

Analysis of Administrative Skills Gaps for Human Resources and Its Impact on Improving the Efficiency of Private Educational Institutions - A Case Study: Al-Kut National University"

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the gaps in administrative skills of human resources in private educational institutions, and the impact of these gaps on the efficiency of institutional performance, through a field case study of Al-Kut National University. The weakness of administrative skills represents a structural challenge facing private universities in Iraq, in light of a complex educational environment that requires human competencies capable of keeping pace with technical and organizational changes, and interacting with accreditation and quality requirements. The study relies on the descriptive analytical approach to measure the gap between the available skills and the skills required by Administrative staff, using a questionnaire form applied to a sample of administrative staff at the university.

The study deals with two types of variables: the independent variable, which is the gaps in management skills (leadership, planning, organization, decision-making, communication), and the dependent variable, which is the efficiency of institutional performance, which is measured through indicators such as achievement, speed of decision-making, and beneficiary satisfaction. The data was analyzed using AMOS structural statistical analysis software, with truthfulness and stability testing and a structural equation model (SEM).

The results showed that there are clear gaps in the management skills of a wide range of employees, especially in the dimensions of "participatory leadership" and "planning ability", which negatively affected institutional performance indicators. The study also found that addressing these gaps through targeted and ongoing training programs would enhance operational efficiency and the quality of management decisions.

The study recommends rebuilding recruitment, training and administrative development strategies in private universities, linking them to performance and competency evaluation standards, and establishing special units to monitor skills gaps periodically to reduce them within a time frame and methodology.

Key words: skills gap, human resources, management skills, institutional competence, private education, Al-Kut National University.



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Introduction:

During the past two decades, private educational institutions in Iraq have witnessed a remarkable quantitative expansion in the number of private universities and colleges, as a result of the increasing demand for higher education and the increased participation of the private sector in the educational process. However, this expansion has often not been accompanied by qualitative development at the level of management and human resources, which has negatively reflected on the level of institutional performance and organizational efficiency. The reports of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research indicate that there is a significant disparity in the levels of quality and efficiency between educational institutions. Especially in the administrative field, which is an essential nerve in ensuring institutional stability and achieving academic and development goals.

In this context, **the administrative skills gap emerges** as one of the most important challenges hindering the development of private educational institutions, as the concept of the gap refers to the difference between the actual skills an employee possesses and the standard skills required by his job. These gaps are manifested in multiple areas, including poor leadership capabilities, strategic planning, administrative organization, and institutional communication. This is confirmed by (Albrecht, 2021) Poor management skills are one of the main structural reasons for the low efficiency of private higher education institutions in the Arab world.

In the Iraqi environment, a study (Al-Kubaisi, 2022) indicated that more than 60% of administrators in private universities have not received job training in the fields of planning and organization since their appointment, which leads to weakness in the management of human, financial and academic resources, thus affecting the quality of education and the efficiency of operations.

This study is based on the importance of **analyzing the administrative skills gaps** of employees at Al-Kut National University as an applied model for an Iraqi private educational institution, with the aim of diagnosing weaknesses, analyzing their causes and effects, and showing the extent to which they are related to the level of institutional efficiency, which means the ability to achieve goals with the lowest resources and the highest quality.

Study problem:

The problem of the study is determined by the following main question:

To what extent do human resources management skills gaps affect the efficiency of private educational institutions?

Research Gap:

Despite the abundance of studies related to human resources and administrative training, applied research that addresses the **administrative skills gap as a direct factor affecting the efficiency of institutional performance within Iraqi private education** is still limited. Most of the previous studies have dealt with the subject from a general angle without focusing on the local context or the case of specific private universities.

Hence the importance of this study in bridging this gap, and providing an applied model that can be generalized or built upon in similar educational institutions.

Research gap analytical summary

1. **Scope of application:** There is no Iraqi study that combined *the analysis of the management skills gap* at the university level with the modeling of its impact on **the efficiency of institutional performance** by the SEM method in a specific private educational institution.
2. **Depth of indicators:** Previous studies used partial efficiency indicators, while this study adopts composite indicators (KPIs) that include effectiveness, time, quality, and beneficiary satisfaction.
3. **Additional variables:** Our study links leadership gaps *planning--* organization with performance efficiency, while other research has focused on a single skill or a narrow qualitative dimension.

With this survey, the theoretical foundation of the study is strengthened, with a clear statement of the originality it will provide.

Importance of the study:

- Sheds light on one of the most prominent challenges affecting the performance of private universities.
- Provides a scientific vision to bridge the management skills gap.
- Provide the university administration with practical recommendations to improve institutional efficiency.

Objectives of the study:

1. Analysis of the reality of administrative skills of human resources at Al-Kout National University.
2. Diagnose administrative gaps that hinder institutional efficiency.
3. Propose mechanisms and strategies to address the gap.
4. Measure the impact of gaps on performance and efficiency.

Hypotheses of the study:

1. **The first hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant relationship between the administrative skills gap and the efficiency of performance at Al-Kut National University.
2. **Second hypothesis:** the gap of administrative leadership, organization and planning negatively affects the quality of institutional performance
3. Regulation gap performance efficiency

Study variables:

Variable type	Variable name	Definition	Measuring instruments
independent	Management Skills Gaps	The difference between available skills and required skills in leadership, organization, planning	Questionnaire – GAP Analysis
Adherent	Efficiency of institutional performance	The ability to achieve educational and administrative goals efficiently and with high quality	Performance Indicators (KPI) – Questionnaire – Internal Assessment

Illustration of the study variables:**graph TD****A [Management Skills Gaps]****--> B1[Administrative Leadership]****--> B2 [Management Planning]****--> B3[Regulation and Control]****B1 --> C [Institutional Performance Efficiency]****B2 --> C****B3 --> C****Previous studies:**

To enrich the theoretical framework and distinguish the current study from previous work, I include the following a critical survey of the top **ten** recent research and reports related to management skills gaps and their impact on the efficiency of higher education institutions, classified into international, regional, and local (Iraqi) studies. After each group, I present a comparative summary showing what has been added or what has remained untreated, in preparation for justifying the research gap.

I. International Studies

Reference	Subject and Curriculum	Key Findings
Deloitte (2025) Global Human Capital Trends	A survey of 14,000 companies in 95 countries focused on the "leadership capacity gap" after digital transformation.	75% of workers demand job stability versus organisations' need for "rapid response"; report identified a skills gap in 'data-driven leadership' and 'continuous learning' <u>The Australian</u>
UNESCO IITE (2023) Talent Ecosystem for Digital Transformation	A regional report on 10 countries (including Iraq) assesses the alignment of higher education policies with digital and managerial skills development.	Recommended the establishment of national systems to monitor skills gaps and link them to university funding allocations. <u>iite.unesco.org</u>

Comparative**note:**

Global reports focus on comprehensive digital leadership skills, but do not provide accurate field measurements within Iraqi private universities, which is what the current study targets.

Second: Regional Studies (Arabic)

Reference	Country/Sample	Curriculum	Key findings
Mustafa (2023)	Jordan – 260 educational leaders in the Ministry of Education	Analytical questionnaire (51 items)	The average availability of leadership competencies according to modern trends; recommended re-engineering leadership training programs. <u>Science Publishing Group</u>
Youssef & Saad (2024)	Egypt – 376 graduates	Comparative Questionnaire	The existence of a moral impact to create university competitive advantage in bridging the employment gap (Employability Gap). <u>JCES</u>

			Journal
ILO (2024) Policy PaperEgypt	Egypt – Policy Analysis	Offer five solutions to bridge the skills gaps between higher education and the labor market and link financing to gap measurement. <u>International Labour Organization</u>	

Comparative Note: Arab Studies focuses on the employment gap or leadership competencies at the ministerial level, while our study addresses the administrative skills gaps within a specific private university and their direct relationship to the efficiency of institutional performance.

III. Local (Iraqi) Studies

Reference	Sample and Methodology	Key findings
Magdy et al. (2024)	3 private universities – descriptive analytical test	Digital transformation explains 6874% of the improvement in the efficiency of educational services; recommended the integration of management training with the technological infrastructure. riped-online.com
Aziz & Mustafa (2022)	335 students / Salahaddin University	SEM modeling
Ramadan et al. (2024)	87 academics + 102 employers	Survey/gap analysis
Hussein (2024)	141 administrative leaders in 3 universities	Pivot Analysis
Saadi et al. (2023)	Two private universities	Correlation study

Comparative Note:

- Most Iraqi studies dealt with one aspect (digital transformation, curricula, leadership), while our study measures leadership, planning and organization as dimensions of the skills gap, and links them quantitatively to institutional efficiency indicators (speed of decision-making, stakeholder satisfaction).

The first topic: administrative skills gaps in human resources in private educational institutions - theoretical framework

First: The concept of management skills

Management skills refer to the behavioral and cognitive abilities and characteristics that enable an individual to perform administrative tasks efficiently and effectively. These skills include planning, organization, decision-making, leadership, and communication, and are essential to ensure the stability of institutional performance and the achievement of the organization's goals.

Mintzberg (1973) defined it as "a set of cognitive and practical behaviors that a manager needs to accomplish his work efficiently." Abdul Basit Mohamed Hassan (2020) defined it as "the ability

to use available resources to achieve organizational goals at the lowest costs and in a timely manner."

Second: The concept of the management skills gap

The skills gap is defined as "the difference between an employee's current skills and the actual skills required by the job" (ILO, 2019). This difference is apparent when employees are unable to respond to organizational or technological changes due to a lack of necessary skills.

Management skill gaps can be categorized into:

Gap type	Interpretation
Knowledge Gap	Lack of theoretical knowledge required to perform administrative tasks
Application gap	The presence of knowledge with the absence of the ability to practical application
Behavior gap	Lack of leadership traits or team-related skills

Third: Manifestations of the administrative skills gap in private education

In private educational institutions, management skills gaps are manifested in several forms, including:

1. **Poor ability to plan strategically:** Many academic department managers lack the skills to formulate realistic plans based on accurate data.
2. **Lack of participatory leadership:** Leadership behaviors are often traditional or authoritarian, which weakens team spirit.
3. **Poor time and resource management skills:** which reflects negatively on the implementation of academic and administrative programs.
4. **Lack of data analysis and decision-making skills:** Many administrative cadres lack effective analysis tools to help them evaluate performance.

Fourth: Reasons for the emergence of skills gaps

- **Weak rehabilitation and training programs** in private universities.
- **Lack of accurate job** descriptions for the tasks of administrative staff.
- **Appointments that are not based on competence and experience.**
- **Rapid digital transformation** that was not accompanied by proper training.

The second topic: the efficiency of private educational institutions - concept, dimensions and effects

First: The concept of institutional efficiency

Organizational efficiency is defined as the ability of an organization to use its resources (human, financial, technological) optimally to achieve its goals with the highest quality and lowest cost (Kaplan & Norton, 2004). It is a combination of effectiveness (achieving goals) and efficiency (achieving them with minimal resources).

In the educational context, competence includes:

- **Quality of Academic Programs**
- **Efficient staff management**
- **Student and Stakeholder Satisfaction**
- **Responding to technological changes**

Second: Indicators for measuring the efficiency of educational institutions

According to university quality reports (QA Higher Ed, 2021), performance efficiency indicators in private education include:

Dimension	Pointer	Measurement method
Academic Competence	Success and graduation rate	Admission and graduation records
Administrative efficiency	Time to complete tasks – employee satisfaction	Internal Surveys
Financial efficiency	Resource Efficiency	Financial Reports
Efficient Infrastructure	Readiness of halls and laboratories	Maintenance and usage reports

Third: The relationship between management skills gaps and performance efficiency

Analytical models indicate that the existence of skill gaps among administrative staff reflects negatively on multiple aspects of competence, including:

- Delayed administrative decisions
- Poor coordination between departments
- Low satisfaction of students and faculty members
- Reduced capacity to respond to crises

Fourth: Challenges facing private educational institutions in Iraq

- **Weak institutional funding** and its impact on training and development programs.
- **Traditional leadership** and non-adoption of modern management methods.
- **Absence of a culture of continuous improvement** and understanding of academic accreditation standards.

Third Theme: Statistical Analysis and Applied Study Results

First: Descriptive analysis of demographic data

Table 1: Sample Distribution by Sex, Qualification, Years of Service

Variable	Category	Iteration	Percentage
Sex	Male	68	60.7%
	Female	44	39.3%
Education	Bachelor	81	72.3%
	Master / PhD	31	27.7%
Years of service	Less than 5 years	34	30.4%
	5–10 years	27	24.1%
	More than 10 years	51	45.5%

Q Explanation: It

is clear that the majority of males have basic university degrees and long experience (45.5% for more than 10 years), which indicates the availability of institutional knowledge and accumulated experience that qualifies them to respond consciously to the paragraphs of the questionnaire, which enhances the validity of the data.

Second: Testing the truthfulness and reliability of the questionnaire tool

Table 2: Cronbach alpha coefficients per axis

Axis	Number of paragraphs	Cronbach Alpha
Management leadership gap	6	0.81
Management Planning Gap	5	0.78
Administrative organization gap	4	0.84
Efficiency of institutional performance	6	0.86

Q Explanation:

Cronbach alpha values ≥ 0.70 indicate high reliability. This means that the questionnaire items actually measure what they are supposed to measure, and that the sample responses are internally consistent, allowing for reliable inferential analysis.

Third: Hypothesis testing using linear regression analysis**Table 3: Results of regression analysis between gaps and efficiency**

Hypothesis	β coefficient	T value	Sig.	Interpretation
H1: Driving gap \rightarrow performance efficiency	-0.41	4.82	0.000	Statistically significant; strong negative effect
H2: Planning gap \rightarrow performance efficiency	-0.36	4.09	0.001	function, negative average effect
H3: Regulation gap \rightarrow performance efficiency	-0.27	3.34	0.002	function; negative limited effect

Q Interpretive analysis:

- Negative β in all cases means that every increase in the skills gap leads to a decline in proficiency.
- The driving gap explains 41% of the change in efficiency when other factors are fixed.
- The high T-strength and significance coefficient (Sig.) < 0.05 confirm that the results are not random but statistically real.

Fourth: Graphic Analysis – Visual Representation of Relationships**◇ Graphical representation (impact path)****graph TD**

A[management leadership gap] -->| $\beta = -0.41$ | C[Efficiency of institutional performance]

B[management planning gap] -->| $\beta = -0.36$ | C

D[management gap] -->| $\beta = -0.27$ | C

Q Analysis:

The graph represents a multiple regression model, showing that the leadership gap is the most deteriorating factor, followed by planning and organization. This requires the rehabilitation of administrative leaders first, then the planning teams, then the internal structure and organization units.

Fifth: Model Quality Using AMOS Analysis – SEM Model

◆ Conformity Quality Metrics:

Pointer	Value	Acceptable minimum	Interpretation
RMSEA	0.061	< 0.08	Good
CFI	0.934	≥ 0.90	Very good
GFI	0.911	≥ 0.90	Acceptable

🔍 Interpretive analysis:

Values suggest that a structural model that connects the three skill gaps to performance efficiency explains the relationship well. RMSEA < 0.08 stands for a low approximate error, and CFI and GFI support the strength of the pattern.

Sixth: Annotated Variance Measurement (R^2)

- $R^2 = 0.57$

• 🔍 Review:

57% of the changes in the efficiency of institutional performance are attributable to managerial skill gaps, which are relatively high in organizational studies, which means that filling these gaps can raise performance by more than half.

Seventh: Summary of the results of the analysis

- The managerial leadership gap is the most negative and requires urgent training programs.
- The planning gap is associated with delays in achieving strategic objectives and weakens coordination.
- Regulation has less impact, but it is no less important, especially in the academic environment.
- The adopted statistical model interprets the relationship coherently and statistically proven.
- The questionnaire used has proven to be consistent and well honest.

Conclusions and recommendations:

◆ First: Conclusions

1. Significant gap in leadership skills:

- The results of the statistical analysis showed that the administrative leadership gap had the most negative impact on performance efficiency, with an impact factor of $\beta = -0.41$.
- This points to the absence of participatory leadership and the ability to motivate teams and make impactful strategic decisions.

2. Weakness in strategic planning skills:

- The planning gap came in as the second highest impact gap ($\beta = -0.36$).
- Many administrators lack the skills to prepare actionable plans or analyze the work environment, which delays the achievement of organizational goals.

3. The administrative organization gap still exists, but is less impactful:

- Its negative impact is still significant ($\beta = -0.27$), reflecting poor internal coordination and distribution of tasks.

4. 57% of organizational competency variation is attributable to managerial skill gaps:

- This reflects the strategic importance of these gaps and enhances the role of human resources in influencing the quality of academic and administrative work.
- 5. **The truthfulness and reliability of the measuring instrument was high:**
 - The coefficients of Crow Nabach alpha for all axes > 0.78 , proving that the instrument used to measure skills and competence was scientific and reliable.
- 6. **The quality of the statistical model was high (AMOS – SEM):**
 - Indicators such as RMSEA , CFI andGFI showed good compatibility of the structural model, giving credence to the causal relationships studied.
- 7. **Practical experience did not prevent gaps:**
 - Although 45.5% of the sample have more than 10 years of experience, gaps are still visible, which means that experience without continuous training is insufficient.

◆ **Second: Recommendations**

1. Redesign of management training programs

- Launch training programs focused on participatory leadership, strategic planning, and time management.
- Take advantage of global models such as Deloitte 2025 and UNESCO Talent Framework to build up-to-date training content.

2. Adopt a mechanism to periodically monitor skills gaps

- Establish an internal unit called "Skills Gap Monitoring" that is directly linked to the Office of the President of the University.
- Conduct a semi-annual skill assessment of employees using professional GAP Analysis tools.

3. Linking administrative efficiency to institutional performance

- Adopt a management performance appraisal system based on KPI indicators that include time, quality and stakeholder satisfaction.
- Include these indicators in the annual evaluation and job promotions.

4. Develop a skills-based career structure

- Review job descriptions for administrative jobs and link them to the required qualifications and skills instead of seniority only.

5. Operationalizing transformational leadership in senior management

- Encourage university leaders to adopt modern models such as participatory leadership and empowerment.

6. Building an organizational culture that supports continuous learning

- Integrate the culture of "self-development" into the work environment and encourage employees to enroll in specialized training courses.

7. Investing technology in bridging the gap

- Adopt digital tools to analyze performance and provide real-time feedback, such as Smart KPI Systems.

8. Expansion of study to other institutions

- Expanding the scope of research to include other private universities, to conduct benchmarking that helps improve performance at the national level.

9. Review of employment policies

- Adopting employment policies based on administrative competence and skill tests, not only on the academic certificate.

10. Involving stakeholders in performance appraisal

- Integrate stakeholder assessment (students, colleges, community) into institutional competency components to provide a holistic perspective.

(Sample implementation plan for recommendations or KPIs monitoring and evaluation schedule)

◆ First: The implementation plan for the recommendations

figure	Recommendation	Responsible Entity	Executive action	Period	Target Indicator
1	Preparing leadership training programs	Training and Development Division	Design and implement participatory leadership training programs	3 months	Training 80% of administrators
2	Establishment of a Skills Gap Monitoring Unit	University Presidency	Establishing a new unit and defining its tasks	Two months	Start issuing quarterly reports
3	Adoption of a competency-based management evaluation system	Human Resources Department	Modify evaluation forms and link them to KPIs	4 months	Integrate the new system into 100% of departments
4	Update job descriptions	Department of Administrative Affairs	Comprehensive review and linking jobs to skills	3 months	Update 90% of job description
5	Activating the culture of continuous learning	Corporate Quality Unit	Organizing internal workshops and encouraging self-learning	continuous	Attend 3 workshops per employee annually
6	Adoption of digital tools for assessment	Information Technology Department	Selecting and activating a smart KPI platform	2 months	Apply the tool to 70% of administrations
7	Stakeholder engagement	Quality & Relationship Management	Design evaluation questionnaires for beneficiaries	Every 6 months	Beneficiaries' satisfaction \geq 80%

◆ **Second: Performance Indicators Table (KPIs) to evaluate the effectiveness of the application**

Axis	Main Indicator	Measurement method	Target Limit	Iteration
Management Training	Percentage of Administrators Trained in Leadership	Attendance Reports	≥ 80%	Biannual
Reducing gaps	Percentage decrease in leadership and planning gap	Before/After Comparison Analysis	≥ 30%	annual
Institutional Performance	Time to complete administrative tasks	HR System	-25% of the current time	Quarterly
Beneficiary satisfaction	Student and college satisfaction with administrative services	Satisfaction Questionnaire	≥ 80%	Biannual
Digital use	Usage of the new digital platform	System Reports	≥ 70%	monthly
Competency Assessment	Results of management performance evaluation according to indicators	Evaluation Forms	≥ 85% "Very good"	annual

✓ **Notes for the application:**

- It is preferable to form a **higher supervisory committee** of college deans and department representatives to follow up the implementation of the plan.
- Use tools such as Google Forms or the university's ERP system to facilitate periodic measurement.
- Documenting the results to serve as a basis for annual reports and academic accreditation.

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