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Summary Survey on the Administrative Support Staff in Adult Education in Germany

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Research findings[1] in Germany show that administrative support for adults' learning in adult education organisations is undergoing an organisational change. From a systemic perspective administrative work is seen now as a part of the pedagogical function of adult education organisations. The internal quality of processes throughout the whole organization is of crucial importance. In spite of the strategic function of administrative staff their work is often not very motivating and social and professional recognition is lacking.

The expertise by Dietsche in 2003 dealt with issues like working conditions, qualifications, training needs and changing in qualification profiles of administrative staff. In order to get more updated results part of the research was carried out again in 2007.

It is not easy to estimate how many persons in adult education organisations are working in administrative positions. In fact we do not even exactly know how many adult education organisations are acting in the field. According to the statistics on community adult education centres[2] there are nearly as many administrative as pedagogical jobs. In 2005 there were 3.622 jobs for administrative staff in the 978 community adult education centres. It can be stated that ca. 39,5% of all positions in community based adult education centres are for administrative staff. Extrapolating this relation and referring to the estimated total number of adult and continuing education organizations[3]*** (18.500 in 2005) we come to a total of ca. 67.000 jobs of this kind.

Research undertaken in existing training offers (from 120 training provision catalogues) in 2003 showed two different types of training provisions:

a) Training for all kind of staff in adult education organisation (a total of 40 offers) e.g. on the issues communication, human resources development, knowledge management, using

[1] Bastian, H. (2002): Markt und Dienstleistung in der öffentlichen Weiterbildung. In: Lohmann, I. (Hrsg.): Die verkaufte Bildung. Opladen, S. 247–260

Dietsche, B. (2003): Verwaltungsmitarbeiter/innen in der Weiterbildung. Tätigkeiten, Qualifikationsanforderungen, Stand und Bedarf der Fortbildung. Expertise für das DIE. Bonn

Kil, M. (2003): Organisationsveränderungen in Weiterbildungseinrichtungen. Bielefeld

Schiersmann, C. (2003): Institutionenforschung am Beispiel der Familienbildung. In: Gieseke, W. (Hrsg.): Institutionelle Innensichten der Weiterbildung. Bielefeld, S. 46–58

[2] Pehl, K./Reichart, E./Zabal, A. (2006): Volkshochschul-Statistik. 44. Folge, Arbeitsjahr 2005. Bonn. URL: www.die-bonn.de/esprid/dokumente/doc-2006/pehl06_01.pdf (Stand: 28.06.2007)

[3] Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung (WSF) (2005): Erhebung zur beruflichen und sozialen Lage von Lehrenden in Weiterbildungseinrichtungen. Kerpen

computer applications, accounting, statistics and specific knowledge for the development of adult education business.

b) Training provisions for the administrative support staff (a total of 50 offers) in the following issues: management of the administration department, consequences of changing legal framework, effective office organisation, accounting, document management, self management, time management.

In 2007 we investigated again the training provisions available for administrative staff. This time we analysed the Qualidat data basis, run by DIE that specializes on training provisions for the staff of adult education organizations. Qualidat (http://www.die-bonn.de/qualidat/) contains training offers of all umbrella organizations of community adult education centres, adult education offered by the churches, training provisions of some of the umbrella organisations of commercial institutions et cetera.

There were a total of 72 offers for "administration" in general, 6 of them referred only to the top management. 49 had issues like effective office organisation, accounting, document management; IT- tools like outlook, office, power point et cetera. Only 17 training provisions dealt with issues of qualitative improvement of administrative work in adult education organizations with subjects like counselling, team work improvement, communication, intercultural communication, management of complaints, time management, project management, key performance indicators.

The training needs and the expected development of qualifications were explored in several interviews with researchers and experts of the field. From the point of view of organizational development there are increasing requirements in (intercultural) communication, knowledge and handling of internal co-operation and co-ordination, adjustment to new computer applications, service for customers and participants.