



Need for Paradigmatic Transformation of Iranian Higher Agricultural Education System: Agricultural Innovation System Perspective

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Iranian Higher Agricultural Education System (HAES) has been seriously challenged under the influence of strong and intertwined socio-economic and environmental forces, the direction of its development being in sharp contradiction with the real needs of sustainable rural/agricultural development. There are concrete evidences indicating the system is facing a serious all-rounded crisis. During the coming years, the system will be challenged even more to transform its role in relationship to the evolving national food, agricultural, environmental and rural development issues. If successful, agriculture colleges will emerge as an important venue for scholars and stakeholders to address some of the most complex and urgent problems facing the society. Failure to respond to the changes affecting agriculture, environment, and education will place many aspects of the HAES in risk. Providing a short review of the turning points of its historical development, this paper discusses the current constrains, challenges and problematic situation of the system and makes suggestion for prospective areas of improvement, reform and transformative changes.

In regard to the complicated/unsustainable nature of the current situation and complex factors behind its creation, a broader theoretical framework related to paradigmatic transformation of AHES in international level by considering the relevancy/generalizability of its concepts, policies, approaches, models, trends, and experiences to the unique characteristic of Iranian context, will be used.

Considering the broadness, depth, nature, interconnectedness and complexity of the present problematic situation, a systemic approach, more specifically, Agricultural Innovation System (AIS), and agricultural workforce system will be applied to consider the synergetic potentialities of relevant actors in the paradigmatic transformation process. This paper attempts to introduce a discourse through a participatory/collective dialogue among academics, policy-makers, planners and practitioners to emphasize the importance and urgency of the current situation and find solutions for current and emerging problems.

Keywords: Higher Agricultural Education System, Agricultural Innovation System, Paradigmatic Change