

EU Project: Professionalization of Literacy and Basic Education – Basic Modules for Teacher Training: TRAIN

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIELD OF LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION

Country report: Germany Summary

1. General description of the situation regarding professionalisation of basic skills teachers

Full time staff members are often engaged in management and organisation and have limited teaching responsibilities. The typical staff situation in adult education institutions consists of a small number of full-time administrators who design, manage, and supervise programmes that are then carried out by larger numbers of part-time teachers. In 1997 the Community Adult Education Centres (Volkshochschulen – VHS) were staffed by less than 10,000 full-time personnel, but nearly 200,000 persons hired on an hourly-paid basis of the more than 500,000 courses. Formal qualifications of these adult educators range from none to a university diploma in adult education. Most course leaders do their work without any special educational training. No common standard yet exists of what constitutes an “adult educator”.

Concerning literacy and basic skills quite a lot of concepts for professional development had been developed and tested in former projects. But nowadays in Germany there is no special professional education for literacy tutors. 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 other European countries. To bring about a greater professionalism in the area of basic education, it is urgently necessary to intensify training of staff. Existing resources such as the aforementioned concepts and resources can serve as a basis for such an effort.

2. National professionalisation policy / program

Due to the political structure in Germany there is no national policy regarding literacy and basic education. The jurisdiction of the Federal government and the *Länder* are 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 down to the present, but these projects cannot serve as a replacement for the right structural conditions. The Federal *Länder* and local governments are in charge of creating an infrastructure and implementing promising project results.

Meanwhile the possibilities of teacher training are very limited. Teacher training is offered on the local, regional and Laender-level, displaying much heterogeneity. The continuity of training projects suffer due to lack of finance.

3. Current situation for literacy trainers / practitioners

In Germany there were / there are a lot of approaches, course or training concepts etc. but there is a lack of sustainability. Unstable honorary-based working conditions threaten service continuity, local lobbying, flow of information, and mobilisation of learners.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research announced a comprehensive research and development program. One topic will be focus on 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.

4. Description of Best Practice / literacy teacher course

Name	Literacy and Basic Education
target groups	Teachers
duration	six one-and-a-half-day modules
Goal	To provide adult literacy teachers with the skills, knowledge and competences required to work with literacy learners
content (broadly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic education: an area fraught with tension: definitions, numbers/data/facts, requirements applying to teachers • Didactics of basic education – learners as actors in their educational process: biographical orientation and learning counselling as didactic principles, didactic and methodological models and strategies • Methods training for practical course work: getting learning processes up and going – gaining access to learning • Counselling in basic education • Evaluation of the teaching-learning process: development of evaluation criteria for the quality of processes and results, self-reflection tools

5. Competences – Framework

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

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