

Innovational Trends in Adult Education in Germany

Rudolf Tippelt* (LMUniversity Munich)

<Abstract>

In view of the new challenges caused by the demographic change and globalization, Germany is faced with a necessity to improve lifelong learning and to establish the systematic further education, in order to achieve greater equality, social participation, economic development and to secure its position of a Modern Society. A Circle of Innovation in Further Education, installed by the Ministry of Education in Germany, formulated recommendations with regard to the possible contribution of further education to lifelong learning. These recommendations are commented and supported by “Rat der Weiterbildung - KAW” (Council of Further Education - Concerted Action Further Education), as summarized in this paper. According to it, the holistic concept of education, which manifests itself in the trias of individual orientation, social participation and ability to be employed, and the special social significance of further education beyond the field of vocational education are equally emphasized. This paper concludes that these recommendations can only be successfully implemented by joint forces of relative institutions in order to create new ways of access to lifelong learning.

Key words : innovational trends, further education, lifelong learning, Circle for Innovation in Further Education

* Corresponding Author : Rudolf Tippelt, Department of Educational Science, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, tippelt@edu.uni-muenchen.de, <http://www.edu.lmu.de/apb/personen/professoren/tippelt/index.html>

I. Introduction: Basic ideas of the Circle for Innovation in Further Education

Lifelong learning for all people is one of the great political and social challenges Germany is faced with. The realization of lifelong learning is decisive for the future of the individual, the society, and the economy. It constitutes a task of prime importance in educational policy.

In Germany, a **Circle for Innovation in Further Education** was installed by the Ministry of Education with the aim of formulating recommendations with regard to the possible contribution of further education to lifelong learning. The members of this Circle for Innovation are public figures holding responsible positions in science, in research, in the unions, in management, or in the Laender.

The recommendations, published in 2008, which form the basis of this report, are addressed not only to the state, responsible, in particular, for the framework conditions of lifelong learning, but also to all those who take responsibility for **the organization of lifelong learning**, that is to enterprises, unions and management, associations, educational providers, and public employers, but also to all citizens, who need to take on more responsibility for their own career of lifelong learning.

These recommendations can only be successfully implemented by joint forces, because the common aim of better exhausting all potentials can only be achieved if all parties concerned cooperate. The recommendations are bound to the overall aim of a long-term use and development of Germany's most important resource, "education", in order to achieve **greater equality, social participation, economic development** and to secure and extend the position of a Modern Society.

Globalization and social changes confront people with great challenges which grow even more demanding through the **demographic change**: knowledge and the ability to apply this knowledge have to be continuously adapted and extended through lifelong learning. Only thus can personal orientation, social participation, and the ability to find work be maintained and improved. Therefore, the "value of learning" needs to be increased, independent of whether the learning serves primarily to further develop the ability to find employment, the practice of civic commitment, leisure-time activities, or the development of the individual personality. Germany is a country of immigration and integration. Compared internationally, the dependence of educational success on social background is much too pronounced in Germany. In order to avoid splitting society all those responsible for lifelong learning need to contribute their share to enable each and every one to fully develop his or her

potentials.

All in all, the status of lifelong learning has already been enhanced by living and working in a society characterized by knowledge, service, risk, immigration and an ageing population and by the extraordinary value attributed to the development of human assets. However, especially the comparatively low enrolment rate in further education in Germany points both to structural deficits and - in view of the increase in the demand for qualified employees, in particular - to the need for a massive increase in individual and social incentives. With regard to the growing importance of further education to lifelong learning, the official objective of further education in Germany is to raise the participation of people between the age of 25 and 64 in lifelong learning to 80% by the year 2015. In this, the participation in formalized further education is to be raised from 43% (2006) to 50% by 2015. With regard to those lesser qualified, of which only 28% had enrolled in further education in the last survey, a participation of at least 40% is targeted.

In order to establish “**systematic further education**” and to increase the participation in further education, possibilities for lifelong learning need to be improved and to be made more attractive. For instance, every degree given should include the possibility that it be followed up with a further qualification. This also means that lifelong learning needs to be made more attractive. Here, a stronger orientation by demand is required. Within the framework of state-run further education, in particular, the programs offered ought to be affordable, easy to enter and aimed at specific target groups. In view of the new challenges caused by the demographic change and in view of globalization, educational consulting and educational programs need to be oriented by the biography and the specific living and learning conditions of the individual.

A promotion of lifelong learning is only possible if both **formal and the manifold versions of informal learning** within and outside of educational institutions are taken into account. Thus, working processes could be changed to simultaneously intensify learning processes, so that the chances of learning on the job could be better exploited.

The local authority district is attributed a key role in the translation of the recommendations given by the Circle for Innovation in Further Education, because a large part of the decisions taken in educational policy are made on the municipal level. In the municipalities and in the **regional area**, the realization of lifelong learning depends upon the quality of the educational programs, on the efficiency in reaching the target group and on the cooperation of all agents.

II. Statement by the “Rat der Weiterbildung – KAW” (Council of Further Education –Concerted Action Further Education) on the individual recommendations presented by the Circle for Innovation

In a public statement, the “Rat der Weiterbildung – KAW”(Council of Further Education)has commented upon the recommendations concerning a strategy for the organization of lifelong learning published by the Circle for Innovation in Further Education. The “Rat der Weiterbildung – KAW” is a circle of experts on communication and cooperation among all providers, associations and organizations working in further education. This council also plays an advisory role in educational policy with regard to further education. Its beginnings go back to the Concerted Action Further Education, founded in the 1980s. The Council of Further Education thus constitutes an amalgamation of important providers of further education in the field of vocational, general, and political adult education. The board of this “Rat der Weiterbildung – KAW” (Prof. Rudolf Tippelt – LMU; Christin Scheers – VDP; Markus Tolksdorf – KBE) has explicitly welcomed the recommendations by the Circle for Innovation and has offered its support in translating these recommendations into educational practice.

Yet, what are these recommendations for an innovation in further education about?

The clear-cut aim of these recommendations – namely “to continuously adapt and expand knowledge and the ability to apply this knowledge through lifelong learning in order to maintain and improve personal orientation, social participation and the ability to be employed” – is expressly acknowledged.

This task – thus the Circle for Innovation – can only be managed successfully as a “common task”. Certainly, the different competences, structures and possibilities of the many educational institutions who – as members – are represented by the “Council of Further Education” are needed for the realization of these aims.

The Council appreciates the emphasis on state-run further education, on municipal responsibility and on the targeted regional and municipal linking-up of all locally responsible agents.

Furthermore, the Council of Further Education has promised to give support in the requested development of a guideline for a future-oriented policy of further education aimed at translating into practice the strategy of lifelong learning. Such a future-oriented policy of education would also free the field of further education of its rather reactive and compensatory image and it would better bring to the fore the clearly needed proactive, structuring side of its actions.

In summary, the **holistic concept of education** expressed in the preamble, which manifests itself in the trias of “**individual orientation, social participation and ability to be employed**”, was welcomed, in particular. The special social significance of further education beyond the field of vocational education shows itself specifically in that the qualification and promotion of competences aimed at economic development are given the same status as further education aiming at the **social integration of minorities** and at a change in cultural values.

The individual objectives of innovation are commented upon as follows:

- The holistic concept of education expressed in the preamble to the recommendations which focuses equally on individual orientation, social participation and the ability to be employed is explicitly welcomed. Through this concept the Circle for Innovation in Further Education in Germany distinguishes itself from the simultaneously developed recommendations given by the Circle for Innovation in Vocational Education. Therefore it seems paramount to translate this holistic concept of further education into concrete recommendations.
- Due to the far-reaching structures of its members the Council of Further Education provides an ideal field for the support of the campaign for lifelong learning demanded by the Circle of Innovation. At the same time, this field is open to politics as a practical field for further research on education.
- These competences and experiences of the Council of Further Education can also be integrated into the formulation of the targeted guideline for a future-oriented policy of further education. Thus, it might be possible for further education to become an active element in the political organization and it would no longer merely react in a compensatory manner to political and other prerequisites.
- The Council specifically supports the emphasis on public responsibility with regard to further education and the importance of the local authority district for further education, especially since on this decisive level, too, the claim holds true that the translation into practice constitutes a “common task”, as stated in the recommendations. Here, too, the Council of Further Education, through its members, can provide and include local contacts for the realization and for the creation of a network on the spot.
- The “long-term implementation” of specific projects requested in the recommendations can only be achieved through the cooperation of local district authorities, industry and commerce, and the different associations and providers of further education.

- The proposals for the introduction of an “education premium” are welcomed as a starting point if this money may in fact be used for the entire field of further education for those interested in further education. With regard to the translation into practice of financing models or when advice is needed regarding possible uses for this money, the network of Council members is available, too.
- The aim of an improved integration of the handicapped into further education is surely to be emphasized, although further education is directed at all parts of the population. What is needed here is a medium-term re-orientation from formal, degree-related qualifications towards competences. Through an acknowledgement and counting of acquired competences new target groups can be won for lifelong learning. In order to best develop the competences and potentials of people acquired outside of formal education, the development of a German/European qualification framework aims at a medium- or long-term change in paradigm from an orientation by formal, degree-related qualifications to an orientation by competences. In this context, **competences acquired outside of the educational system** should also be acknowledged. This requires instruments and procedures for an uncomplicated ascertainment and recognition of competences, also as a prerequisite for the re-entry into formal education (e.g. a **profile passport**). This is meant to help reach especially those target groups of lifelong learning which could so far hardly be reached through conventional educational programs. The acknowledgement of competences also implies that they are recognized and counted on higher educational levels.
- The Council of Further Education supports the new demand for an opening up "to new target groups for university courses and for further education", yet this is linked to an increase in the demand for qualification procedures aimed at the staff needed for these new groups. The call for an enhanced “interchangeability” of the elements of the education program should be reliably extrapolated with concrete numbers. For this, **concrete indicators** should be named which should be relevant to the allocation of funds. A municipal and regional system of educational reporting has still to be established. The Circle for Innovation has set the following targets: The interchangeability of the different elements of the education program has to be increased and their **vertical and horizontal linkage** needs to be strengthened. General and vocational further education, in particular, need to be linked more closely and the possibility to go on from a first vocational training to further education, and from vocational training to a university education has to be guaranteed. In this, the Circle for Innovation in Further Education supports the motto

of the Circle for Innovation in Vocational Education: **“Second chance of qualification - Promote secondary qualification among adults”**. Furthermore, measures for the prevention of premature terminations of school or training careers need to be pursued further. The possibility to apply for final examinations in school and vocational careers at a later point need to be extended. The first vocational training and further education (also on the university level) have to be **linked more closely** and, if necessary, to be regulated through formal policies. In view of the increasing need for qualified specialized employees, the transition from vocational education to university education should be made easier. It should be possible to take into account results achieved within the framework of further education when taking up an (additional) course of studies:

- o In order to open up a larger number of prospects of promotion from vocational training or from one's occupation, talented graduates from a dual education who want to follow up with a university course of studies should be given a promotion grant.
 - o For part-time students, especially for working persons and for parents in the family phase, universities and companies have to improve the terms for a compatibility of job and studies and of family and job. In view of the increasing need for qualified employees, the universities should furthermore expand this field of further education and form **alliances with enterprises (dual system)**.
 - o Access to university courses and to scientific further education has to be made easier. **Cooperation between universities, enterprises, research institutions and institutions of further education** has to be improved and extended and these institutions have to be opened up to people without a university education by taking into account recognized vocational qualifications. Competition in the field of scientific further education which focuses on a need- and demand-oriented program of scientific further education is appreciated.
 - o **Scientific further education** should also be certified and provided with credit points.
- With regard to the requested steps of **professionalization** - not only in the field of educational consulting - a project sponsored by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and at present carried out in cooperation with the LMU (University of Munich) should be mentioned. This project, called **“KomWeit” (Increase in the enrolment in further education and improvement of equal opportunities through the promotion of competence among teachers**

- in further education), is already carrying out applied pure research in this field.
- Lifelong learning depends on a general development and maintenance of quality covering all educational sectors and providers. In this context, the professionalism of the staff, in particular, has to be strengthened. The Council of Further Education, too, stresses the great importance of the field of **quality maintenance**, however, a restrictive bureaucratization has to be avoided by all means. Continuous quality management and concrete feed-back systems have already been carried through on a broad scale. The innovations required consist above all in the translation of feed-back results thus gained. Quality maintenance should never amount to nothing more than a routine examination of the efficiency.
 - In order to guarantee a quantitatively sufficient and qualitatively high-grade program of consulting available to all target groups, especially to those which have so far not been reached, an **integrative system of educational consulting** is required, covering **all phases of learning**. This also includes low-threshold and actively outward-going consulting services. In this, educational consulting and career guidance, in particular, should be coordinated. The aim is to establish educational consulting - in accordance with the OECD definition of 2004 - as a service “the objective of which is to support people of all ages and at every point in their lives to make independent decisions with regard to their education, vocational training and occupation on a well-prepared and informed basis and to take their vocational life into their own hands.” In order to achieve this aim it is paramount that educational guidance in Germany be further developed and extended.
 - The emphasis on the significance and the tasks of further education in the field of integration is shared. Against the background of the demographic changes and the special responsibility towards migrants attributed to Germany as a country of immigration, the Circle for Innovation in Further Education expressly supports the **National Plan for Integration**. It has been made possible to better exploit the potentials of immigrants within the educational system for their personal development and their integration into the community. The demand for integration is not only directed at persons with a migration background, rather, it is aimed at all people in our society. On the basis of current projects, examples of already successful integration can be added to the discussion.
 - Lifelong learning has to keep its attraction even throughout the late and post-vocational phase and it has to be further developed so that the **knowledge and the competences of the older**

generation are preserved. Only thus will it be possible to secure social participation and the recognition of the knowledge, experiences, and abilities of the older people in the interest of the younger. Due to a prolonged lifespan the percentage of older people in Germany will increase continuously and strongly over the next 30 years. This development has a far-reaching impact on the social community, on enterprises, on employment, and on the social budgets. By learning during the late phase of one's vocational life, professional competences may be maintained and improved and, furthermore, social and economic integration are ensured well into old age. The **challenges that arise with the demographic change** and that further education, systematized learning processes and the development of competences are confronted with, need to include the social and vocational integration of adolescents and the role of adults under the age of 50. Educational research on the learning behavior of older people has to be intensified and new forms of intergenerational learning should be spread. Furthermore, in order to ensure the older people's ability to remain on the job, appropriate programs of further education should be developed in cooperation with the companies. In this context, programs for job-related qualifications need to be supplemented by programs for the promotion and maintenance of good health. In view of the massive demographic changes, the demand for intergenerational learning, formulated in the recommendations, is of high relevance. However, when translating this aim into practice, the demand for an intergenerational approach has to be taken seriously, meaning that both the target group of "older people" and that of the "younger" generation have to be addressed.

- Education also plays a crucial role in **regional development**. Regions have to be supported in developing integrated, regional educational concepts which focus on the entire biography of an individual and on lifelong learning. By consolidating all responsibilities relevant to education in the region, the quality of educational programs can be strengthened, target groups can be better reached and the cooperation of all agents can be simplified. The programs that have so far been promoted in Germany show that there is a strong need for consolidating all responsibilities and activities that are relevant to education on the regional level and for including the agents of the civil society (e.g. **learning regions**). Here, the local authority districts play a pre-eminent role. Educational monitoring within the region can create the required transparency regarding educational programs, educational processes and the effects of education. With regard to the role played by the civil society and by the municipal level of action in the implementation of a

further developed concept of lifelong learning, the Circle for Innovation refers to the initiative “learning on the spot”, planned in cooperation with foundations. This initiative aims at developing and promoting an exemplary, **coherent educational management on the spot**, in order to systematically relate educational places, the demand for education, and educational programs to one another. For the implementation of the proposed initiative "learning on the spot" the Council of Further Education pledges on-the-spot support thanks to its members already being present and effectively linked well onto the municipal level; in addition, it also offers to give advice on the decision-making level.

- The strengthening of **international, political and (inter-)cultural education** is considered to be indispensable by the Council of Further Education, too. When translating this aim into concrete measures of promotion, broad experiences in dealing with differentiated measures of promotion in this field can be drawn upon. Both the transparency concerning the international validity of degrees and procedures for an adequate classification of degrees of further education within the framework of qualification need to be further developed. Educational activities across the border to neighboring states have to be intensified, taking into consideration the respective specific regional needs. Transnational educational activities need to be intensified in all educational sectors and for all target groups and they have to be qualitatively strengthened with regard to their long-term effectiveness for lifelong learning. Furthermore, specific measures for the international commercialization of further education have to be developed and implemented.
- One last point is of great importance to educational research and research on further education: Since the innovations aimed at have to prove worthwhile, a broad **formative and inventorial evaluation of the practical measures is strongly advised** as an important task of research on further education.

Systematic further education relies on a balanced distribution of public and private responsibilities. Initiatives by the Federal Government and the Laender, by the local authority districts, the Federal Agency for Employment and other providers as well as successful individual initiatives by schools, universities and other institutions on the regional level and, finally, the extraordinary commitment of individual personalities should be better communicated to the public.

The proposals of the Circle for Innovation in Further Education (2008) take up the “Strategy for Lifelong Learning in the Federal Republic of Germany”, already agreed upon by the Federal

Government and the Laender in the course of the Conference of 2004. Even then, it was emphasized that the realization of lifelong learning concerns all educational sectors. The prerequisites for the willingness to partake in further education are basically developed through motivation and the ability to learn independently acquired during education in early childhood and through the contents of education and training in school, in vocational training and at university. The school-leaving certificate is the basis for every educational biography. Therefore, every person must be given the opportunity to achieve this degree. For those who do as yet not partake in lifelong (further) learning, due to negative educational experiences, new ways of access to lifelong learning have to be created. School education and a sound first vocational training are the best basis for continuous learning.

References

- Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (2008). Bildung in Deutschland 2008. Verfügbar unter: http://www.bildungsbericht.de/daten2008/bb_2008.pdf.
- Barz, H. (2006). Innovationen in der Weiterbildung. Was Programmverantwortliche heute wissen müssen. Augsburg: Ziel.
- Bergold, R. (2008). Was ist neu an den Empfehlungen für die Weiterbildung? Einige Thesen zu den Empfehlungen des Innovationskreises Weiterbildung. In: Erwachsenenbildung 2, S. 94-96.
- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2008a). Berufsbildungsbericht. Verfügbar unter: http://www.bmbf.de/pub/bbb_08.pdf.
- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2008b). Empfehlungen des Innovationskreises Weiterbildung für eine Strategie zur Gestaltung des Lernens im Lebenslauf. Verfügbar unter: http://www.bmbf.de/pub/empfehlungen_innovationskreis_weiterbildung.pdf.
- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2008c). Leben und Lernen für eine lebenswerte Zukunft - die Kraft der Erwachsenenbildung. Verfügbar unter: http://www.bmbf.de/pub/confintea_bericht_deutschland.pdf.
- Faulstich, P. (2008). Kompetenzentwicklung als Weiterbildungsperspektive. In: Hessische Blätter für Volksbildung 4, S. 306-314.
- Heuer, U. (2006). Zukunftsfähigkeit der Institution Weiterbildung. In: Forum Erwachsenenbildung 2, S. 15-20.
- Loebe, H./Severing, E. (Hrsg.) (2007). Weiterbildung auf dem Prüfstand. Mehr Innovation und Integration durch neue Wege der Qualifizierung. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.

- Schillo, J. (2008). Zur Lage der Weiterbildung. Zum aktuellen Stand der Bildungspolitik. In: Erwachsenenbildung 2, S. 80-82.
- Streich, D./Wahl, D. (Hrsg.) (2007). Innovationsfähigkeit in einer modernen Arbeitswelt. Personalentwicklung - Organisationsentwicklung - Kompetenzentwicklung; Beiträge der Tagung des BMBF. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag.
- Tippelt, R./Reupold, A./Strobel, C./Kuwan, H./Pekince, N./Fuchs, S./Abicht, L./Schönfeld, P. (2009). "Lernende Regionen - Netzwerke gestalten". Teilergebnisse zur Evaluation des Programms "Lernende Regionen - Förderung von Netzwerken". Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.
- Tippelt, R./Schmidt, B./Schnurr, S./Sinner, S./Theisen, C. (2009). Bildung Älterer. Chancen im demographischen Wandel. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann.
- Tippelt, R./von Hippel, A. (2009). Handbuch Erwachsenenbildung/Weiterbildung, 3. überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.