

## Chapter 71

# Higher Public Officials on Direct Citizen Participation in Turkey: Institutionalized vs. Curious Public Administrators

**Ayşegül Saylam**

*Hacettepe University, Turkey*

**Naci Karkın**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0321-1212>

*Pamukkale University, Turkey*

**Belgin Uçar Kocaoğlu**

*Necmettin Erbakan University, Turkey*

### ABSTRACT

*Governments are expected to introduce public policies to empower citizens to engage in government business for various reasons including trust building. This chapter presents enablers/barriers before direct citizen participation (DCP) in Turkey by employing interviews conducted with higher public administrators at the ministerial level. The results reveal that DCP is mostly used for informing and consultation purposes rather than fostering a citizen deliberation. The main barriers before DCP are found as centralized bureaucratic structure, lack of administrators' awareness for DCP, and a lack of participation culture. The authors argue that DCP could be fostered where public officials are curious rather than institutionalized.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Direct citizen participation (DCP) is a process where citizens are regarded as stakeholders, rather than being subjects with regard to designing and implementing public service, including a number of important sub-processes. It has also a number of dimensions that would attract various disciplines. In this chapter, the authors focus on public administration (PA) dimension. DCP is the key for co-production of public service provision, of which there are some preliminary stages ranging from access to information to providing citizens with empowerment to engage in public affairs. Leaving aside some important questions on citizen participation (i.e. who to participate, how to participate and to which extent to participate) in order to discuss in following sections in detail, direct citizen participation is functional for many reasons. There are many reasons for governments to promote DCP and its supporting mechanisms (i.e. access to information and dissemination of open government data). Raising government legitimacy and trust building seem the most important (Dudley, Webb Farley, & Banford, 2018). Thus we aim to give a theoretical and conceptual perception of citizen participation with regard to current public administration theories, approaches and paradigms while referencing to a plea for new kind of practical, conceptual and theoretical perspectives. The growing need to give more room for cases from developing countries (Xue, 2018), reorganization of PA curricula (Roberts, 2018) and a new administrative doctrine as curious public administrator (Hatcher, 2019) could be stated as examples.

The authors selected Turkey as a study case since she reflects some complicated status with regard to DCP. Turkey, on the one hand, aims to finalize negotiations to prove necessary for accession to the EU, thus fosters many mechanisms including DCP. On the other hand, it is largely affected by turmoils in the Middle East causing to be accused of an axis shift. From a theoretical perspective, Turkey is a follower country, mostly and deeply affected by Anglo-Saxon PA tradition, though being a continental European country set its administrative structure similar to the French administrative system.

The chapter thus has an aim to seek possible answers for the following questions as:

- What is the level of DCP and how it is perceived by appointed high officials in Turkey?
- What are the advantages, the disadvantages and the obstacles of DCP?

The chapter includes five parts. In the first part, the authors present conceptual and theoretical frameworks. In the following part, a brief and descriptive note on the Turkish PA context and development of DCP in Turkey are given. Part three consists of a case study performed with senior and middle level administrators in concurring with ministrerial website research, and analysis of various official reports. In part four the authors aim to lay down the level of DCP in Turkish PA in align with the scope of the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) citizen participation typology. In the final part the authors make discussions and draw the conclusion.

## **THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND**

From a conceptual point of view, there are some interchangeable words used for DCP as citizen engagement, citizen involvement, citizen participation, public participation, or community participation. Although the terms might differ from each other in essence, they are usually used interchangeably in the literature (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014).

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