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Designing Theoretical Model of Strategic Management of Agricultural Knowledge and Information Extension for Empowering Farmers in Iran (A Case Study; Agriculture Jihad Specialists of Alborz and Tehran Province)

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research was to design theoretical model of strategic management of agricultural knowledge and information extension for empowering farmers. This study used qualitative research method. The research method was an exploratory method and instrument development model was used in order to measure strategic management. Target population included 161field and official experts of Agriculture Jihad Organization of Alborz and Tehran Province. The main instrument for data collection was an open-ended questionnaire (protocol).Based on data gathered through documents, electronic and field research (interview) theoretical model of this study were drawn.

Keywords: Theoretical Model, Strategic Management, Knowledge and Information, Empowerment Farmers.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is considered the most important and essential part of human life and imagination supplies the developed world is not possible without agriculture, While the development of agriculture without farmers lack access to knowledge and information and farmers are aware of the current issues in agriculture not be reached. So, agricultural development means human development (Marsh, 2001). Hence, Attaining to this should be priority of organizational activities and programs in the agricultural sector (Dinpanah and Amouei, 2013).

Nowadays, strategy of empowerment is regarded as a very important step in the process of organizational development which enables persons to cope with the external threats. Of course, it is regarded as one of the main shortcomings of modern organizations involved in development as well, such as agriculture extension. The Perspectives of agricultural extension has a high capacity to scientific and technological empowerment of many farmers in developing countries will have an affordable procedural path.

The fundamental role of agriculture development accepted by many developing countries through provides extension, technical and insight training in order to meet the technical, skills and information requirements. Also, farmer's empowerment, quality of life and efficient management of productive resources was provide a Required fields (River & Qamar 2003, Anderson & Feder 2004, Hosseini and Sharifzadeh 2008, Gholifar *et al.*, 2013).

Given that, active population in the agricultural sector are still a significant part of the total population accounted for the developing countries and context of agriculture is an ongoing activity, intensity is changing (Hosseini and Sharifzadeh 2008, Byerlee *et al.*, 2009).

So, in such circumstances the agriculture extension as an informal education system in the form of teaching career should focused on the empowerment's presences that including the development assets and their capacity to participating, interacting, be effective and finally, control and accountability (Nnadi *et al.*, 2013, Boone, 1985).

In the era of knowledge management and development of wisdom-orientation, agricultural extension agents should pay attention to effective changes, constraints facing, the audiences' needs, as well as international changes Increasing changes in the range of agricultural knowledge, technology and information system (Hosseini and Sharifzadeh 2008). Undoubtedly, policy making, extension, training, marketing, support services, institutions and organizations, technology research, production and operation and processing are the indivisible elements of developing agricultural sector that appearing in the different levels.

Each component has its actors which play significant role in networking link with other actors. Agricultural knowledge and information system was designed on the basis of such cognitive cognition of agricultural development that offers a clear framework to determine the statues of the different actors and elements in agricultural development (Asadi *et al.,* 2010).

Given the current state of the agricultural sector in Iran, strengthening or reforming is necessary because of, challenges and shortcomings in agricultural extension and consequently in agricultural knowledge and information system. Some of these challenges and shortcomings including:

- Lack of a stable place for these systems
- Definitions and misunderstandings of the role of systems and their services
- Problems in formulating goals and tasks
- Problems in the selection of extension's approaches and practices
- Beast idea of technology transfer activities
- Weaknesses in organizational structure
- Pour relationship between the regulated the rules, culture of multilateral cooperation and partnership subdivision of agricultural development
- Lack of necessary skills in the field of science and research into new discoveries and scientific advice and effective promotional messages
- Lack of adequate coverage for an audience with the extensive network extension
- Lack of communication between extension and research institutions with farmers
- Weaknesses in evaluation and monitoring

Considering the above, it can be stated that agricultural extension due to the influence of surrounding structures and internal movement, need of harmony and dynamic development always in need of upgrading, modification planned, purposeful, comprehensive, balanced, and contingency system. So, identify these cases along with the ongoing management and process-oriented with the changes required in the whole agricultural extension system and consequently agricultural knowledge and information system, as well as participation all of the institutional agents in collaborative and flexible procedures in accordance with competitive world are essential.

Hence, this study also suggests that to design a model for strategic management of knowledge and information on the aid to this content. In this process, the following objectives are considered:

- Determine the factors affecting the strategic management of agricultural knowledge and information
- Identification of internal structures that influence the strategic management of agricultural knowledge and information
- Identify the structure of external influence on the strategic management of agricultural knowledge and information
- Determine the factors affecting the empowerment of farmers in problem finding and problem solving professional
- Determine the role of agricultural extension in empowering farmers
- Identify the components of the empowerment of farmers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study was conducted using qualitative research method. Qualitative research methods appropriate for the study of complex processes. In this research, an exploratory method and instrument development model was used in order to measure strategic management. Assumptions of the exploratory method are as follows:

- Lack of measurement
- Unknown variables or lack of an appropriate framework
- This plan is qualitative and appropriate for a phenomenon (Creswell *et al.,* 2003).

Statistical population was consisted of 161 field and official experts of Agriculture Jihad of Alborz and Tehran province. The main instrument for data collection was open-ended questionnaire (protocol). Questionnaire, focused on four major areas including; the internal factors affecting the application of strategic management in the agricultural information and knowledge system, the external factors affecting the application of strategic management in the agricultural information and knowledge system, measuring components of empowerment of farmers, assessment of strategic management in the agricultural information and knowledge system. In depth interviews approach and direct observation were used. Several months were spent to study the subject in depth and each interview lasted several hours and sometimes, due to prolong of interview, it was postponed to next days. Specialist' talks were recorded and all the interviews were filmed and recorded. Responses were listened several times and were classified in codes. Coding and developing category system and creating hierarchical category system were used for data analysis. In addition, the quantitative method was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on contingency table of research and interviews, the main variables identified. A questionnaire was developed from a review of literature, and interviews with agricultural expertise that contains four main sections including;

Internal factors affecting the application of strategic management in the agricultural information and knowledge system that evaluated with several options such as the appropriateness of extension programs with the conditions of farmers(economical, social, cultural), The link between research and agricultural extension, The competence and qualifications of managers to allocate funds for various activities, etc.

-The external factors affecting the application of strategic management in the agricultural information and knowledge system that evaluated with several options such as the participation of farmers in rural decision making, the participation of private sector in financing, Decisions and policies in order to develop sustainable agriculture, Promoting a demand-oriented method in the field of technology, etc.

-the factors measuring farmers' empowerment that evaluated with several options such as the farmers' participation in decision-making and implementation process, equitable distribution of benefits, level of productivity, level of confidence, the relationship between extension and agricultural experts, etc.

-Assessment of strategic management in the agricultural information and knowledge system include the main qualitative section in this research and evaluated with several options such as the method of interaction between agricultural knowledge and information system actors, the role of agricultural extension on interaction management of AKIS actors, the role of agricultural community on farmers' efficacy.

In this research, strategic management in agricultural knowledge and information considered as the Independent and Latent variable (X) that influencing on the final dependent variable named empowerment (Y2) will assessed through developed items from field studies;1.strategic management in agricultural knowledge and information (Y1) which is under the influence of Exogenous variables and 2. empowerment farmers(Y2) Which on one hand is under the influence of strategic management of agricultural knowledge and information variable and another hand is under the influence of Exogenous variables affecting on the strategic management in agricultural knowledge and information is evaluated with questionnaire was developed. But, these variables were drawn in format of theoretical model developed due to continue research study.

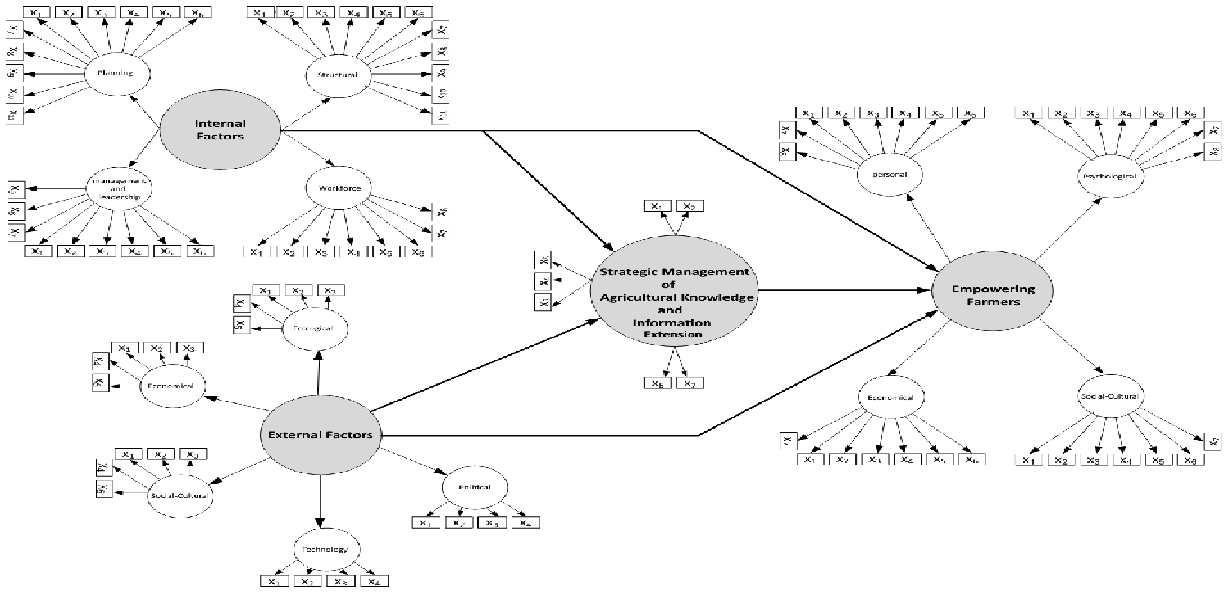

Fig. 1. Theoretical Model of Research.

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