

DEMAND DRIVEN PARTICIPATORY RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TURKEY: LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS¹

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Introduction

Generally, the rural development professionals have a top-down or supply driven culture in Turkey. Also the existing agricultural policy needs to exclude the farmer from decision making of nearly all intervention activities of Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Finance. With the exception of our Centre's action researches, using participatory approaches, and one FAO's training project, the supporting efforts for demand driven participatory rural development approaches are very limited. This paper aims to analyse the situation and discuss the possible ways to disseminate the demand driven rural development approach in Turkey.

Agriculture Policy and the Ministry of Agriculture

The top-down or supply driven culture of professionals in Turkey was also strengthened by the "training and visit system" of World Bank. Since 1980 Turkey is reshaping its agricultural policy under the pressure from IMF and World Bank. So called "structural adjustment" has been limiting agricultural production since insufficient competitiveness power and injustice developed countries' price supports. For example, cotton is heavily supported by USA, but Turkey is forced to cancel price support. So Turkey import cotton and farmers decrease their cotton production. Beginning of direct payment system and continuing price premiums also had paralysed the extension system of Ministry of Agriculture. Because all these jobs managed by the Ministry of Agriculture. Recently the Ministry ordered to transfer majority of the extensionists to the departments charged for these payments and paper work in the central provinces offices. In the counties, the extensionists are very busy with the paper work for direct payments. They don't have enough time to do their extension job. Of course this is not the only factor affecting the quality of extension work especially needs good relations with farmers. Insufficient in-service training and lack of motivation are also important factors. Taking into account of this policy and situation the extensionists have no time and motivation to adopt demand driven rural development or extension approaches which they require strong dialog with farmers. On the other hand the amount distributed by direct payments is very limited, but the effects of this ultra so called "free market" are harmful for farmers. This also urges the Ministry to have a top down and excluding position and behaviour.

In the education period of extensionists, they are conditioned by a top down culture.

The Results of Demand Driven Rural Development Projects

Our centre had carried several participatory rural development projects using PRA approach. The first project conducted in a village by our Centre team, showed that demand driven rural development approach has a big success potential. (Özkaya, Karaturhan, Boyacı,1) The approach needs strong dialog with farmers. The second project was conducted by cooperation with a county extension office. This experience had showed that extension units of Ministry of Agriculture could not easily internalise the approach in their condition. (Özkaya, Karaturhan, Boyacı, 2, 46-52) Although the progress in production results was good in the villages, the institutionalisation of the approach was not realised in this project. The managers of county extension office don't support the participatory approach. They generally like quick results and with "their projects" the success will be their success and they want to manipulate to reach this point. Undemocratic climate in the extension organisation is

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also the sub cause of those causes. The participatory methods are also not known in these organisations and this also supports the existent situation.

Recently some young officials in the Ministry of Agriculture had contacted with us to find new ways to solve the existing problems of extension and rural development activities of the Ministry. We conducted a weekly training program for a group of extensionists from several parts of Turkey. We don't know this group will find a room for the demand driven approaches.

NGOs, Chamber of Farmers and Cooperatives

The NGOs are more ready for participatory approaches but they have also the similar problems like ministry. Some of them think that participation brings some methods to better manipulate the farmers. This phenomenon is very effectively presented in the literature. (Cooke, Kothari; 3)

We had established good relation with some national NGOs, to disseminate the participatory approaches. We conducted a training workshop and some joint field activities for a NGO. But it needs time for them to accept the demand driven approach. For example, to create strong dialog with local community and co-learning we proposed to settle self-help groups, but in a project of this NGO, the idea is accepted, but not performed. Lack of time was said for the reason.

After being aware of the participatory approaches, some urban centred NGOs refused to follow them. They said that they had no time, and only the universities can apply them. But of course in the reality they found the approaches threatening their superior position to farmers.

The Local Agenda 21 activities are rather concentrated in many cities of Turkey. We found this platform effective to create a good atmosphere for demand driven approaches. The official general ideology is participation in these platforms. But many of the members of the platforms are urban professionals, and many of their behaviour is top-down. Recently they are interested with rural development.

Chamber of Farmers Union in Turkey had been established by legislation. It is not coming from grassroots. Financially it is dependent to the Ministry of Agriculture. But they supported the publication of our books on participatory approaches and we have good relations with some county chamber of farmers. They have important potential for participatory approaches. But the values and behaviours for many of them are not very different from Ministry and NGOs professionals.

Independent and democratic village development cooperatives are also very important organizations for the institutionalisation of demand driven rural development. We had some successful experiences with them using participatory approaches. Especially in the west part of Turkey there are some strong and economically successful cooperatives. If their urgent problems are solved by using co-learning strategy with their members and managers, they will be open to accept bottom-up approaches.

Academics

For six years personally I am conducting courses (also in master and PhD degree) in the Agriculture Faculty. The students are very enthusiastic in the courses. But generally the academics are not interested with participatory approaches. Many of the academics are not supporting these participatory approaches simply because they are new.

Only recently we found some master students to accept to use these approaches in their thesis. Some find these approaches tiring. But most importantly the academics don't support the usage of approaches. There is a tyranny

of methods. For many of the academics the only method is structured questionnaires, and for some of them only the econometrics is science. Recently some foreign donor agencies urge to use participatory approaches, and this will help to change the status quo. But another threat is that some academics will be using the methods superficially.

The Farmers

The farmers have got used to want something from government organizations for many years. The politicians are also happy from this behaviour. In this way they can easily manipulate them. The professionals applying demand driven projects have to be patient, and have to wait until the farmers are ready. The farmers may be in a “silent culture”.

Also many local community members may be in a manipulating position to professionals. The reason of that behaviour is that they think that the professionals have pre-determined options like sewage system construction or the distribution of milking cows. Then they claim sewage or milking cows. In the reality their most important problems are not these options. The professionals have to be aware of these processes, and have to good command on methods.

EC and Turkey’s Agricultural Policy

Turkey is affected by the European Union agricultural policy. The supply driven characteristics of rural development approach of that policy is also advocated in Turkey. It seems to distribute some money under the rural development label. This is hampering demand driven participatory rural approaches.

Conclusion

Unless a radical reform had taken in Ministry of Agriculture the participatory approaches will not be performed in a big scale. Now only with some of extension units it can be applied.

What can be done to support a strong demand driven participatory rural development application?

- To perform education and training activities in every level and for many institutions (especially for NGOs, cooperatives and chamber of farmers) Also Local Agenda 21 platforms are very important for these activities.
- To prepare training workshops for academics also.
- To cooperate with other professionals, like sociologists, anthropologists, social service experts, etc.
- To publish bulletins, and create a discussion list in the internet.
- To prepare joint projects with organisations. Only some of extension units of Ministry of Agriculture can be in this category in these conditions. But NGOs, cooperatives have more potential.
- To help NGOs to enhance their democratic structure and to capacity building for participatory approaches.
- To conduct joint participatory projects with chambers of farmers and cooperatives to effect the agriculture policy to have a more convenient agriculture policy for demand driven rural development.

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