Social Construction of elites’ experience and understanding from using facilities provided by the National Elites Foundation, Participants: Elite Members of Iran's National Elites Foundation

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Abstract

Elites in every country are the main factor in national growth and development. Likewise, Iran is not an exception and Iranian elites play a considerable role in national development. Yet, in the recent years the brain-drain phenomenon has been intensified as the elites leave the country to the developed countries. Accordingly, huge economic, social and political costs are imposed on the country. Regarding to this, different organizations have been established in order to offer a variety of incentive facilities and encourage elites to stay in Iran. But, evidences indicate that these organizations have failed to function efficiently enough and consequently brain-drain has been accelerated. Taking the above points into account, due to lack of thorough studies in this field as well as a dearth of quantitative evaluation of this issue, the present study aims to investigate experience and understanding of the elites supported by the National Elites Foundation from using the facilities offered by the organization in form of a qualitative methodology and ground theory. To this end, the researchers employed deep, purposeful and theoretical interviews as means of data collection. Then, the data were analyzed through open, axial and selective coding. Totally, 194 concepts, 29 minor and 15 major categories besides one core category were identified. The results suggest that experience and understanding of the elites from receiving and using the National Elites Foundations facilities was minimal, low efficient and weak functions. In other words, although a majority of the elites takes benefit from the offered facilities, they have numerous difficulties in addition to the point that they see facilities minimal and low effective.

Keywords: elites, foundation program, ground theory, paradigmatic model, small-scale theory.
1 Introduction
Elites in every country play a considerable role in national growth and development. Likewise, Iran is not an exception. Yet, in the recent years the brain drain phenomenon has been intensified as Iranian elites leave the country to the developed countries [1]. Accordingly, huge economic, social and political costs are imposed on the country [2]. These conditions therefore add power to the developed counties and so weaken the developing countries like Iran. As a result, scholars, planners and politicians have endeavored to find solutions to this unfair transformation. Thus, different organizations have been established to persuade elites to staying in instead of leave out the country.

The most significant remedy to this problem is adoption of the National Elites Foundation statute in the late 2004 by Supreme Cultural Revolution Council. In years followed, the foundation initiated its programs. According to the Statute, the foundation aimed to enjoy from Iranian elites’ capabilities for national development and knowledge production. On the other hand, the foundation must prohibit elites’ brain-drain. In this regard, the organizations have supported the elites offering them a verity of incentive facilities. However, after one decade of activity, no independent study has examined efficiency and the rate of achieving pre-established goals by the foundation. Generally speaking, the foundation has failed to act successfully in its policies and provided facilities. Because, during the recent years, the brain-drain phenomenon has been accelerated among the elite members of foundation. Iran is ranked first among all other countries in the brain-drain phenomenon [3]. The existing studies therefore have overlooked investigating the reasons. Additionally, a great portion of the available research works has used quantitative research methods. Consequently, the elites sponsored by the National Elite Foundation have not been studied directly. Accordingly, the current research aims through qualitative research method and ground theory investigate the brain-drain phenomenon.

2 Material and Methods: Conceptual framework
Considering quantitative and qualitative differences in terms of philosophy and paradigm points of view [4], quantitative studies employ a conceptual framework versus theoretical framework in quantitative research methods. Conceptual framework encloses concepts forming the core focus of qualitative studies [4][5][6]. Accordingly, interpretive approach confronts social positivism approach aiming at exploring the rules of social life. The interpretive approach emphasizing “conditions” assumes that based on different conditions, men construct varying meanings and so it should be avoided to recognize a generalized and holistic pattern of their actions. Unless, in terms of current conditions and exclusive life experiences and situations we shall interpret their actions [4][7] But, how is it possible to achieve a scientific understanding with this approach?

In interpretive approach the purpose is to understand humans’ interactions meaning. In this sense, knowledge is traceable in man’s everyday actions. In this view, knowledge is nothing beyond human interactions. Thus, folk knowledge is the main source of qualitative studies and so scientific methodologies must be applicable as a result of this, knowledge is not to be a product of scientists or elites, and rather, knowledge is instantly produced and reproduced by the public. Therefore, subject and object of understanding are the same and investigator acts either as a researcher or as a researched [5][8][9]. Taking these points together, the present research is an attempt to investigate Iranian elites’ understanding, sponsored by the National Elite Foundation, from the process of changing into elite.
Method
The current study used an interpretive paradigm (selected from positivism, critical and interpretive paradigms). Thus, a quantitative research method was applied. According to the research questions and purposes, the quantitative research method adopted the ground theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in a book titling the same as “the Discovery of Ground Theory”. This research method is important because in one hand it assists theory making and on the other hand it leads to an instrument for analyzing qualitative data. Indeed, this method is seeking for higher portion of description, as well as production or exploration of the theory. The ground theory investigators ask for developing the theory through studying subjects who are involved in a mutual interaction.

The devised theory in this method is not imposed on the research externally, but it is a product of data obtained from participants who experience a process. In this way, two main approaches could be discussed as: objectivist approach of Strauss and Corbin [10] and constructivist approach of Charmaz [11]. In the present study the investigator employed the former approach. For sampling procedure, purposive and chain sampling methods were applied. The participants consisted of students participated in school and university Olympiads, top national students and top graduates, national and international inventors, experienced and active elites, and new coming elites of different majors. Moreover, the process of data collection used deep and semi deep interview techniques and continued up to the point that the investigator achieved a theoretical impregnation on the basis of theoretical sampling. To this end, 11 participants were interviewed. Totally, the interviews took a minimum of 56:24 minutes and a maximum of 228:78 minutes; i.e. over 1000 minutes.

Each interview lasted 97 minutes in average. Then, the interviews recorded were converted into texts. It needs to be mentioned here that the process of data collection proceeded along with data analysis process. In the data analysis process, line-by-line analysis was used to do open coding. Along with expansion of concepts and categories, axial and selective coding methods were employed. Credibility of the data were confirmed through triangulation (researchers’ engagement in different process of the National Elite Foundation), prolong engagement in the study, member checking and reflexivity techniques. Experts affirmed the reliability via affirmation of multidimensional coding by different coders.

3 Results and Findings
Generally speaking, the present research investigated experience of receiving and using varying facilities offered by the National Elite Foundation. In this process, the researcher endeavored to evaluate quality of experience the elite participants had when they utilized the foundation facilities. Accordingly, numerous processes of demanding for facilities, how the facilities were used, the foundation’s purpose for providing facilities, the impact of facilities on scientific research and development, the facilities effect on personal life, distribution of facilities and so forth were investigated. Finally, inter-subjective spaces resulted from experiencing thee processes were summarized within a core concept. More precisely, this core concept was consisted of 15 major and 29 minor categories as well as 194 constructed concepts. These are discussed in the following.

The core category: experience of sustainable engagements in confronting with minimal, low efficient and low functional facilities
The core category of the current study was designed so that whole process of demanding and receiving facilities were included and so it would be comprehensive enough. Therefore, the core category was the experience of sustainable engagements facing with minimal, low efficient and low functional facilities. Essentially this process indicates that the elites were confronted with several and instant challenges in the process of demanding for and receiving facilities. In fact, they pass through a long and complicated procedure, but approximately most of them refuse to use such facilities. Meanwhile, the participants stated that there exists a huge gap between what the foundation has defined as purposes for providing such facilities and what actually happens. Here, the participants showed their dissatisfaction basically from the process of military services project as a research project besides taking loans with high interest.

The participants reported facilities provided by the foundation minimal, low efficient and low functional. As a matter of fact, the participants reported that the foundation facilities are unfair, malfunctioned and having no particular plan for the future. However, the participants added that despite their challenges with the foundation, they feel a great sense of debt towards these facilities and have attempted to pay for these debts. So, the participants stated that through being active in different scientific fields, have tried to repay the debt. Yet, they have concluded that the country does not welcome their attempts. That is to say, business environments and expansion of science are inappropriate and Iranian elites face with numerous difficulties. Consequently, they failed to compensate the foundation support. This problem therefore has made Iranian elites to complain about the current problem formally or informally, but they have become frustrated socially and mentally and have tolerated several social and mental harms.

As a result, the elites’ dissatisfaction and quitting the foundation and migration have been happened. Considering this, the present study core category is constant challenges of low efficient and low functional facilities. Because in one hand the elites are encountering with lots of problems in the process of receiving facilities and on the other hand the granted facilities are low efficient and low functional and have led to no significant change in the applicants’ lives (exception for some insignificant changes in personal life).

Paradigmatic model: experience of minimal, low functional and low efficient facilities

The paradigmatic model of the study indicates processes and activities take place in the context of study (Model 1). This model consists of five sections of causal, underlying, and intervening conditions, strategies and outcomes. in the center of model, central phenomenon exists. Activities shape around this domain. Processes and activities occur in the context of the present study show that the central phenomenon in the third category is the experience of minimal, low efficient and low functional facilities. That is to say, the participants had a subjective and objective experience of minimal, low efficient and low function from receiving facilities. In other words, the subjects asserted that their experience was accompanied with constant challenges in demanding for and receiving the facilities. They considered the foundation’s facilities low efficient (subjective experience). Other activities of the elites were connected to this experience and formed their main actions.

Causal conditions

The casual conditions of the paradigmatic model of the third category are as follows:

The causal conditions that essentially lead to occurrence of some phenomenon in the present study were among the main causes of experiencing low efficient and low functional facilities. In
other words, the main reason of this challenge is direct and explicit conflict of the elites with the process of receiving facilities. That is to say, the participants all have used the facilities in terms of their need, which this has made them to obtain a particular experience and understanding of the facilities. This is also known as lived experienced. Meanwhile, one central cause of demanding for and receiving facilities is the elites’ financial needs. That is, a majority of Iranian young adults are interested in obtaining financial resources due to inappropriate business conditions.

The important point here is type of advertisements have been performed in Iranian cities, universities and schools about the National Elite Foundation. The present study author’s lived experiences confirm the participants’ viewpoints and suggest that social representation of the foundation in Iranian society accompanies with considerable amount of material and spiritual facilities. That is to say, presence and encouraging attending at the foundation aiming at access to extensive facilities for young adults, has been approached as a utopia. So that, achieving it would be a remedy to solving the youths’ problems and bringing them success. Consequently, youths and elites are attracted to such ideal representation, while in reality they face with an experience of low efficient facilities of the foundation.

As one of the participants, Setareh states that: “We are the foundation decoration for its social advertisements. These facilities are also the foundation decoration for us. The foundation creates a showcase of us. Look, how good guys you have. Then, it says to us, look how good facilities you have. But after, you fear to come close to them. It is absolute insanity.”

In this regard, however gender plays a very considerable role. Because, one form of the elites’ actions is influenced by their gender. This is not the case of presence of man or woman, rather each of them due to the type of their activity in society, have different social roles. Girls do many attempts to prove themselves as first degree citizens, and this endeavor was obvious in content of their interviews and their desire for success. Therefore, like boys, girls are seeking for opportunities to benefit from the foundation’s facilities in order to gain economic independency. Likewise, boys try to go further and intend to create new jobs and business. Thus, they prove themselves in this way. Boys prefer entrepreneurship and manufacturing more. As a result, gender leaves a direct impact on the experience of low efficient and low functional facilities. Since both groups’ expectations have not been satisfied completely here, reality opposes presented ideal images.

**Contextual conditions:**
The contextual conditions of the current research are as follows:

Contextual conditions are a ground for occurrence of the present research strategies. In fact, the contextual conditions are essentially specific conditions are in association with participants. This context is more linked to particular conditions exist among elites compared with other people in a larger scale. Accordingly, in this section the introduced characteristics are very small and relate to the social and mental preferences of the elites and participants. Such features as a sense of need for economic independency, and a sense of need for personal autonomy are dependent to financial status of the elites. That is to say, because of inappropriate conditions of elite, as a result of improper business conditions, they have greater desire for economic and personality independency. Therefore, they work hard and fight with obstacles.
In this regard, the tendency to construction and administrative projects should be also included. Feelings of development and achievement, are social and mental emotions have been institutionalized within elites (because of various experiences of success in different problems occurred in school, as well as other socio-political and cultural activities). Moreover, the tendency to creation of jobs could be classified in this category. But, besides all these peculiarities, we need to mention the very meticulous role of one of the aforementioned characteristics. That is, spending military service period for boys. This gender-oriented problem has remarkably affected the use of facilities by this group of elites. Since these facilities are considered as the most outstanding facilities for young adults and so enable them to finish the military services period in form of a research plan. But, they face with lots of problems. One of the participants states that:

**Model 1- Paradigmatic model: experience of minimal, low functional and low efficient facilities**
**Intervening conditions**

The intervening conditions include the following cases as: 1. Inappropriate economic conditions of young elites; 2. Universities’ failure to make money; 3. Macro policies of the country for educating elites; 4. Foundation’s policies for making elites indebted and dependent to it.

Intervening conditions are broader conditions (broader than contextual conditions) in which strategies take place. In fact, these conditions are more related to macro forces which influence participants’ strategies. In other words, unlike context conditions, the intervening conditions are not specific. But, they are more general and abstract which intensify or
alleviate the main phenomenon. poor economic conditions of young adults in one hand and unstable economic condition in Iran, the country has been encountered with several economic problems, young adults experience the minimum loss of such conditions. Accordingly, this problem has considerably affected the phenomenon and the participants’ strategies.

Generally speaking, this issue affects other areas of intervening conditions. Because this process makes the National Elite Foundation and policy maker organizations act so that Iranian elites become dependent to them. In words, these organizations have developed policies for educating elites which follow one-way and ideological policies in maintenance and attraction of elites. In this regard, the selected attraction policies are not only functional, but also they intensified elites’ dissatisfaction and so their desire to migrate. Meanwhile, these policies failed to provide a proper context for academic centers and economic conditions to be able to attract elites, except for spending limited financial resources. In socio-cultural and political domains similarly ideological policies have been emphasized. This therefore considerably affected the study phenomenon and actors’ strategies. As another participant, Setareh states that: “Our professor holding a degree from Harvard University in pharmacy came back Iran to train students in Iran. But, she could not tolerate the conditions even for one year. For such ridicule things. You know why? Dr. please keeps your Hijab.”

**Strategies**

The participants’ strategies in the present study in relation to the central phenomenon of the research and under the impact of intervening and context conditions are as below:


As it is clear in the paradigmatic model, in opposition to central phenomenon, which is a minimal, low efficient and low functional experience of the foundation’s facilities, there exist actions and strategies of the elites as well as interactive actions and strategies. In one hand negative strategies and on the other hand positive actions and strategies could be tracked. in one hand, the elites formally and informally complain for the current process severely, and on the other hand, they perform positive strategies in two ways as a) a sense of debt and duty towards the offered facilities by the foundation and b) attempts and actions in line with compensation.

As a matter of fact, the elites do some actions in three directions. The first is an intense and excessive sense of duty and debt towards the country. The second is complaining to the current procedures and the third is a supplement to the second direction consisting of constant attempts to compensate. One of the participants, Mehraneh sates in this regard that: “I feel a sense of debt to my country, but not to the foundation. Not as an institution. But, when I am studying like all other parts of the world, an institution must pay students’ costs in form of loans or facilities. I am in Iran and lots of money are paid or my education, so I am indebted to my land. That is, this is the reason prevents me to migrate. My country expects me to pay off the loans. On the other hand, I see that there are no good conditions for compensation, so we are equal. Nothing more I can do (she smiles)”.

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Outcomes
The outcomes obtained from application of different actions and strategies are classified as below:
Outcomes are the results of strategies actors take when encountering with the central phenomenon, context and intervening conditions. Then, they are represented in positive, negative and neutral form. In the present study, in opposition to experiencing minimal, low efficient and low functional facilities, the elites took two strategies (negative and positive) in three directions (complain, a sense of debt, attempt to compensate). In fact, in addition to criticizing the nature of facilities, they showed their debt to those minimal facilities as well. They even worked hard to compensate. But, unfortunately, the outcomes of these strategies were negative in all three directions. These outcomes ended to different harms and social and mental exhaustion and frustration of the elites. This problem therefore motivates the elites through a tangible and intangible transition, rather constant; ignore the foundation in specific and the country interests in general. So, they continue their plans personally and exit the scope of a political discipline has surrounded the education of elites’ policy. Consequently, the elites would be employed by other organizations, organs or public and private institutions abroad.

4 Discussion and conclusion:
The present study aimed at social constructing experience and understanding of the Iranian elites sponsored by the National Elite Foundation from receiving and using the foundation’s facilities. To this end, adopting deep interviews and purposeful and theoretical sampling, the data were collected through open, axial and selective coding procedures. The findings were classified in form of 194 concepts consisting of 29 minor categories, 15 major categories and a core concept. The paradigmatic model was designed in terms of causal, context and intervening conditions, strategies and outcomes all around the central phenomenon. But, what shapes the main conclusion of ground theory is producing a small-scale theory (Model 2). As a matter of fact, the theoretical schema or small-scale theory illustrates quality and procedure of the process passed precisely and is non-linear within the paradigmatic model theoretically. In other words, the schema is illustrated using one-way and two-way arrows. The former indicates causal impact and the latter show the reciprocal and non-linear effect. The direction and process of schema initiates from the left and continues to the right.
The results show that Iranian elites have spent much time and energy to be able to receive the facilities. Yet, the very first encounter of elites with the foundation’s facilities takes place prior to being supported by the foundation. In this point, the society and foundation in form of numerous propaganda represent an image of a utopia for those who receive facilities. In more details, representation of facilities in the society and academic centers is so ideal encouraging the elites to join them and take advantage from special facilities are allocated to the elites like employment, huge loans, scholarships and so forth. Having such ideal image in their mind, the elites move towards becoming a member of the foundation, however, after a while they face with inefficient process of receiving facilities. The first objective and direct experience of the elites in regard to the facilities is their challenge to go through a very complex and difficult bureaucracy which direct them to two paths. In some cases, the elites renounce the process of receiving facilities. But, in most cases the elites
tolerate the difficulties assuming that in Iran you should track down and utilize the facilities despite challenges.

But the question here is that whether or not receiving the facilities could justify all advertisements about the foundation? The elites answer it during the process of receiving facilities. They have an experience and understanding of facilities which oppose the picture represented by media. They evaluate facilities minimal, low efficient and low functional. They state that the words and deeds do not match each other. This objective and subjective experience and understanding lead to complaints. We should mention here that most of elites show a great debt to receiving such facilities. This problem is illustrated in form a reciprocal arrow onwards formal and informal complaints. The dialectic interactions are evident.

Yet, formal and informal complain stimulate elites to leave the country. On the other hand, this sense of debt and hard work to compensate the debts remains unsuccessful due to inappropriate conditions in Iran. As a matter of fact, these conditions in one hand intensifies brain drain and on the other hand it leads to inability to compensate debts. Thus these problems consist of two direct and two indirect outcomes. The former includes social and mental exhaustion and ignoring the foundation and the latter comprises quitting facilities and migration (indirect outcomes in black and red). Overall, this process indicates that how in encountering with the experience of minimal, low efficient and low function facilities have significantly attempted, but they believe they have failed. So, two general outcomes could be drawn from: a) the elites’ migration and b) social and mental exhaustion. Both have created much loss nationally needing a long time and huge costs to be compensated as well as a need for good human and financial resources management.
5 References

Model 2- The study schema: a experience of minimal, low efficient and low functional facilities

- An ideal image of facilities produced by foundation
  - Facilities package
  - An ideal image of facilities produced by society
- Complicated bureaucratic process
  - Difficulty in receiving facilities
  - An experience of minimal, low efficient and low functional facilities
  - A sense of debt
  - Attempt to pay debts
  - Improper context for compensation
- Formal and informal complaints
- Brain-drain
  - Inability to compensate debt
  - Social and mental exhaustion
  - Quitting foundation
- An ideal image of facilities produced by foundation
  - Quitting facilities

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