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Vocational education for adults in the programs of the German Community Learning Centers (Volkshochschulen)

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German Institute for Adult Education
Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning

DiE

Overview

- Community Learning Centers (Adult Learning Centers) as adult Education providers in Germany
- Measuring general and vocational Education in Statistics of Adult Education
- Defining vocational Education for the German CLC
- Sample and Method
- The share of vocational oriented education in CLC in Germany
- Discussion

CLC as adult education providers in Germany

- Institutional framework for adult education in Germany: the **federation** governs **vocational** education for adults, the **federal states** **general and political education** for adults
- Community Learning Centers (CLC) underlie the legislation of each federal state, but are run or governed by the local communities
- CLC are wide-spread, well-known adult education providers that offer a broad range of topics in adult education

Adult education statistics: general vs. vocational education

Perspectives for the statistic measure of adult education:

- Companies and their supply of education for their employees: mostly vocational education, due to context
- Individuals and their participation in non-formal learning: distinction by type of class/topic (German Report System on Adult Education) vs. distinction by subjective purpose (Adult Education Survey)
- Suppliers of adult education: distinction by topic; how about target group, intention with the course?

Background information about CLC statistics I

- Exist since 1962
- yearly survey at all German CLC that are member in the national umbrella organization (DVV)
- conducted by the German Institute for Adult Education
- current main categories effective since 1998

Four types of classes:

- Courses (3 lessons and more; differentiated into **open** and **closed** courses)
- Single events or lectures (up to 2 lessons)
- Field excursions (up to one day)
- Educational journeys (more than one day)

Background information about CLC statistics II

Classification of topics into six “program fields” (for courses exist also finer subcategories):

- 1) Society-Politics-Environment
- 2) Culture-Creation
- 3) Health
- 4) Languages
- 5) Work-Profession
- 6) Basic Education-Graduation from School

Core measures for all classes at CLC:

- Number of classes
- Lessons of classes (one lesson = 45 minutes)
- Registered participants in classes

Hypothesis and research problem

Hypothesis: there is more vocational education at CLC than measured for courses in the program field Work-Profession

What is vocational oriented adult education (at CLC)?

- How to include key qualifications?
- How to include the supplier's intentions?

Goals and benefits

Goals with the study:

- Find a definition of vocational oriented education that is suitable for CLC as adult education suppliers
- Estimate the share of vocational oriented education at CLC

Benefits of this study:

- Contribute to a differentiated discussion about the measurement of vocational vs. general education
- Develop ideas for a revision of CLC statistics

Multi-method approach

- Expert interviews: Discussion of working definition of vocational oriented education at CLC and development of search criteria
- Analysis of the complete program catalogues of a sample of CLC for one year on the basis of the search criteria
- Estimation of the share of vocational oriented education in this sample
- Extrapolation and estimation of the share of vocational oriented education for all CLC using CLC statistics database

Expert interviews

Interview partners: five experts from the field of CLC (federal umbrella organization, federal state's organization, CLC in different regions of Germany)

Search criteria for “vocational oriented courses”:

- Courses leading to a recognized advanced vocational qualification
- Courses addressing persons working in a specific vocational field
- Courses addressing persons in search for a job
- Courses teaching general soft skills
- Courses teaching computer skills, except for courses explicitly for leisure purposes
- Courses teaching language skills, if specifically designed for professional use

Program catalogue analysis

- Data base: Online program catalogue archive (N=50)
- Selection of a sample (N=30) with best possible fit with central variables in CLC statistics (size range, legal entity, region, program field structure)
- Inspection of complete program catalogues for the year 2007 on the basis of search criteria
- Documentation of all courses by vocational/non-vocational; duration; current program field classification

Results of the program catalogue analysis

Program Field	Society- Politics- Environment	Culture- Creation	Health	Langua- ges	Work- Profession	Basic Education- Graduation from School	Total
Number of Lessons counted in courses in the program field	27,269	60,949	79,934	233,007	85,285	141,259	627,704
Percentage of vocational oriented lessons of all lessons in the program field	7.8%	0.4%	6.0%	4.7%	88.6%	0.0%	14.9%

Own calculations

Extrapolation for all CLC and all courses

Premises and assumptions:

- Classes in the program field Basic Education- Graduation from School are non-vocational oriented
- Courses by order of companies are all vocational oriented
- No weight for the sample

Results of the extrapolation

Program Field	Society-Politics-Environment	Culture-Creation	Health	Languages	Work-Profession	Basic Education-Graduation from School	Total
vocational oriented lessons in open courses (estimation)	47,751	5,808	162,179	275,417	1,376,967	0	2,032,430
lessons in closed courses	43,193	21,469	15,928	294,650	772,029	198,192	1,345,461
Percentage of vocational oriented lessons from all lessons in the program field	13.9%	1.7%	6.6%	9.2%	92.4%	0.0%	20.1%

Own calculations with data from the study and the CLC statistics Database, 2007

Comparison of the different measurements

Program Field	Society-Politics-Environment	Culture-Creation	Health	Languages	Work-Profession	Basic Education-Graduation from School	Total
Percentage of vocational oriented lessons (sample, open courses)	7.8%	0.4%	6.0%	4.7%	88.6%	0.0%	14.9%
Percentage of vocational oriented lessons (extrapolation)	13.9%	1.7%	6.6%	9.2%	92.4%	0.0%	20.1%
Share of each program field within vocational oriented lessons	3.0%	0.9%	5.9%	18.9%	71.3%	0.0%	100%
Share of each program field according to current classification (open and closed courses)	4.4%	10.9%	18.0%	41.3%	15.5%	9.9%	100%

Own calculations with data from the study and the CLC statistics Database, 2007

Discussion

The hypothesis about higher share of vocational oriented education with modified definition can be held up, however:

- Raise of share of vocational education is not as large as expected
- Scope of the definition plays a key role
- Appropriateness of distinction between vocational and general education needs to be discussed

This study provides helpful suggestions for a revised statistics, but:

More research and conceptual considerations are necessary to find a suitable way of representing vocational oriented education in adult education suppliers' statistics, also beyond CLC