

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIELD OF LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION

State of the art in Germany

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The EU project “TRAIN – Professionalization of Literacy and Basic Education – Basic Modules for Teacher Training” began in October 2006. The project has a term of two years and involves partners from Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, France, Cyprus and Switzerland.

Literacy, broadly conceived as the basic knowledge and skills needed by all is a fundamental human right. In every society literacy is a necessary skill in itself and one of the foundation of other life skills. There are millions who lack opportunities to learn or who have insufficient skills to be able to assert this right. The challenge is to enable them to do so. This will often imply the creation of preconditions for learning through awareness-raising and empowerment. Literacy is also a catalyst for participation in social, cultural political and economic activities, and for learning throughout life. In the rapidly changing world of today's knowledge society, with the progressive use of newer and innovative technological means of communication, literacy requirements continue to expand regularly. In order to survive in today's globalized world, it has become necessary for all people to learn (new) literacies and develop the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information in multiple manners.

While there is a growing demand for adult education and an explosion of information, the disparities between those who have access and those who do not are also growing. There is therefore a need to counter this polarity, which reinforces existing inequalities, by creating adult learning structures and lifelong learning environments that can help to correct the prevalent trend. In February 2003, the United Nations proclaimed the Literacy Decade for the period 2003-2012 towards the goal of education for all.

In Europe the development of literacy and basic education is very different – that applies to the professional development of trainers as well. Professionalism within literacy and basic skills is a difficult subject because teacher and trainer have to deal with adults who are marginalised or disadvantaged. In addition to their reading and writing difficulties the students do have learning problems. Therefore teacher and trainer have to improve their knowledge about psychological and social aspects. It is necessary to develop innovative methods of teaching and learning, including interactive technologies. Even if the importance of training literacy and basic education practitioners and professionals is not disputed there are enormous differences how to deal with it. In Belgium and the Netherlands you can find job descriptions for the staff, and universities provide trainings with final examinations and certificates; in Great Britain core curricula and standards have been developed for students and there are efforts by the government to improve teacher training in the field of literacy and basic education. In most European countries – as in most of the participating countries - there is a lack of teacher training qualification.

Within the framework of the project, strategies, concepts and examples of good practice are now to be triaged, analysed and disseminated in the partner countries as well as in additional European countries which already have more experience in this field. This will help prepare an additional project objective: strategies for five continuing basic education models for teachers are to be developed and carried out in the area of literacy / basic education. These are to be looked upon as models linking up various examples of good practice throughout Europe.

1.2 Description of procedure

This report is the result of basic research focusing on “educational training of teaching staff”. First of all, developments and the state of the art in the participating countries as well as other European countries such as Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands are also being researched. There is an interest in getting to know and comparing the various underlying conditions and structures as well as strategies, concepts and examples of good practice. The results are explored in the various country reports, which are all comprised together in a compendium.

In compiling this report, we were able to make use of the series “Compact DIE Country Report on Literacy/Basic Education” (Tröster 2005). Moreover, Internet research was conducted, relevant literature triaged and analysed, and expert interviews performed with continuing education staff working in the field of literacy / basic education.

2. Development of Literacy and Basic Education in Germany

2.1 An overview of developments, underlying conditions and structures

For a long time the number of illiterate persons in Germany could only be estimated in a rough manner. Ever since Germany took part in the *International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)* for the first time in 1994, we have known that 14.4% of adults over 15 years of age (approximately 7.7 million) in Germany have only attained the lowest level of reading competence (OECD 1995, p. 38).¹ These results have not been given much attention, however, nor have they been of any consequence for educational policy. Then came the PISA shock, confirming that one-fourth of pupils leave school without an adequate basic education. “In view of the discussion over the PISA study, the topic of literacy – basic education – vocation-oriented basic education is taking on a whole new relevance, quite possibly obtaining a new dimension.” (Tröster 2002, p. 11). Basic education can be described as a field “fraught with many tensions” (cf. Tröster 2000), as the topic is connected with a whole host of aspects and many unresolved questions. Thus in Germany, it is not sufficiently known what basic education means² and how literacy and basic education relate to each other. In addition to this, there is a lack of understanding of the connection between basic education, society, personal development and the working world. On the whole, there is movement in the area, which is undergoing “profound change” (Tröster 2000, p. 13), which also causes “a lack of clarity as well as creative opportunities” (Linde 2002, p. 17). There is a need for discussion and action, a need to clear up fundamental issues and agree with stakeholders and decision-makers on future prospects for establishing this area in a manner which allows the long-standing demand for institutionalisation and professionalisation to be achieved.

We first became aware of the phenomenon of illiteracy when menial jobs were eliminated in the 1970s as a result of technological progress and unemployment rose precipitously. A growing number of people became losers in the jobs market and had to struggle with reading and writing problems. The first literacy courses were launched at this time in various

¹ The IALS study “Basic qualifications, business and society” was the first international study of basic qualifications of adults. Three types of basic qualifications were measured: prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy (cf. OECD/Statistics Canada 1995, p. 17 and <http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/IALS.html>).

² In the “Hamburg Declaration on Learning by Adults”, formulated during the world UNESCO conference CONFINTEA in 1997, it was stated that: “Basic education for everyone means that, regardless of their age, people have the opportunity to develop to their full potential as individuals or in a community. This is not only a right – it is also an obligation towards other people and society as a whole. It is important for the recognition of the right to lifelong learning to be supported by measures which create the preconditions for this right to be exercised” (UNESCO 1997, p. 7).

educational facilities, in prisons and through different initiatives. Changing economic conditions also led a new target group and tasks to be assigned to the field of adult education (cf. Bastian 2002, p. 5).

An initial conference on “illiteracy among young German-speaking people and adults” was staged in 1970. This conference issued a memorandum entitled “For a right to read”, which has not lost any of its importance and relevance down to the present day (cf. Drecoll/Müller 1981, pp. 165-173). The Federal Ministry of Education and Science recognised the need to act at that time and commissioned a study by the Arbeitskreis Orientierungs- und Bildungshilfe (Working Group for Orientation and Educational Aid - AOB), Berlin, one of the first agencies funding reading and writing courses. The study was entitled “On illiteracy in the Federal Republic of Germany” (Ehling/Müller/Oswald 1981). The following year the Federal Ministry of Education and Science commissioned the Pädagogische Arbeitsstelle (PAS) at the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV)³ to develop “conceptual foundations for literacy work, and to initiate model programmes promoting literacy throughout Germany, to advise institutions which execute courses and train teachers of courses. The very successful project work was awarded a prize by UNESCO in 1985” (Buchhaas-Birkholz/Rückert 1992, p. 80). This was followed by a project in 1986 focusing on “elementary education”. This issue was to close the gap between literacy programmes and further education programmes such as courses allowing people to acquire a lower-level secondary school degree. Another focus was training of teaching staff – especially learning counselling (cf. Fuchs-Brüninghoff 1989 and Fuchs-Brüninghoff/Pfarrmann 1991).

Parallel to this, during the period 1984 to 1989, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research promoted a unique “integrate media literacy programme”, first of all to raise public awareness of the problem, which was lacking until then, and secondly to motivate other stakeholders to attend courses like these. The number of participants rose rapidly from 2,600 in 1982 to 5,600 in 1985 and 8,300 in 1987 (cf. Kropp 1987, p. 37).

The projects have “made a crucial contribution to raising awareness of educational policy, to the further development of education strategies and to a networking of actors in the field of practice and research” (Bastian 2002, p. 6). Crucial prerequisites were established for continuing education facilities, especially adult education colleges, to offer programmes everywhere. The course and counselling strategies which have been developed still apply today. A new area of work has been created which, however, especially concentrates on staff working in the area of jobs-creation programmes. After these possibilities were excused and local governments were called upon to come up with financial solutions, the first setbacks were experienced. “Instead of a consolidation of jobs, there were disruptions and setbacks. Stagnation set in” (Fuchs-Brüninghoff/Tröster 1996, p. 8).

“There are no national statutory arrangements for programmes being offered throughout Germany in the area of literacy and basic adult education. The programmes and their infrastructure differ among the *Länder*. Standards for the training of course teachers, instructional material, counselling and organisation of instruction have sprouted up repeatedly in projects, and sporadically at the local level, but these have not been developed further to be applied at the national level. There is no uniform, secure source of funding available” (Döbert/Hubertus 2000, p. 99).

The jurisdiction of the Federal government and the *Länder* are a given as a result of the Germany’s federal structure. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research can only promote innovative projects in the area of basic education and literacy. This has indeed repeatedly been the case from the beginning of literacy campaigns down to the present, but these projects cannot serve as a replacement for the right structural conditions. The Federal

³ PAS was the predecessor organisation of the Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE – German Institute for Adult Education).

Länder and local governments are in charge of creating an infrastructure and implementing promising project results.

The area of literacy/basic education only crops up in laws and regulations on continuing education in a few cases – e.g. in Lower Saxony or Hesse. Basic education and adult literacy are also a sporadic topic for the Federal government-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and the Promotion of Research (BLK), but this is certainly not a “permanent” topic. In the BLK report on the situation in 1991, entitled “Functional illiteracy in the Federal Republic of Germany”, among other things “a new course in basic education” is called for, as is “fixed institutionalisation” and “training and reasonable pay for teachers”. Moreover it is stated that “Estimations of costs of literacy and basic education programmes should not only take micro-economic factors into account, but also macro-economic factors. Literacy constitutes an overall societal problem which causes costs in the social and administrative area as well as in connection with the labour market” (cf. Huck/Schäfer 1991, pp. 34-37). In addition, research needs were already seen to exist back at this time: the Secretary General of the BLK recommended that “targeted, more detailed possibilities and contents be developed for research projects and trial models in the field of education”, but this call was not put into practice in the area of adult education (cf. Huck/Schäfer 1991, p. 3).

In the 1990s a more comprehensive conception of basic education gained increasing currency at the international level, replacing the more narrowly focused literacy strategy, and this also had an impact on the situation in Germany. New social competence requirements require a conceptual reorientation, thus leading to broader basic education models. It is important that “increased societal requirements with respect to employability” be conveyed at the same time as those “personal and social competencies which are part of what is generally viewed to make up basic education in integrated form” (Bastian 2002, p. 7). In the German discussion of continuing education, this attention to basic education is still relatively new, but this issue is not being addressed, nor is it accepted, everywhere. Instead, reference is often still being made to “elementary education”, or merely “alphabetisation” or “literacy” (cf. Nuisl 2000, p. 104). An issue of ALFA-FORUM in 2004 (issue 54-55) carried the title: “what is ‘functionally literate’ supposed to mean? In this case as well, a “search began for suitable terms and concepts” (Linde 2004, p. 2) while Kamper called for “basic education for adults” (Kamper 2004). These examples show that basic education can indeed be characterised as an “area fraught with tension” (Tröster 2000): There is no uniform understanding nor is there any generally valid definition or list of terms. Various social groups develop different requirements and expectations of basic education which learners with their needs are confronted with (cf. Tröster 2000, p. 16 et seq.). These range from programmes helping individuals cope with life all the way to training of skilled labour (cf. Bastian 2002, p. 7).

Another development relates to “vocationally oriented elementary education”. Here the task is to obtain a close networking between working and learning while developing and implementing integrated strategies for course work and support for educational training. “Learning special skills takes place not only alongside, but also coterminously with methodological-strategic, socially communicative, self-experiencing and self-evaluating learning” (Steindl 2002, p. 48). With respect to the vocational focus, there have been voices warning that this aspect should not be overemphasised. Consequently, it would appear important to “link general personal skills especially required in the vocational context with the same important personal development skills in order to support people in structuring their lives as well as in coping with their everyday working lives more effectively” (Tröster 2002, p. 12).

Interesting changes are associated with the new media, which as an engine of societal development also bring about movement in the area of literacy / basic education. New media mean new challenges, and they open up new opportunities.

It should be emphasised that both successful project activities as well as work at the grass-roots level would not be possible without the tireless commitment of the people working in this field. In spite of the difficult underlying conditions and insecure employment, these people work to further develop literacy and basic education to benefit the target group.

2.2 Relevant bodies and actors

Different actors and service facilities work for basic education and literacy at the national level:

Bundesverband Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung e.V. (The Federal Literacy Association)

The association has existed in its present form since 1997, with approximately 400 individual and organisational members. Its objectives include supporting individuals as well as institutions in the field of literacy by means of information, advocacy and lobbying in the area of educational policy and public-relations work. The Federal Association issues the ALFA-FORUM, the only journal for literacy and basic education in Germany.

Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV – German Adult Education College Association) and the Länder associations of adult education colleges

The DVV and the *Länder* associations of the adult education schools work to promote literacy at adult education colleges. Thus the DVV declaration of 7 December 1993 on the “maintenance and expansion of courses for literate young people and adults” emphasises that “literacy is a task for further public education and is thus an issue of common interest to the Federal, *Länder* and local governments” (cf. DVV 1993).

Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE – German Institute for Adult Education)

The DIE, an institution of the *Leibniz-Gemeinschaft*, is funded by the Federal government and the *Länder*. The institute acts as a go-between for research and the field of practice in adult education, supporting these with various services. Various projects with funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research have been carried out since the beginning of literacy which have supported literacy and basic education work in a sustained manner. Among other things, strategies for training staff and for working with participants and a strategy for providing counselling to learners have been developed. The DIE has coordinated and taken part in projects at the European level as well. One of the services it provides is the issue of the annual VHS statistics, which offer data on literacy / basic education (numbers of participants, courses on offer, etc.).

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

The UIL is an international institute addressing literacy in industrialised countries which strongly advocates using the term “basic education” in order to retain an open channel to the international discussion. For some years now the institute has been staging workshops on the topic for journalists. A project is being started up on “family literacy” at present (cf. UIP 2004).

German UNESCO Commission e.V. (DUK)

The German UNESCO Commission acts as a broker in the field of foreign cultural policy. It serves as a link between the state and science as well as operating as a national liaison office in areas in which UNESCO works and is thus also involved in the international literacy decade of the United Nations from 2003 to 2012.

Bündnis für Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung (Alliance for Literacy and Basic Education)

An “Alliance for Literacy and Basic Education” was formed in 2003 in the context of the world literacy decade under the coordination of the DUK. The aim is to bring together stakeholders and strengthen work in the field of basic education (cf. http://www.unesco.de/c_arbeitsgebiete/alphabetisierung.htm). Besides the objectives behind the decade, the alliance also bases its work on the Bernburger theses (cf. www.unesco.de/pdf/ua54-03.pdf).

The Alliance has the following members: the German UNESCO Commission, *Bundesverband Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung* (Federal Association for Literacy), the Federal German Ministry of Education and Research, *Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung*, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband*, *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft* (Trade Union for Education and Science), Ernst Klett Verlag Sprachen, *Stiftung Lesen* (Foundation for Reading).

2.3 Providers of courses and development of programmes

80 to 90% of providers of literacy and basic education courses are adult education colleges. There are furthermore associations or initiatives such as, for example, the *“Arbeitskreis Orientierungs- und Bildungshilfe”* (AOB - Working Group for Orientation and Educational Aid) or the *“Lesen und Schreiben”* (Reading and Writing) association, both based in Berlin. In addition, vocational training programmes are sometimes offered in prisons as well.

Most courses take place in the evening once or twice a week (duration: two to three hours), but there is also a demand for morning courses. The fees charged for these courses vary greatly. While a host of institutions offer the courses free of charge, others charge fees. In view of the fact that learners generally have a low income, fees are often lower than regular course fees. In comparison to other programmes such as e.g. language or computer courses, these courses do not produce any profits. On the contrary – they cost institutions a considerable amount. Generally there are special terms and conditions that stipulate that course sizes must be below ten participants in order to guarantee better support for the learners. In addition to the aforementioned on offer, there are also scattered measures or studies programmes which are carried out over a longer period of time (6 to 12 months).

Contents and focal points in literacy and basic education work

Generally – at least this is the case at larger adult education colleges – courses are offered at different levels. The terms “literacy” or “illiteracy” are not used in the course descriptions; the courses are called things like, for example, “reading and writing from the word go”. The first course is preceded by initial counselling, a personal counselling meeting and possible additional meetings. In an ideal situation, counselling to support courses should generally be available. But as a result of their precarious financial situation, institutions are scarcely able to continue to offer these.

Standard programmes in the meantime also include “basic mathematics courses”, “writing on the PC” or “Internet competence”. In the area of communications there are programmes such as “making me understandable – getting what I want”, “listening – speaking – reading” or “being bolder in dealing with government bureaucrats”. “English in the area of basic education” has also become commonplace. Additional courses on offer along more creative lines include creative writing workshops. “Writing days” and creative writing or also yoga and writing. Both educational holidays and summer courses as well as writing days or writing

weekends – sometimes with childcare – have been offered at some institutions for several years now. In addition to relevant thematic focal points, creative writing has achieved a high status.

It is evident that these programmes go beyond traditional literacy and must be subsumed under the rubric of more comprehensive basic education. The example of Hamburg Volkshochschule (Hamburg Adult Education College) shows the direction in which this area of work might develop in the future. The area of basic education was established there at the beginning of the 1990s “in order to be able to meet new educational policy requirements within the framework of an expanded notion of literacy” (Hamburg Volkshochschule, cited in Linde 2001, p. 44).

As stated above, adult education colleges are the main providers. Statistics on adult education colleges⁴ indicate that the courses offered in the subject area of “literacy / elementary education” increased in the programme area of “basic education – secondary school degrees” from 2,519 in 1991 to 3,203 in 2004 (VHS-Statistik Arbeitsjahr 2004). Although participation in the course increased, the total amount on offer in the said period of time remained constant at merely 0.5%. The number of participants was 26,968 (VHS-Statistik 2004).

Even in the wake of two decades of intensive work, however, there is still no national programme. Adult education colleges with at least one literacy course numbered 313 in 2004 – the highest number attained to date. It should be noted, however, that 664 adult education colleges do not offer any reading and writing courses. The ratio of 30% to 70% has not improved considerably over the last decade (see diagram 1).

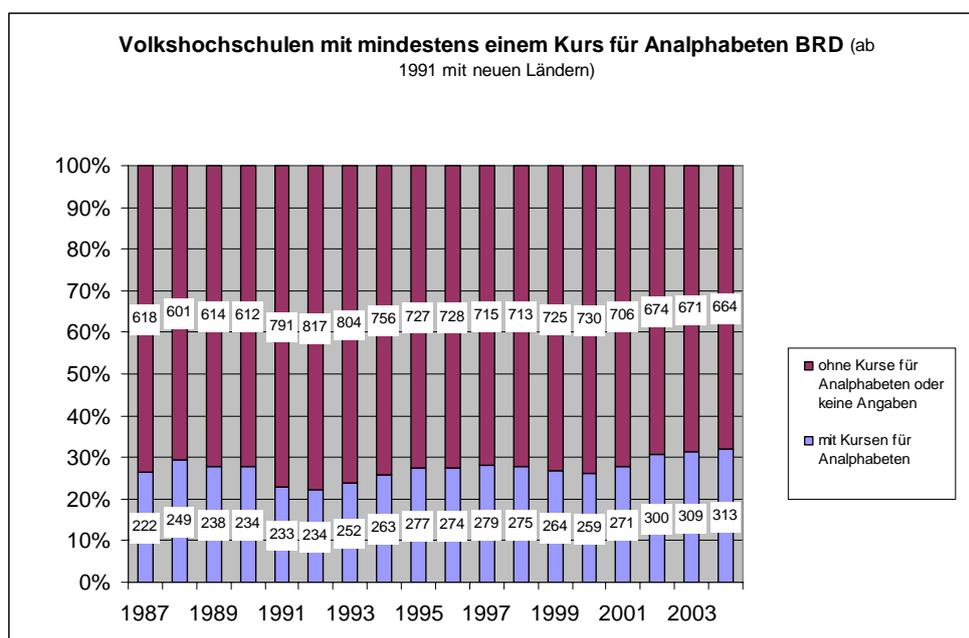


Diagram 1 Adult education colleges with at least one course for illiterate persons

⁴ The “VHS-Statistik – Arbeitsjahr 2004” distinguishes among other things between “courses for special target groups” – in this case illiterates. Information on the new German *Länder* has been included in this since 1991. In 1998 the VHS statistics were reformed. The new subject area of “Literacy / elementary education” has now been included in the programme area of “basic education – secondary school degrees”, which in the statistics of the target group of “illiterates” experienced very significant changes in the years 1997 to 1998.

Adult education colleges with at least one course for illiterates in the Federal Republic of Germany (with the new *Länder* beginning in 1991)

- not including courses for illiterate persons or no information
- with courses for illiterates

Although the importance of literacy and basic education is uncontested, no programmes have been implemented on a national scale. Responsibility is in the hands of the German *Länder*, but there is a lack of arrangements and especially funding. This means that in principle each institution decides itself which programmes are to have priority and can be funded depending upon their budget situation. As long as there are no statutory arrangements, it is not possible to establish a consistent, sustained programme.

2.4 Public-relations work and addressing target groups

In the 1980s, at the beginning of literacy, there were successful media campaigns. Things quieted down after this, but in the meantime the *Bundesverband Alphabetisierung* (Federal Literacy Association) has forged ahead:

- The *Alfa Telephone* offers family members and stakeholders anonymous counselling and informs them as to learning possibilities and further-education facilities with literacy courses in the vicinity. These services are funded exclusively by donations.
- *Social campaign “Don’t write yourself off. Learn to read and write!”* This public-relations campaign came about in collaboration with the advertising agency Grey in Düsseldorf. It concentrates on print media and television. Thus there are advertisements with crude stick letters and orthographically incorrect slogans to grab attention. Advertisements have been run in several newspapers and magazines. They are also available as posters. On top of this, Grey has produced TV commercials which reach a large public audience. The TV commercials, which can also be obtained as videos, have received prizes from “Telly Awards” and EFFIE.
- The *Alfa-Mobil*, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, is the Federal association’s “mobile information and training unit”. It is especially used in regions in which there are (still) too few literacy programmes on offer. Moreover, training courses are carried out on the APOLL E-learning platform.
- The Federal association has been commending persons who work for literacy in different fields and appointing *ambassadors for literacy* since 2003. These citations are to be awarded on World Literacy Day on September 8.

There are furthermore *exhibitions* such as *Die Welten der Wörter* (Worlds of Words), a joint project sponsored by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and Ernst Klett Verlag Sprachen. This popular exhibition has been touring Germany for two decades now.

2.5 Research

In contrast to other countries in Europe and overseas, the topic of literacy or basic education scarcely enjoys any importance at all in the field of research. Kamper and Linde note that there is no university-based research (cf. Kamper 2001, p. 30 and Linde 2005c, p. 18).⁵ The universities accordingly do not have much of an influence on the educational policy

⁵ Courses on literacy/basic education are very rare. Notable exceptions include, for example, the Berlin University of Applied Science or the universities of Marburg, Cologne, Hamburg and Munich.

discussion. Only occasional dissertations and master's theses especially address the topics of literacy and literacy campaigns, with less interest being shown for basic education.⁶

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research is now forging ahead in this area with a research and development project. EUR 30 million is to be invested in the programme over a period of five years down to the end of the UN decade in 2012. Before we examine the programme in more detail, a brief retrospective look is warranted. The first literacy activities in Germany definitely showed promise. In particular, research in the 1980s focused especially on causes of illiteracy. Thus, a DIE project sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research commissioned Bielefeld Adult Education College to research the "Factors causing illiteracy" (cf. Döbert-Nauert 1985). In addition, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research entrusted the DIE to participate in the EU research campaign "Preventing and combating illiteracy" and to carry out the project "Aspects of learning to read and write among adults". Hence the goal is being pursued of deriving preventive measures from the study of learning biographies of illiterate adults. This approach was unique in the EU research campaign. A follow-up project in cooperation with continuing education facilities for teachers in selected Federal *Länder* studied the extent to which the findings and material developed for the field of adult education could also be rendered useful to primary and secondary school education (cf. Buchhaas-Birkholz/Rückert 1992 and Federal Ministry of Education and Research 1993).

A "study on the state of the art in literacy and elementary education in the Federal Republic of Germany" was carried out in 1994. The objective behind the survey was to take stock of continuing education programmes for Germans and foreigners in all the German *Länder* (Weishaupt 1996).⁷ No more national studies have been carried out since then.⁸

When Germany took part in the first [International Adult Literacy Survey \(IALS\)](#), considerable hopes were aroused that more would be learned about "basic qualifications of adults". While in other countries – for instance in Belgium or Switzerland – the IALS received considerable attention, with national reports being published and conclusions drawn for education policy, the study went largely ignored in Germany. By comparison, the PISA study generated greater attention. The poor results mean a challenge for educational policy (cf. Linde 2005c, p. 18). At present the field of adult education science is contemplating whether to focus on the conception and design of a "PISA for adults" ([Themenheft REPORT 4/2004](#)). In his article "Kompetenz oder Berechtigung? PISA – eine Herausforderung auch für Erwachsenenbildung und Forschung" ("Competence or right? PISA – a challenge for adult education and research as well"), Schlutz explicitly addresses literacy and basic education (Schlutz 2004).

⁶ Thus, the first dissertation "*Analphabetismus trotz Schulbesuchs*" (Illiteracy in spite of attending school) was published in 1990 (Kamper 1990). Additional examples include: "*Wege Erwachsener in die Welt der Schrift*" (Paths of adults in the world of the printed word) (Romberg 1993) and "*Schriftspracherwerb funktionaler Analphabeten*" (Acquisition of written languages by functional illiterates" (Tymister 1994), "*Sprachbewusstheit funktionaler AnalphabetInnen am Beispiel ihrer Äußerungen zu Verschriftungen*" (Börner 1995) (Language awareness of functional illiterates: the example of statements made on written messages", or "*Analphabetismus in Wechselwirkung mit gesprochener Sprache*" (Löffler 2000) (Illiteracy in interaction with spoken language). Two *Diplom* theses should be mentioned here, for example, which have provided an interesting impetus in this area. "*Biographische Muster funktionaler Analphabeten*" (Egloff 1997) (Biographical patterns of functional illiterates) was published in 1997 and "*Analphabetismus und Alphabetisierung in Deutschland: Kein Thema für die Erwachsenenbildung*" (Linde 2001) (Illiteracy and literacy campaigns in Germany: ignored by adult education) in 2001.

⁷ The empirical survey was carried out within the framework of the DIE project "Development and trial literacy and elementary education programmes in the new German *Länder*", promoted by the Federal Ministry of Education.

⁸ Merely the annual statistics for adult education colleges issued by the DIE covers literacy and basic education programmes).

Also deserving mention is a project at the *Länder* level which is being sponsored by the Saxon Ministry of Education and the *Arbeitsstelle Praxisberatung, Forschung und Entwicklung* (Office for Practical Counselling, Research and Development) at the Dresden Protestant University for Social Work, [apfe](#): the [PASS alpha](#) project – **Pro Alphabetisierung** (Pro Literacy) – pathways in **S**axony (December 2004 – November 2006). The objective was to improve empirical foundations, to encourage and further develop new approaches, create networks and support cooperation.

Assuming that literacy and basic education will be an important topic in the future and that lifelong learning is not possible without appropriate basic education, it is necessary to encourage research in this area in Germany as well. Important aspects include *inter alia* research on impact and prevention. With regard to adult learning, studies on learning strategies and dealing with resistance to learning can be highly informative. Because no studies have been carried out on the degree and scale of functional illiteracy in Germany, there is a fundamental need for more to be done in this area. It continues to be of interest to carry out continuous surveys on the state of the art with respect to literacy and basic education programmes among all sponsors of continuing education (cf., for example, Döbert/Hubertus 2000, p. 130 et seq. and Tröster 2000, p. 23).

As was already stated at the beginning of this chapter, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research recognised this problem and announced a comprehensive research and development program comprising the following four topics:

1. Research work on the basis of literacy and basic education work with adults
2. Research work aimed at boosting the efficiency and quality of support and counselling measures for adults with insufficient basic education
3. Research and development work on literacy and basic education work in the context of business and labour
4. Research and development work to professionalize teaching in literacy and basic education work with adults.

It must be assumed that this programme will stimulate research activities in this field in a sustainable manner. Cooperation on joint research projects is aimed at helping network national actors from the fields of science and practice in order to strengthen the area of literacy and basic education in Germany on the whole.

3. Concept of Teachers Training

In the earlier literacy projects of the DIE (at the time it was still called PAS), concepts for the training of staff were already developed and tested in the 1980s and 1990s. These were adopted by *Länder* associations for adult learning colleges as providers of continuing education and modified over the years. At the same time this involved strategies for launching continuing education of course teachers based on topics and individual needs.⁹ In addition, a concept of training in learning counselling was developed.¹⁰ The DIE moreover developed continuing education strategies and practical aids in the context of (occupationally oriented) basic education, basic education and the new media.¹¹

Although there are hence various strategies for training staff, implementation appears to be a difficult task: The continuing education situation has deteriorated considerably, as funding is not ensured. As far back as 1992, Fuchs-Brüninghoff described the “loss of qualification in literacy campaigns or the crisis in continuing educational training of staff” (1992, p. 102).

⁹ A detailed description of strategies is contained in Fuchs-Brüninghoff/Kreft/Kropp 1986 and Fuchs-Brüninghoff 1989.

¹⁰ A detailed description in [Fuchs-Brüninghoff/Pfirrmann 1991](#)

¹¹ Detailed descriptions in Tröster 2000, 2002 and [2005](#).

In the meantime, the situation can be characterised as desolate. Continuing education is only being offered in a sporadic manner by a handful of *Länder* associations of adult education colleges.

Continuing education programmes are offered by the *Bundesverband Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung e.V.* (Federal Association for Literacy and Basic Education). In particular, three one-day introductory events which consecutively build on each other deserve mention. The *Länder* associations which (still) offer continuing education on a regular basis in particular include Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Brandenburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Mecklenburg-Western Pommerania, Bremen, Hamburg and Bavaria. In addition there are occasional non-statutory associations offering different types of continuing education such as, e.g., *Arbeitskreis Orientierungs- und Bildungshilfe* (AOB), Berlin, (Working Group for Orientation and Educational Aid) or *Kreisel* in Hamburg.

(Note: examples of good practice are provided in chapter 5.)

In Germany today there is neither any clearly defined vocational profile nor any well-founded, obligatory education or any appropriate (basic) studies programme such as those to be found in Belgium. To bring about a greater professionalism in the area of basic education, it is urgently necessary to intensify training of staff (cf. *inter alia* Döbert/Hubertus 2000, p. 128 et seqq.; Tröster 2000, p. 23; Linde 2002, p. 23). Existing resources such as the aforementioned concepts and resources can serve as a basis for such an effort.

4. Review of Literacy Teachers' Competences

The question as to the required competencies of learners is under discussion, but there are no uniform or binding standards.

As an example, one can cite a survey which was carried out during preliminary work seeking to develop a basic literacy model (cf. also chapter 5) within the framework of the innovation project "literacy in NRW. Quality assurance through sustained approaches to public and networking work". Among other things, the question of the required competencies of course teachers was explored in this study. From an overview containing fourteen points seminar participants selected the three most important requirements applying to course teachers' own competencies and skills. After this, these priorities were placed in a ranking scheme. This list has also been expanded. Two groups were surveyed: first of all course teachers who work as honorary staff, and secondly full-time educational staff. The assessment produced the following results:

Table: Self-assessment of course teacher competencies

Rank	From the view of the course teachers	From the view of the full-time staff
1	Technical competence	Technical competence
2	Social-communicative competence	Social-communicative competence
3	Support for learning	Life experience
4	Self-competence	Problem-solving competence
5	Counselling competence	Cooperative skills
6	Cooperative skills	Support for learning
7	Adult education competence	

Source: Korfkamp 2000, p. 19, cited in Kommnick 2002, p. 45

Animation, willingness to engage in continuing education, identification with the facility, media competence, organisational capabilities and conveyance of technical knowledge and know-how have been added to this list. Technical competence has been supplemented in the selection list with the appendage “Learning psychological and methodological-didactical foundations”, while self-competence has been supplemented with “Reflections on one’s own learning biography, motivation and role as course teacher” and social-communicative competence through the “knowledge of the experiential world of learners, learning history of learners, knowledge of group processes” (Korfkamp, p. 18). Interestingly enough, media competence is not identified by either group, nor is counselling competence named by staff working full-time in the field of education. Life experience of educational staff working full-time in the field was added in handwriting to the fourteen points and enjoys a high status.

5. Examples of good practice

Two continuing education strategies or models are presented in the following:

- **Landesverband der Volkshochschulen Nordrhein-Westfalen: „Fachmodul Alphabetisierung“ (Land Association of North Rhine-Westphalian Adult Education Colleges: “Special Literacy Module”)**

The *Land* association has been offering the certificate programme “Basic Qualifications for Course Teachers in the Field of Adult Education” since 1999, comprising six modules with a total of 60 instructional units. This also includes the basic module “Literacy, a weekend seminar with fourteen instructional units for new course teachers”: containing the following thematic areas:

- “Illiteracy in the Federal Republic of Germany”
(contents: definition, appearance and magnitude of functional illiteracy);
- Causes of functional illiteracy
(contents: living environment and learning motives, biographical approach)
- Learning counselling (contents: initial counselling and counselling to support courses);
- An understanding of the role of course teachers;
- Didactics and methods in literacy instruction
(contents: e.g. approaches to the conveyance of written language, coping with mistakes, impetus to write, etc.);
- Working resources and material for different levels of learning groups;
- Working with heterogeneous groups / aspects of internal differentiation;
- Tools for assessing learning and success.

- **Landesinstitut für Schule und Medien Brandenburg (LISUM) (Land Institute for Schools and Media in Brandenburg) and the Brandenburgischer Volkshochschulverband e.V. (bvV) (Brandenburg Adult Education College Association) and practical basic education – continuing education series for course teachers and heads of programmes in the field of elementary education**

This programme consists of a continuing education series with six one-and-a-half-day modules. Participation in the events and overnight stay are free of charge. The *Land* covers the costs.

The modules

1. Basic education: an area fraught with tension
(contents: definitions, numbers/data/facts, requirements applying to teachers)
2. Didactics of basic education – learners as actors in their educational process
(contents: biographical orientation and learning counselling as didactic principles, didactic and methodological models and strategies)
3. Methods training for practical course work

(getting learning processes up and going – gaining access to learning)

5. Counselling in basic education – structuring initial meetings with interested persons

(contents: counselling situations and occasions)

6. Evaluation of the teaching-learning process in basic education

(contents: development of evaluation criteria for the quality of processes and results, (self-reflection tools)

The following tools can be derived from continuing education programmes:

- The focus is increasingly on the interaction between teaching and learning.
- Learning counselling is a key element.
- Didactics and methodology continue to be essential elements.
- It is becoming increasingly important to analyse the role of course teachers.
- Reflection and evaluation are indispensable with respect to quality development and controls.

6. Current problems and challenges

A lot has been set in motion in the area of literacy and basic education, and much is still in motion. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research has been promoting innovative projects right from the outset. Wide-ranging experience is available, as are conceptual approaches, while the field of practice exhibits a high level of motivation – but implementation is slumping due to lack of funding from the *Länder*. Demands for institutionalisation and more professionalism have not been satisfied down to the present day.

Literacy / basic education is an important topic for the future. The tasks to be tackled will be to stake out the area anew and achieve sustainability. The connection to the notion of lifelong learning deserves emphasis. This is where the importance of a “second chance” is emphasised. Because a constantly rising level of literacy and basic education is being required as a result of societal change, in the future it must also be possible to run through this process several times – during elementary and secondary education, adult education and vocational education.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

In order to propagate the area of basic education, an important precondition would first of all be a “fundamental clarification of the state of the art and prospects”. This at the same time requires involvement of all actors. It is necessary to more effectively pool networking activities and lobbying work in order to be able to act jointly (cf. Linde 2002, p. 28 or Tröster 2000, pp. 15-18). This boils down to joint lobbying work at the level of education policy as well – especially with the Federal *Länder* and the Federal-*Länder* Commission – in order to bring about the long-overdue establishment and institutionalisation of the field.

With respect to the need for more professionalism, a joint approach by the stakeholders is necessary. A modular strategy of continuing education should be developed based on existing concepts (which need to be developed further) and which applies at the national level. This can then lead to the creation of a (basic) studies programme. Another object should be to develop and support the professional profile of literacy and basic educationalists. The planning of this project should make use of experience from neighbouring European countries.

On the whole, it would appear both warranted and necessary to intensify the international comparison of experience in order to learn from the experience of other countries. Tried-and-proven strategies can be adapted or modified. Moreover, not only trans-national projects –

such as already exist in the EU context – could be carried out on a larger scale, but also research projects.

The new research and development programme of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research will blaze new trails. Various projects are planned relating to more professionalism which will contribute to an improvement in teachers training by establishing national studies programmes or a basic studies programme, corresponding curricula and a competencies profile.¹²

¹² Unfortunately the projects have not become publicly available to date. The applications procedure is still ongoing.

8. Literature and links

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Bernburger Thesen zur Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung:
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Bundesverband Alphabetisierung: <http://www.alphabetisierung.de/>
Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission e.V. (DUK): <http://www.unesco.de/>
Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV) und Landesverbände der Volkshochschulen:
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