ground for increasing the various communications, functional and technical skills of managers. In fact, it can be considered the reason for the importance and the first factor in the model. In general, in our country, in the field of management and the way of external and internal communication with customers and clients, there has always been a debate and managers have not been able to satisfy employees and clients. On the other hand, it can be said that the importance of the management dimension in the strategic competency model is that in an organization such as education, which has the first place in the distribution and dissemination of culture, the management dimension is expected to be based on law and transparency and affairs on a functional and communication basis. Be accepted. The organizational dimension is the second important part of the present model with a factor load of 0.93 and components (intra-organizational with a factor load of 0.97 and extra-organizational with a factor load of 0.97) and individual dimension with a factor load of 0.90 and components (personality with a load The factor was 0.94, cognitive with a factor load of 0.91 and value with a factor load (0.88) and was confirmed. The requirement for the success of any organization is the link within the organization with outside the organization and attention to changes in the environment. The importance of the organizational dimension is related to the connection of needs within the organization with external needs, and this requires the skills of strategic thinking competencies of education managers to look carefully at issues and guide their staff to adapt to the needs and improve students' different skills. .

Although the present results have limited generalizability and require a larger and more diverse statistical community, but can be used as a native model of strategic competencies of education managers, Other limitations were the lack of cooperation of education directors due to job difficulties and problems

related to the time of completing the questionnaires and the lack of attention to competency in the administrative system, which motivated the statistical community to cooperate to complete the questionnaire. Another limitation was that the majority of the experts present were people with very old years and younger managers were less present in the study. Combining the competencies of highly experienced managers with less experienced managers can contain other valuable points and further identify the weaknesses of the model, because young managers have different attitudes than managers of previous generations. Accordingly, it is suggested that researchers in future studies use both the attitudes of young managers and the statistical population in terms of geographical level. Considering the importance of strategic competencies in the selection and appointment of education directors, it is suggested that a tool for measuring the competencies of individuals in each of the dimensions (individual, managerial and organizational) be developed and designed. Researchers can work on how to implement each of the dimensions and components of strategic competencies in the form of separate study plans. This means designing training programs and types of training appropriate to each of the dimensions or strengthening the following competencies.





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