

Call for Papers

**Zeitschrift für Weiterbildungsforschung ZfW**  
*Journal for Research on Adult Education*

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**Programme and Programme Planning Research**  
**Methods and Results**

Edited by Marion Fleige & Aiga von Hippel

Research on adult and continuing education shares theoretical approaches and questions with other educational disciplines, ranging from the development of educational organisations, the development of educational-professional practice, the micro-didactic design of educational offerings as well as the learning and teaching processes in formal and non-formal education approaches. In contrast to the other sectors, the research on adult and continuing education focuses in particular on the meso-didactic planning and design of educational programmes and offerings, including their recipients and participants.

Adult and continuing education are characterised by fewer administrative requirements (in terms of participation, objectives and content), largely no state-mandated curricula (cf. Schrader and Ioannidou 2011) and no state-regulated obligation to participate. In particular, general continuing or adult education is based on voluntary participation. For that reason, educational offerings and programmes have to be continually developed at the meso-didactic level in coordination with different interests. Hence programme planning has a fundamental significance for adult and continuing education and is regarded – alongside the act of teaching itself – as the heart of professional practice in adult and continuing education (cf. Gieseke 2000; Tietgens 1982). It is thus possible, through offerings and programmes in particular, to reconstruct particular interpretations of education and to depict the respective profiles of educational institutions. It is through programme research that differences apparent in all sectors of adult and continuing education – currently in particular in the area of „adjunctive education“ – can be observed and systematised.

The upcoming issue of the *Journal for Research on Adult Education* [Zeitschrift für Weiterbildungsforschung] focuses on programme research broadly, as well as the aforementioned aspects for exploring and analysing adult and continuing education. Here, "programme research" means research on programmes as well as on programme planning activities.

The editors invite contributions which present new results of programme research in terms of content, while explicitly describing the methodology adopted, i.e. analysing the different methodological approaches related to their respective results. There is also the question to what extent the respective methods themselves co-construct the object of research topics (programmes, programme planning action). The methods to be considered include, in particular, programme analyses (of various types), interviews, group discussions, but also document analyses (e.g. of job adverts), participant observations and, in combination, evaluations of statistics. New challenges arise from digitalisation, especially related changes in how programmes are publicised.

A large number of current publications on programme research, its results, and its diverse methods are available, including the textbook by Fleige, Gieseke, von Hippel, Käßlinger, Robak (2018), the issue on programme planning/research of *Hessische Blätter für Volksbildung* (2/2019), the issue on programme planning of *Pädagogischer Blick* (4/2020) as well as a corresponding forthcoming issue of *Zeitschrift für Hochschule und Weiterbildung* (02/2021). The documentation of the annual conference of the adult education section of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft [German Society for Education Science] 2019 (Dinkelaker et al. 2020) on historical research in adult and continuing education also offers corresponding insights. A central overview of these and other publications is provided by the bibliography on the homepage of the Expert Group on Programme Research of university chairs and DIE. Approaches and traditions of programme research in other countries (see, for example, Ratcliff Daffron et al. 2021; Rocco et al. 2020; Manninen 2017; Sork 2010; Gboku & Lekoko 2007) as well as an initial international comparative discourse in this field and on the establishment of programme archives (which have already been further developed in German speaking countries) are offered in a volume by Käßlinger et al. (2017). However, what still remains to be done is a summary of the methodological discussions (e.g., following Nolda, Pehl, Tietgens 1998) based on new research results in the context of a unifying publication. This is what the planned journal edition aims for, with contributions envisaged on new studies and methodological reflections, framing these with fundamental considerations of the achievements of this research approach as well as its genesis.

The overarching questions of this issue of *Journal for Research on Adult Education* [ZfW] refer to how the approach of programme and programme planning research has evolved and continues to develop in the present, which methodological and other challenges it raises, which methods are used for which questions and how they are intertwined, and which methodological approach (cf. Dörner and Schäffer 2012) underlies such methods. In this context, we also ask about current results of programme research. We are interested to learn which professional practice and which influencing factors (e.g. structural dimensions, urban/rural, historical development, etc.) have been explored, and which commonalities and differences can be found in the programme planning in different institutions (e.g. corporate,

public sector, providers segmented according to special interests, private-commercial, private-commercial, academic providers of adult and continuing education) as well as in different formats (e.g. face-to-face, blended and e-learning offerings). Aiming for a broader view, we are also interested in the question of connections to other research areas of adult and continuing education (e.g. research on addresses and participants, on organisations/institutions, and environments). The relation to professional research is equally relevant. Finally, we aim to explore how types of programmes and programme planning actions (e.g. in open and closed offerings of the VHS or other providers etc.) can be developed methodically. The central question is how, on the basis of empirical findings of programme and programme planning research, terms and concepts for adult and continuing education have been developed and can be further developed.

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