

# Professional Self-development of Faculty Members; A Study in Developing a Structural Model

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to develop a structural model of professional self-development in the faculty community. The structural model has been investigated as a quantitative method with the help of LISREL software. This research has been conducted in the faculty members of Tehran, Shahid Beheshti and Allameh Tabatabai universities with 3460 people. In this study, 346 people were selected using random sampling method and Morgan table. A professional self-development questionnaire with reliability ( $\alpha = 0.97$ ) was used to collect data. This questionnaire examines 5 dimensions of professional self-development. The results showed that the structural model of professional self-development of faculty members has five key dimensions including professional self-development competencies, self-development action and implementation, self-development planning, self-development tendency and factors affecting self-development that are well-suited to the data. The results showed that these dimensions have affected each other in such a way that the effective factors with path coefficient ( $\gamma = 0.52$ ) have affected the tendency to professional self-development. Also, inclination with path coefficient ( $\gamma = 0.92$ ) has affected self-development planning. In addition, planning with path coefficient ( $\gamma = 0.95$ ) has affected self-development action and practice. Finally, action and practice have affected the professional self-development competencies with path coefficient ( $\gamma = 0.83$ ).

**Keywords:** Structural model, quantitative approach, professional self-development.

## Introduction

Human Resource Development (HRD) is one of the most conventional and the most costly activities among various activities of Human Resource Management (HRM). These activities include new skills, improving the existing skills and behaviors and methods effective on staff. HRD is any type positive process or activity which is able to develop knowledge based on work, expertise, literacy and satisfaction in short or long term which is for personal, group or team result or for the resources of an organization, society, nation or finally all humankind (Vanhala & Ahteela, 2010). The new approach has been recently considered by experts is self-development which will be highly proportional to the spirit of scientific independence and self-governance of faculty member.

According to self-development, individuals themselves are responsible for their professional growth and are looking for self-development opportunities. Self-development activities are voluntary activities that individuals intentionally do to learn new things for their new job or to develop their occupational skills and knowledge. Self-development activities have not been asked from individual by organization. Individuals' self-development includes any activity that he does to make his skills better as an organizational member (Orvis & Gregory, 2011).

The writers have made effort to explain the differences, differentiations, definitions, concepts, books, materials and methods of self-development in their majors and fields (McAllister, 2007). Self-development books and programs have appeared since 1950s (Farrand, 2005) and they have recently been documented in journals (Holzinger et al., 2012). Self-development growth has been estimated billions of dollars. However, self-development has not been deeply studied so far (Farrand, 2005) which has necessitated studying and researching this concept in different environments and organizations to gradually identify scientific approaches to develop individuals in organizations with this approach. Accordingly, the current study has been conducted aiming at answering this key question that how the self-development structural pattern of the universities' faculty member is?

In order to comprehend self-development better, first it is necessary to identify HRD well. HRD is a field of practice and theory focusing on designing programmed activities to facilitate learning and development in organization to be profitable both for organization and for learners (Lammintakanen et al., 2008). HRD has been defined as one of the performance systems in organization which takes the responsibility of all activities related to the education and development of staff (Lyons, 2016). HRD has been defined as policies and programs supporting equal opportunities to permanently gain and apply skill, knowledge, attitude and competencies which improve personal independence and are mutually useful for organization, individual, society and learner environment (Nazar et al., 2011). As mentioned earlier, self-development is a new approach which has been recently considered in HRD. Self-development is personal growth and progress which is accompanied with responsibility to increase one's learning and selecting a tool to achieve it. Thus, encountering individuals with real issues is better than educating them theoretically and it has been recognized as an important resource for learning and development. Accordingly, self-development is the beginning of an effort to personal development and accepting suggestions in the field of strategies, tactics and working with human resources. More simply, mainly self-development not only aims at guiding individual to progress but also it facilitates his progress in all levels.

Self-development is a process that learners are responsible for making learning conditions, content, field and stages of learning (Boyce et al., 2010). From learning and education point of view, self-developer will play a key role in determining learning dimensions and necessities. Since person-centered or learner-centered approach is designed and implemented based on the needs specific to each person, it will be more effective and efficient and organizations won't pay heavy costs for learning courses and general education which are less effective but they will help individuals self-development by providing learning resources and consultation services during learning process and besides fulfilling staff's personal purposes, they will achieve organizational goals. Self-development needs people who take the initial responsibility of programming, doing and evaluating learning experiences. This development may be done through some learning opportunities such as working experiences, periodic seminars and professional workshops or conferences. Also, self-development is a starting process from individual that organizations or supervisors have not asked it officially from individuals (Ellinger, 2004).

(Khasanov & Karimova, 2017) have designed a professional self-development model for learners including six key parts. There are society and government on one hand and professional self-development system on the other hand which works cooperatively and personally. According to this model, official and unofficial educations and internships have been also considered. Educational environment acts as a background where there is an interactive communication between teachers and students. This models emphasizes that self-development events have to occur inside educational environment and inside real life. Two forms of teachers support simultaneously happen for self-development activities in this model that one of them is cooperative and another one is personal (Figure 1).

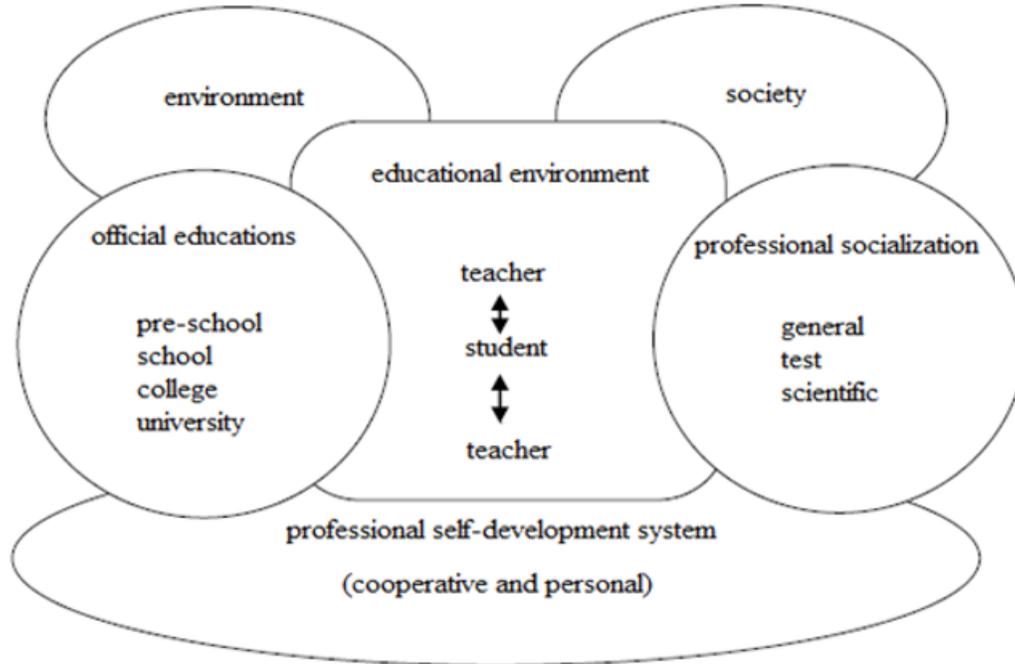


Figure 1. professional self-development model (Khasanov & Karimova, 2017)

## Literature Review

(Bladergroen et al., 2014) have studied the role of technology in professional self-development inspiration that a part of their results showed that professional self-development will be a part of teachers and students inspirational behaviors in the future. According to their definition, professional self-development inspiration has been focused on itself and is formed around an imagination of a successful teacher and instructor and according to the latest progresses for person.

(Alhaddad, 2014) in his PhD thesis concluded that there is an increasing request for professional self-development which mostly focuses on features that make individuals involved and participate in self-development activities and explain it.

(Antonova, 2014), has investigated the economic identity of people and their basic behaviors and the results showed that professional self-development may be originated from the economic and psychological identity of people. In other words, weak psychological perception or weak economic condition causes professional self-development and self-actualization.

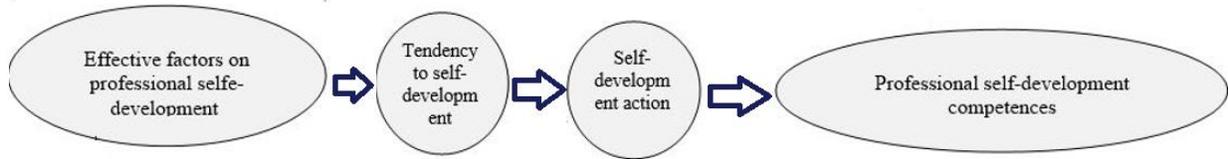
(London & Holtlarsen Thisted, 2013) have concluded that younger people show higher self-development process and those who receive more reinforcements and feel powerful have higher performance than others. They have focused on self-development activities in their studies that concentrate on occupational path progress like setting goals to improve performance, increasing commitment to develop their occupational performance, involvement in programming occupational progress path, learning new skills and obtaining new knowledge.

(Orvis & Gregory, 2011) have investigated the relationship between so active characters and self-development process. The results showed a significant relationship between working environment supports interaction and familiarizing individuals with learning goal, experience and awareness freedom. Also, so active characters show significant positive relationships with self-development processes.

(Reichard & Stefanie, 2011) have concluded that self-development enables people to adapt themselves with permanent environmental changes. They have stated an interaction between leader self-development and the processes which are able to create an organizational leadership development strategy. Also they have maintained that self-

development is a valuable and effective method for organization that makes individuals develop themselves for competitive courses.

According to what has been investigated and mentioned, the conceptual model of this study is illustrated as follows and research questions have been asked based on this model (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** research conceptual model

According to the research conceptual model, the following questions have been considered:

- Is the professional self-development structural model of faculty member fitted?
  - Are the factors effective on tendency to professional self-development influential?
  - Is tendency to professional self-development programming influential?
  - Is programming effective on self-development action?
- Is action effective on professional self-development competences?

### Methodology

The current study is descriptive-correlative and of structural equations type. The statistical population of this study are all faculty members of University of Tehran, Shahid Beheshti University and Allameh Tabataba'i University which were 3460 people. Simple random sampling method used for sampling. 346 people have been selected for sample volume using Morgan (Table 1) from faculty members of these three universities. The researcher-made professional self-development of faculty members questionnaire used to collect data including 50 questions which investigate and evaluate 5 key dimensions of professional self-development.

Content and face validity used to validate the questionnaire so that the opinions of the experts, supervisors and advisors considered and the questionnaire corrected and completed using them. Cronbach's alpha has been used to investigate the questionnaire reliability so that the SPSS showed the reliability of the questionnaire 0.97.

**Table 1.** The reliability of professional self-development questionnaire of faculty members

Row	Dimensions	Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha)
1	Self-development competences	0.87
2	Acting self-development	0.90
3	Self-development programming	0.85
4	Tendency to self-development	0.83
5	Effective factors on self-development	0.96
6	Total reliability	0.97

### Results

The research findings have been expressed focusing on fulfilling the research objective but before explaining the objective, here are the descriptive results: considering frequency distribution of the respondents based on experience, the research findings showed that faculty members with 6 to 10 years of experience have allocated the most number of statistical sample volume to themselves with 34.7% and regarding frequency distribution of the respondents based on gender, male faculty member and female faculty member have allocated 52% and 48% of the sample to themselves, respectively. The results of the cognitive population statistics of the respondents about scientific ranking showed that most members of sample faculty member have ranked as assistant professor with 51.7%.

The result of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the professional self-development of faculty member variable with 1.261 and p-value 0.083 shows the normal data distribution of this variable which shows the normal curve of this variable.

In order to investigate the fitness of professional self-development model of faculty member first the internal relationships of these components must be considered. The results showed high relationships between the dimensions and components of this model. The following (Table 2) shows the results.

**Table 2.** The correlation table of professional self-development dimensions of faculty member

Variable/ Component	1	2	3	4	5	6
Self-development competences	1					
Self-development action	0.70**	1				
Self-development programming	0.68**	0.77**	1			
Tendency to self-development	0.59**	0.82**	0.82**	1		
Factor effective on self-development	0.50**	0.62**	0.55**	0.63**	1	
Self-development	0.70**	0.83**	0.76**	0.83**	0.93**	1

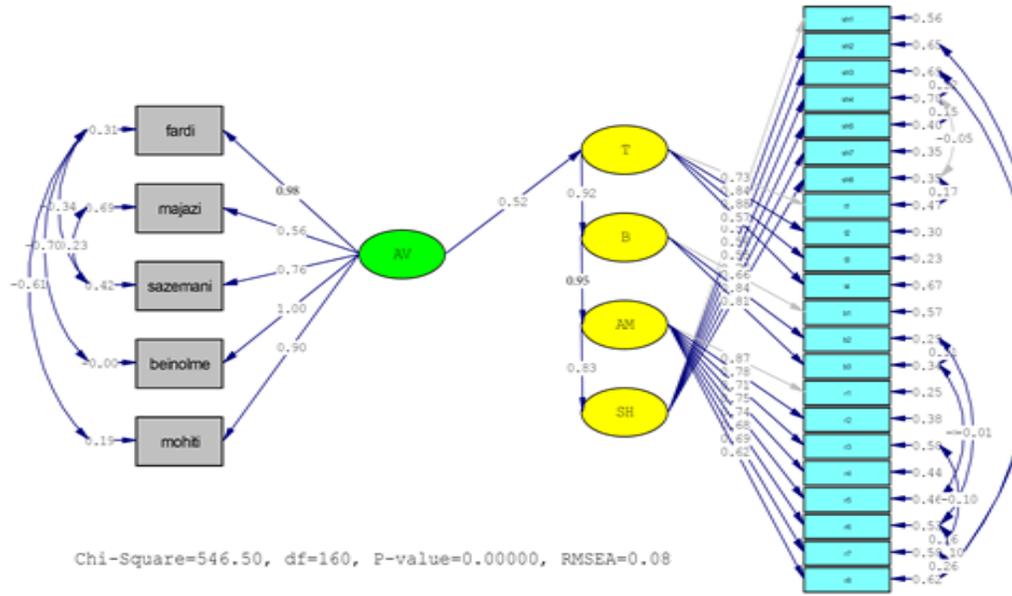
\* P-value

\*\* (p<0.01) 0.01 (p<0.05) 0.05

Investigating the fitness of professional self-development of faculty member with data showed that the model enjoys relatively good fitness. In order to investigate the fitness of a model it is necessary to investigate and confirm the fitness indices off the model (Figure 3) and (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Fitness indices of professional self-development model of faculty member

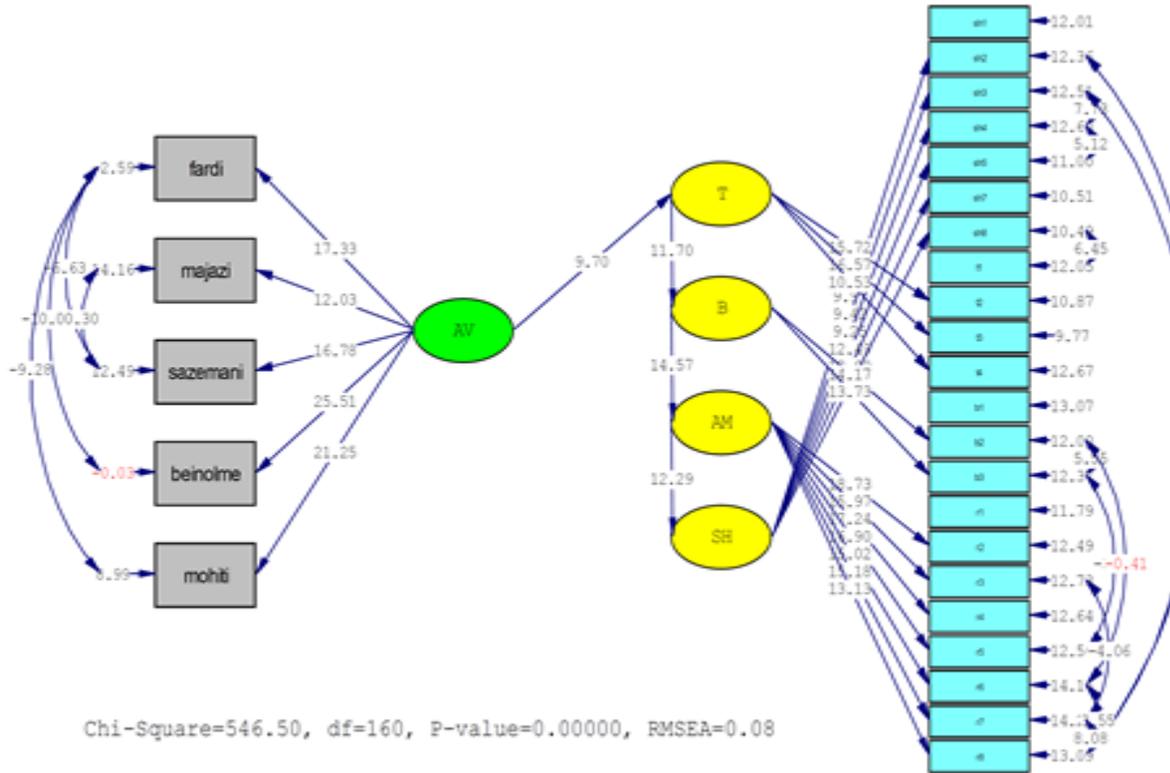
Fitness index	X2/df	RFI	NFI	RMSEA	NNFI	IFI
Range of acceptance	1-5	>0.09	>0.9	<0.1	>0.9	0-1
Calculated value	3.41	0.95	0.95	0.08	0.96	0.97



**Figure 3.** Path coefficients in professional self-development pattern of faculty member

In this study, every index which investigates model fitness and real data from a specific direction is judged based on a p-value. After removing covariance errors, investigating fitness indices like ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Bentler and Bonnet’s Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RSMEA) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) shows that the model enjoys relatively good fitness with data (Table 4).

In order to investigate the significance of the model relationships, t-test or t-value was used. Since significance investigated at 0.05 error level, so if the values resulted from t-value be calculated less that  $\pm 1.96$ , the relationship isn’t significant. T-value shows the significance of all relationships, in other words the model enjoys good fitness with data which answers all research questions positive (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** T-value in the professional self-development pattern of faculty member

**Table 4.** Total investigated paths in the professional self-development pattern of faculty member

Path	t-value	Regression coefficient	Status
Factors effective on self-development / tendency to self-development	9.70**	Direct 0.52	Sig
Tendency to self-development / self-development programming	11.70**	Direct 0.92	Sig
Self-development programming / self-development action	14.57**	Direct 0.95	Sig
Self-development action / self-development competences	12.29**	Direct 0.83	Sig

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The present study has been conducted aiming at professional self-development of faculty member Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The importance and findings of this study has been considered in different studies and researches by (Bladergroen et al., 2014), (Alhaddad, 2014), (Antonova, 2014), (London & Holtlarsen Thisted, 2013),

(Orvis & Gregory, 2011) and (Reichard & Stefanie, 2011) which is demonstrative of the importance of the professional self-development of faculty member like other teachers.

After removing covariance errors, investigating professional self-development pattern of faculty member fitness like ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Bentler and Bonnet's Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RSMEA) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) shows that the model enjoys relatively good fitness with data. Studies by (Bladergroen et al., 2014) and (Alhaddad, 2014) were among studies which investigated professional self-development. Nowadays, professional self-development has been studied in different models that each of them has its own components and function like the study by (Khasanov & Karimova, 2017) which has designed a model for professional self-development including six key parts. There are society and government on one hand and professional self-development system on the other hand which works cooperatively and personally. According to this model, official and unofficial educations and internships have been also considered. Educational environment acts as a background where there is an interactive communication between teachers and students. This models emphasizes that self-development events have to occur inside educational environment and inside real life. Two forms of teachers support simultaneously happen for self-development activities in this model that one of them is cooperative and another one is personal. Like the model by this researchers, the model of the current study has some specific dimensions and components.

The findings of this study show that the professional self-development model of faculty member consisted of five key dimensions including effective factors, tendency, programming, action and finally professional self-development competences. Such dimensions are found in studies by (Bladergroen et al., 2014) and (Alhaddad, 2014) which shows this importance of these dimensions.

Professional self-development of faculty member will bring them higher performance in these dimensions as (London & Holtlarsen Thisted, 2013) has focused on self-development process and have stated that those with self-development receive more reinforcements and feel powerful and have higher performance than others. They have focused on self-development activities in their studies that concentrate on occupational path progress like setting goals to improve performance, increasing commitment to develop their occupational performance, involvement in programming occupational progress path, learning new skills and obtaining new knowledge that all of them may be related to self-development.

According to the results of the current study, the following suggestions are recommended for the professional self-development of faculty member:

- Factors effective on personal development such as personal, organizational, virtual, international and environmental factors must be reinforced and developed to strengthen the professional self-development of faculty member.
- Tendency to self-development plays an important role so improving the tendency of faculty member as well as informing, meaning-making and things like them which promote tendency to self-development are recommended.
- Programming for self-development is necessary so faculty member may use professional self-development programming to develop themselves.
- The appearance of self-developmental behavior is originated from acting self-development therefore doing activities and actions which practically show the self-developmental behavior of faculty member like self-learning, E-learning and virtual learning, teaching, learning by doing, learning from colleagues, coaching and like them are recommended.

At last, it is essential that professional self-development of faculty member leads to the development of professional self-development competences that paying attention to these competences such as professional meaning making, professional valuing, professional purposefulness, professional cognition, professional skills, professional communications and professional ethics and behaviors is recommended.

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