

Educational Sciences in Iran: Problems, Challenges and Prospective

Iran, as a historically, culturally, and scientifically ancient country has had a prosperous status in the human life and world's education. To give an example, Iranian cosmopolitan scientists and educators such as Bozorgmehr, Ferdowsi, Birooni, Razi, Avicenna, Sadie, Khayyam, Nasir-oddin-Toosi, and many others are among the great educators and scientists who have played an important role in human life. When we compare this with other main ancient countries of China, India, Egypt, and Greek, it becomes clear that only Greek scientists and educators are comparable to Iranians in the amount of influence of their science and education on international and historical basis.

But, nowadays, in terms of innovations in culture, education, and other sciences, both philosophically and methodologically, Iranian scientists' and educators' research products are not remarkable. Today's Iranian human sciences are academically and socially struggling with some essential problems and challenges that block the process of qualitative growth and

development of sciences and education in this ancient land which was once one of the most valuable cradles of knowledge and wisdom.

Research indicates that the qualitative development of higher education in our country is much lower than its quantitative growth. During the past 25 years (1981-2005), the Iranian academic community and its institutions have expanded dramatically (Yalpani, et. al, 2006)¹. Currently, there are more than 50 state universities, and nearly 150 non-private technical undergraduate schools, which enroll about 750,000 students. There are also about 60 official research institutions throughout the country. In addition, since 1984, an extensive country wide private university system (mostly undergraduates) was started which enrolls another 750,000 full time students.

We may ask why the qualitative development and scientific products, especially in social sciences and humanities, are not worthy to mention. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology for the academic year 2003, the total numbers of master and doctoral students and available faculty were 68287, 12189, and 25723, respectively². Subtracting from the latter the 50 percent of instructors/tutors, who are not directly involved in any meaningful research activity, there still remain 12861 potentially researching faculty members.

The same source gives the total numbers of national scientific output for 2003 as 3326 counts. This means that each faculty member has produced in that year 0.23 indexed scientific publications. Should we include all those who with their daily work collect the needed scientific data, i.e., the graduate

1 - Social Sciences in Iran: An analysis of research output of Iranian scholars (1966-2005).

2 - S. Ensafi, H. Gharib, *Iranian Contribution to International Knowledge, year 2000, IRANDOC, 2003.*

students, each year we end up with a publication per scientific worker ratio of only 0.034. This number is the resultant when we include all academic disciplines. When we now focus our attention to the Social Sciences and Humanities group, the situation seems to be significantly worse (op. cited)¹. In a research conducted by the present author himself, it has been found out that there are only seven research-based scientific journals of education² in our country with maximum publication volume of 10 thousands for about one million teachers and about one hundred thousand educational experts. All these mean that we are confronting huge problems and challenges with regard to the educational research products and publications.

The question is why there is such a shortage in scientific review articles, especially in education, in our country. Our understanding is that there are different problems confronting scientists in Iran. These problems are tremendously larger and much more complicated for researches in social sciences and humanities than natural and pure experimental sciences. Ideological problems are the most difficult ones in human sciences and education as well. The more brilliant the scientists of human sciences, the more frustrated they are from scientific institutions. Medium-range researchers seem to be much happier with the scientific institution to which they belong compared to the brighter scholars. These institutions seem not to play a positive role in the case of the best scientists. Shortage of facilities provided by institutions are one other major

1 - Moin, M., Mahmoudi, N. Rezaei, *Scientific output of Iran at the threshold of the 21st century*, *Scientometrics*, 62, 239, 2005.

2 - The names of research-based scientific journals which are totally or partly specified for education and are considered as the most credible scientific journals are: 1)Journal of Social and Human Sciences of Shiraz University; 2)Journal of Educational and Psychological Studies of Ferdowsi University; 3)Journal of Psychology and Education of Tehran University; 4)Journal of Psychology and Education of Ahwaz University; 5)Quarterly Journal of Educational Innovations of Ministry of Education; 6)Quarterly Journal of Education of Ministry of Education; and 7)Quarterly Journal of Curriculum Studies.

problem for research. Another is the tenuous cooperation among scientists.

In such a situation, the Quarterly Journal of Educational Innovations aims to focus on most significant preoccupations and questions concerning educational issues and then to answer them. The articles of this journal explain some problems and challenges of education and try to show the main roots and factors of the problems that the education system is encountered with. As well, it seeks to reach an understanding and offering of the specific and applied ways through which the educational sciences can be grown and developed. In this special issue of the Quarterly Journal of Educational Innovations, nineteen articles are presented in English language to follow its six years of publication in Persian language. We welcome the researchers and scientists of education and psychology to send their articles in English language to be considered and reviewed for publication. As a prospective aim, we are looking forward to publishing the journal in both English and Persian in parallel form to reach the international scientific society as well as the one inside Iran as we have done in the past time.

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