

Learning aspects from the Czech Republic and German Federal State of Brandenburg towards innovative extension education in Knowledge Systems

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Abstract: *Manifold radical structural changes have formed the present Agro-educational Knowledge Systems - AeduKS in the post-socialist Czech Republic and Brandenburg, a New German Federal state. Organisational and institutional structures have been in transition in both since 1990, compelled to search for new functions and roles in the free market system. The official solutions chosen are diverse in the sense of privatisation level to date and structure of extension education. The main learning aspects from the transition processes of both systems will be derived for international learning. From the authors' prospective most important aspects on comparability and differences, as well as impediments in implementing innovative education topics and structures aiming the approach on Agricultural Knowledge and Information System for Rural Development - AKIS/RD will be fundamentally described as learning aspects for innovative extension education and potential roles for new actors. To overcome the gap of linkages in both AeduKS – the CZ and Bbg, GER - potential actor groups as intermediaries are suggested.*

Keywords: *innovation, extension education, actors, linkages*

Knowledge systems' description - focused on innovative extension education in CZ and Bbg - GER

A disquisition on the role of non-formal learning in the changing processes in the AeduKS in the Czech Republic and the German Federal State of Brandenburg will build the theoretical basis of this poster. (The system approaches are described in Rolls & Slavík, 2003, Heiden, 2004, 2006, Mistr, 2007). Many extension and education systems in former post-socialist countries followed the trend of privatisation e.g. gone by the Netherlands, Denmark or New Zealand. So did in diverse manner and privatisation level all New Federal states of Germany (except Saxony), Poland (partly), Hungary, Estonia and the Czech Republic while they had to build up their AKS from a very beginning. During those transfer processes nearly all former structures and linkages broke away, regardless of their importance for future development or acceptance.

Reasoned by the German federative governmental system pluralistic extension and education systems approaches are characteristic. Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt e.g. opted for a privatised system subsidised by the state since 1990. A stepwise cutback of extension delivery was processed, in Brandenburg extension subsidies were reduced to practically zero in 2002, i.e. private funding and private delivery (Nagel et al. 2003, based on the classification of Rivera 2001). In this case the lack of resources has disastrous consequences for public goods extension combined with a lack of informal linkages.

Following Rolls & Slavík (2003), the new commercial farming in the Czech Republic since 1989 is supported by personal information systems through which farmer access and manage the information used in their decisions. An increasing use of contact services and use of internet is surveyed and an important place in the information system is occupied by consultants building up an effective – farmer-centred - consultancy service for farmers. Concerning the privatisation level the Czech Agricultural Knowledge System – CZ AKS is still in transition process, while the Brandenburg - Bbg AKS that started the privatisation process in 1990 is fully privatised since 2002. But how might future information and education policy relate to rural development, while in both systems we focus on in the poster, consultancy services do the information transfer fully farmer-centred?

Both systems face a lack of ministry/ civil society influence on these topics to transfer as result of privatisation and farmer-centred approaches, and differ in the role of university input on education services.

The poster will show the main gaps in the Knowledge System structures as overview facing innovative extension education, including rural development aspects, as a part.

We at date still carry out open questions of the Czech and Brandenburg Knowledge System cases facing the role of extension education, its uncertain long term financing and the implementation of innovative agri-environmental knowledge. Comparability and differences of both systems will be derived in the main hot spots and from the authors' prospective most important aspects on these will be fundamentally exemplified taking local actors' experiences of the authors' co-operation partners into consideration. The table 1 in Heiden (2006, p. 371) gives an methodological overview of criteria chosen as important for international AKS estimation in general searching for rural development options in Agricultural Knowledge Systems, that helps to focus these hot spots as well.

International learning aspects

Which are the commons and the differences and what might international partners learn from gained experience of the two System cases? In transition towards innovative extension education as part of the knowledge systems the interplay between agro-educational organisations, new key-actors and linkages via networks play an important role to overcome gaps identified mainly with AeduKS for Rural Development in mind. Linkage gaps and too less interchange between farmers and experts we face in more then the Czech and Brandenburg privatisation example, see e.g. publications about the Dutch system before 2006. In the sense of triangular approach hints for non-formal learning and discussion on International AeduKS will be derived from the above mentioned analysis focussing on education, training and innovative extension topics as hot spot knowledge systems aspects. We try to give answers on what Czech and Brandenburg researchers, trainers and those stakeholders who take an active part on the changing processes may be interested on about the respectively other system.

To overcome the gap of linkages needed to implement this model, e.g. in both educational approaches – AeduKS, potential actor groups as intermediaries are suggested. As example the role and (potential) activities of science shops, regional management or information centres are examined.

Prospected intermediary role-settings

It would be arrogant to think we could define all relevant roles and function for a trend-setting AeduKS model without taking part in a well facilitated multi-role group setting about it, clearly spoken in our day-to-day role as researcher and intermediary. Anyhow, as our research role defines we might open-up the field with hypothesis based on the case experiences we made:

Prospected roles for researcher in privatised trend-setting AeduKS:

- Open-up innovative challenges and perspectives = trend setter
- provide local adapted information and demand driven thematic results
- install transfer/ exchange offices integrated in research centres and universities
- provide expert pools for qualification and training
- enable space for civil societies' research demands
- sensitise for public goods issues
- keep connected with practise (farmer, associations), intermediaries, training supervisors, politicians.

Prospected roles for training supervisors in privatised trend-setting AeduKS:

- Provide actualised information in (further) education
- provide discussion-fora with thematic experts
- sensitise for public goods issues
- provide competence training for environmental management
- stay connected to all role groups.

Prospected roles for intermediaries in privatised trend-setting AeduKS:

- Improve prospective common pre-conditions
- stimulate knowledge exchange

- stimulate discourse (dialogue without hierarchy)
- sensitise for public goods issues
- maintain rules
- open-up space for vision experiments
- be an all-winger
- linking research and extension services
- survey need identification of all key-stakeholder groups
- stay connected to all key-stakeholder groups.

Prospected roles for extension workers/ specialist advisors/ consultancy services in privatised trend-setting AeduKS:

- Look for synergies with advisor colleagues
- apply for innovative project funding and On-farm activities
- build up co-operations with associations providing innovative knowledge
- participate in quality and risk management
- participate in further qualification
- sensitise for public goods issues.

Prospected roles for politicians in privatised trend-setting AeduKS:

- Provide information about new regulations and guidelines
- provide space and realise bottom-up decision-making power
- organise funding for innovative thematic and On-farm initiatives
- take over controlling and evaluation functions
- become client for education and extension material
- become client for field-days, training courses and discourse panels.

Prospected roles for farmers in privatised trend-setting AeduKS:

- look for synergies with farmer colleges
- apply for On-farm activities including research and extension
- organise bodies for demand collection
- organise field-days for colleague-wide exchange
- provide local knowledge.

Addressing all groups our premises are to keep open for multi-stakeholder learning and participate in discourses as role-group stakeholder.

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