Hippel, Aiga von; Tippelt, Rudolf

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The role of adult educators towards (potential) participants and their contribution to increasing participation in adult education - insights into existing research

Aiga von Hippel
Ludwig-Maximilians University, Germany (vonhippel@lrz.uni-muenchen.de)

Rudolf Tippelt
Ludwig-Maximilians University, Germany (tippelt@edu.uni-muenchen.de)

Abstract

Increasing participation in adult education and addressing certain (disadvantaged) target groups is not only a professed aim of educational politics on both the national and the international level, but also a pedagogical goal. Target group and participant orientation are fundamental concepts in this process. This article discusses results of a recent German research project which examined the perspective of adult educators. The question is raised as to how far adult educators believe that target groups and participant oriented quality and the promotion of competences among adult educators may contribute to an increase in enrolment in further education. By examining the attitudes of adult educators with regard to target groups and participant orientation possible ways of improving target group participation and participant orientation on the institutional level are suggested. Furthermore, the article touches upon research questions, asking how research on potential participants and actual participants could be linked to research on educational programmes and the profession.

Keywords: target group orientation; participant orientation; competences of adult educators; increase in participation in adult education

Introduction and outline

Increase in participation as a pedagogical and political aim
Inclusion represents an important aim in adult education[1], be it under economic, democracy-theoretical, socio-political or subjective aspects (cf. Schreiber-Barsch, 2009), - an aim determined both externally, by the expectations levelled at adult education, and internally, by the self-conception of adult education (cf. Wrana, 2006).
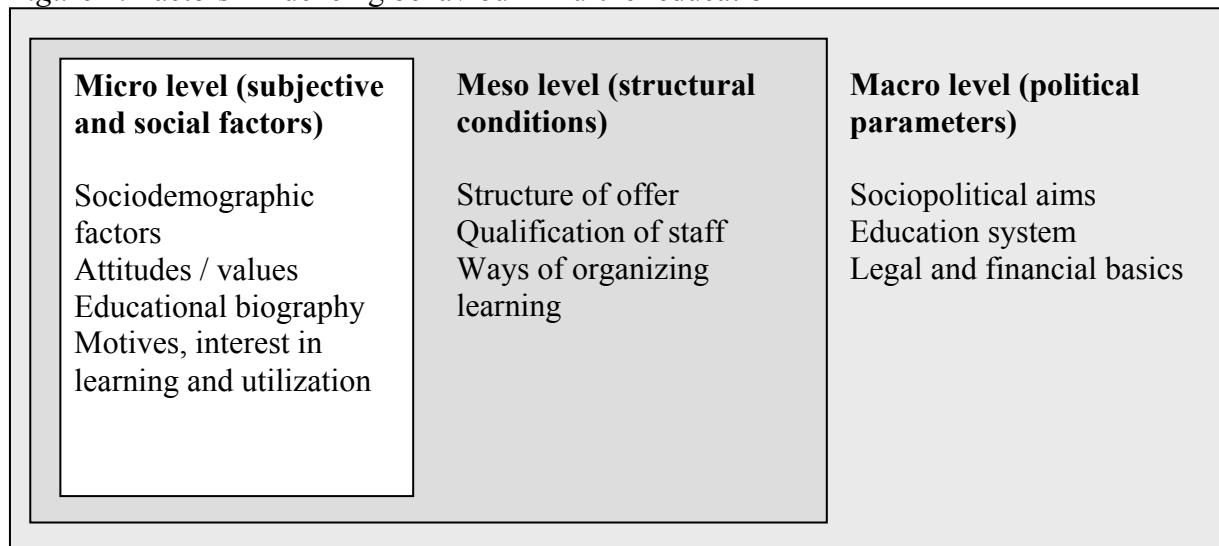
There are three arguments to justify the extension of participation: equity and social justice, pragmatism/expediency and national self-interest (McGivney, 1990). However, this set target has not been achieved to the extent expected, as is shown by the results of research on participation in adult education (on the Adult Education Survey see von Rosenbladt and Bilger, 2008; Eurostat, 2009). The most powerful predictor of participation remains the previous level of education (McGivney, 2001). This is also the case internationally.

Increasing participation in adult education represents a great challenge, both on the German and European level: "Against the background of the demographic challenges with which all European countries are confronted, increasing the participation rate is equally a common and key mission for all" (Egetenmeyer & Strauch, 2008, p. 16; see also Alpine, 2008).

Influencing factors on the participation in adult education

Participation in further education is influenced by different factors, such as motivational, socio-demographic or context-related factors (cf. Brüning, 2002; Wittpoth, 2006). On the micro level these are subjective and socio-demographic factors, on the meso level we have the financial and content-related characteristics of the educational programmes and on the macro level the structural framework conditions (ibid.) (figure below). Educational barriers are not restricted to a single level; instead they gradually build upon one another, thus possibly even enhancing their compulsive character. The levels are linked to one another, but their interaction is difficult to verify empirically. The meso level is also perceived differently by individuals because of different premises on the micro level.

Figure 1. Factors influencing behaviour in further education

Micro level (subjective and social factors)	Meso level (structural conditions)	Macro level (political parameters)
Sociodemographic factors Attitudes / values Educational biography Motives, interest in learning and utilization	Structure of offer Qualification of staff Ways of organizing learning	Sociopolitical aims Education system Legal and financial basics

Source: Brüning, 2002, p. 19

Factors on the meso level: professionalism and quality

A high standard of educational programmes and courses offered in further education must be ensured in order to reduce social inequality and promote excellence (Tippelt, von Hippel, Reich & Reupold, 2007). Likewise, in order to strengthen equity and good learning results (EU Memorandum, 2006), the promotion of lifelong learning among all groups of individuals is essential.

On the one hand optimization of quality means an increase in the quality of the programmes, the actual realization of these programmes and the results achieved on courses in further education. The importance of the promotion of quality in further education by focusing on the quality of the staff (Committee of the European Communities, 2007), by stressing the capacity of the "lifelong learning workforce" (Schuller & Watson, 2009, p. 8) is indisputable. Professionalism is defined as "masterly professionality, as an indicator of high-quality work" (Nittel, 2000, p. 15) and thus examines the level of professional action. The linking of quality issues with attempts at professionalization and professionality development can be observed since the 1990s (Gieseke, 1997). To this is added the question of a possible contribution of quality and professionality to an increase in enrolment in further education. Professionalization is mostly analyzed within the context of quality development. Aside from its rather objective aspects, quality also has subjective aspects; in this case one could speak of "appropriate quality", the appropriateness of which is determined by the learner (Ehses & Zech, 2002, p. 118), which refers to target groups and participant orientation. In German also the terms "Adressaten" and "Adressatenorientierung" are differentiated, but they're not translatable in English to express the same meaning. "Adressaten" in German means all potential participants, it's slightly different from target group. Participant orientation means the orientation of the adult educator towards the individual learner (his wants, learning biography etc.) during the course. It's the micro-didactic equivalent to target group orientation which refers to the macro-didactic level.

The adult educators (not only the full-time regular members of planning staff, but also and above all the many freelance extra personnel [course instructors and coaches] and also the administrative staff) in the institutions of further education play a crucial role in the construction of quality (Buiskool, Broek, van Lakerveld, Zarifis & Osborne, 2010) – also with regard to profile formation – as they constitute a direct interface with (potential) participants (Tippelt, Reich, von Hippel, Barz & Baum, 2008).

Different studies revealed the central role of the course tutor as a quality factor from the point of view of the participants: technically, didactically and methodologically competent course tutors are the crucial criterion for quality; only then do criteria such as low fees or premises come into play (Tippelt et al., 2008; Loibl, 2003). In-service training courses for staff in further education are of great importance to the professionalization of micro-, meso-, and macro-didactical fields of activity in adult education and thus to the promotion of quality. The realization of lifelong learning presupposes specific competences of adult educators: "Only through an orientation of the teachers' perspective towards the learning adults, their potentials, their capabilities, their interests and towards the demands they are trying to meet, can lifelong learning be realized as a cultural standard." (Emminger, Gieseke & Nuissl, 2001, p. 190) In-service training for those working in further education can be considered as part of a strategy for the promotion of competences among teachers in further education and therefore part of the process of lifelong learning among adults.[2]

Research questions and overview
This article – which discusses results of a recent research project, in order to link them to further research questions – focuses on the meso level and therefore on professional activity, on the competences of adult educators and in this above all on target group and participant orientation as professional action. The article raises the question of how strongly adult educators believe that target group- and participant oriented quality and the promotion of competences among adult educators might contribute to an increase in enrolment in further education.

The focus is thus on the adult educators as central agents in the process of the promotion of lifelong learning among adults. Further training for teachers in adult education is thus not an end in itself, instead further training is meant to improve the quality of the structuring of learning contexts through the competence of adult educators and thus to help reach different target groups. In this way the aims of adult education (promotion of individual competences, economic innovation, social integration and cultural participation) can be better achieved (Tippelt & von Hippel, 2010). By examining the attitudes of teachers in adult education towards target group- and participant orientation possible ways of improving quality on the institutional level are shown too and at the same time the scope of action on the societal level is discussed.

The second section outlines the state of the art in research in this field and the major lines of reasoning in the scientific debate. Here, factors influencing participation are described and target group - and participant-orientation are discussed as important competences for teachers in adult education. The third section outlines the methods and structure of the research project. Selected results of this research project are presented in the fourth section, the focus here being on target group- and participant orientation as a means of increasing enrolment in further education from the perspective of the adult educators. In the concluding section the results are summarized and research desiderata are described.

Latest developments in research and major trends in the recent debate

Definition of terms

Those people targeted by adult education may be considered target groups, insofar as they can be depicted by common socio-structural features. Those taking part in a course may be considered participants (Faulstich & Zeuner, 1999). A target group is a construction, a classification according to a prominent feature (for example age) (Siebert, 2000). Participant and target group orientation means that the planning and the structuring of the micro- and macro-didactical fields of action is oriented by the target group and participant, by his or her needs and interests (see regarding problems of needs assessments, whose needs should be addressed?, Sork, 2005 and regarding the principle of learner-identified needs as central for programme planning theory, Wilson, 2005). In both cases the emphasis is on the anticipation of learning preconditions in the broadest sense; participant orientation is practiced on the didactic level of action constituted by the implementation of educational programmes (micro-didactic), whereas target group orientation is practiced on the level of programme planning (macro-didactic) (cf. Tietgens, 1992). Target group and participant orientation figure among the most important didactic principles in adult education because learning by adults always comprises follow-up learning (Siebert, 2000). Whereas in the past target-group orientation focused on addressing problem or fringe groups, nowadays universal target group orientation is intended. This is based on the insight that all social groups – both those actively taking part in education and those distant from education – have specific expectations regarding further education and have thus to be addressed differently.

Theories and models on factors influencing behaviour in further education

Research on the question of how target group and participant orientation can contribute to an increase in participation in further education is still rather sketchy. On the whole,

the question of what could contribute to an increase in enrolment in further education is difficult to answer empirically because factors of influence are to be found on several levels (micro-, meso-, and macro-level) and their share in contributing to the development is hard to circumscribe. The different studies (for example Eurostat, 2009; Silva, Cahalan & Lacierno-Paquet, 1998) operationalize motives for and obstacles on the way to further education in different ways. Often the individual levels are not separated from each other. Moreover, the usual questionnaires can only explore the attitudes and perceptions of target groups and participants – the influence of course offers is much more difficult to measure. Thus the European Adult Education Survey has described various areas as obstacles which are also related to the perception of the meso level by the potential participants (e.g. conflicts with work schedule (-> time structures), too expensive (-> fixing a price), no facilities at a reachable distance (-> regional structures); Eurostat, 2009). At the same time this example demonstrates the obvious connection between (perception of) the meso level and the micro level. Furthermore, we are lacking a theory of participation in further education which would integrate all the different approaches in research and in theory building. With regard to regulating agents in participation in further education, Wittpoth (2006) calls this the problem of "big questions, small answers" (p. 53). Evaluative studies on the financing of further education for instance, reveal the difficulty of reaching the disadvantaged through financial instruments (cf. Dohmen, 2005; Ehmann, 2003). Research on target groups (cf. von Hippel & Tippelt, 2010) describes the motives and deterring factors on the side of the potential participants; research on the social environment also describes concrete expectations regarding a differentiation according to milieu that a lecturer must fulfil. Research on target group in a way offers the complementary perspective to that of the adult educator with regard to the question of what teachers in adult education can contribute to an increase in participation in further education. However, we do not know of any studies examining the perspective of the adult educators. But it is important to examine these perspectives because they give information on the limits and potentials of the contribution that could be made by institutions of adult education as a whole, because it is the adult educators who determine the didactic structure.

There are a lot of complex conceptual frameworks concerning adult education participation or participatory behaviour in general from different disciplines like economics, social psychology, leisure and recreational studies and time allocation, adult education and consumer behaviour (especially of the 1970s and 1980s) (Silva et al., 1998). Alongside subjective and social factors, the different concepts partially integrate structural conditions as external factors, but generally not the specific role of the images of adults, the focus tending to be more on social factors as well as attitudes. A common model to explain non-participation is the concept of learning barriers (Cross, 1981). Learning barriers are classified into situational (e.g. lack of childcare), institutional (regarding the providers of organized learning) and dispositional (attitudes to self and learning). The current Bounded Agency Model (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009) examines more of the interaction between the macro and micro levels, only marginally touching upon the meso level. Individuals have a degree of agency with regard to their learning behaviours, but a "bounded agency", because they are bounded by structures, contexts and features of the self that restrain choices (Salling-Olesen, 2004). The model includes structural factors and analyzes the interaction between these and individuals' dispositions. It highlights "that welfare state regimes can affect a person's capability to participate through the way it constructs structural conditions and helps individuals overcome both structurally and individually based barriers" (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009, p. 203). Henry and Basile (1994) integrate the instructor into their model as one

of several course attributes. The only model which explicitly examines the matching of teacher, institution and participant is Boshier's Congruence Model (1973), which was empirically verified and which analyzes participation and dropout. It integrates subsequent evaluation of teaching quality by means of a semantic differential. Generally speaking however, previous models are unable to adequately assess from an empirical perspective the qualifications and the competences of adult educators (which are evident in the participant and target group oriented micro- and macro-didactic organization of courses offered) as factors of influence.

One must conclude that at present we have no complete, empirically verified und easily verifiable theory of behaviour in further education: "Innumerable studies have been conducted and many theories developed, but the understanding and prediction of adult learner behaviour has not progressed significantly." (Garrison, 1987, p. 212).

The following section seeks to give an insight into the state of research on factors related to the micro level (subjective and social factors) and the meso level (competences, quality, target group and participant orientation).

Subjective and social factors

Since the beginning of the last century, research on target groups (in German: "Adressatenforschung") has examined the social conditions for (non-)participation in adult education; research on participants on the other hand, focuses instead on the individual learning preconditions and motives (cf. Faulstich & Zeuner, 1999). The central topic of research on target groups is the question of equality and inequality in adult education (cf. Bremer, 2007).

Research on potential participants and participants constitutes an important part of research on further education. The adult is at the centre of this line of research which examines the interests and motives of adults in choosing courses in further education, their expectations with regard to organized learning contexts and possible barriers. Research on potential participants analyzes, from a subject-oriented point of view, subjective and group-related perspectives with regard to lifelong learning, typical interests and deterring factors in further education, the different conceptions of education and individual informal learning. Thus it differentiates potential participants. However, in addition to the task of differentiating potential participants and of addressing them in specific ways, there is also the challenge of integrating different target groups and of offering contexts of experience suitable for these diverse groups. The perspectives and concepts of research on adult learners have become much more diversified during the last twenty years. Influential concepts are those of research on specific target groups (cf. Schiersmann, 1999), socio-demographic research on non-participants and participants such as the German Reporting System Further Education/Adult education Survey or statistics on adult education centres (cf. von Rosenbladt & Bilger, 2008), on attitudes towards adult education (e.g. Blunt & Yang, 2002; Reich-Claassen, 2010), research on biographies (cf. Nittel & Marotzki, 1997; Seitter, 1999), and research on social milieus (cf. Vester, Oertzen, Geiling, Hermann & Müller, 1993; Bremer, 2007; Barz & Tippelt, 2007). Empirical research consistently shows group-specific differences in participation in further education. Central factors of influence on participation in further education are the socio-demographic features age, school and professional education (Boudard & Rubenson, 1994, 2003), occupation, job position, gender and nationality, as well as regional aspects (from Rosenbladt & Bilger, 2008; Eurostat, 2009). Participation in further education is not only influenced by socio-demographic factors, the extent to which the work place promotes learning also plays an important role for the development of learning competences, indeed the work place can

be seen as a "second chance" to reduce disadvantages, but may also increase these if it does not promote learning (cf. Baethge & Baethge-Kinsky, 2004, p. 140). The continued importance of the vertical models detailing circumstances of life, including socio-demographic features such as education, job status and income, are enhanced by the horizontal models depicting lifeworld and milieu-theoretical differentiations (cf. Hradil, 2001). Next to the aforementioned socio-demographic factors some aspects related to motivation and attitude – which in turn are closely related to socio-cultural features – are among the obstacles on the way to further education. Generally speaking people with little school education obviously have more trouble finding their way into further education.

Conditions on the meso level, particularly target group and participant orientation
In dealing with the question of the relevance of target group- and participant orientation to further education, points of contact between research on target groups and on participants as well as between research on programmes and on the profession must be taken into consideration. Research on target groups and on participants investigates the expectations of adult learners, which is necessary for the professional activity of adult educators when planning educational programmes.

With regard to partially decreasing participant numbers and a slightly lower or consistent enrolment in further education in Germany during the last few years (von Rosenbladt & Bilger, 2008) – which is merely in midfield from an international perspective (OECD, 2002) and continues to be strongly dependent on the previous educational level – and with regard to a sometimes high quota of cancelled courses, planners are uncertain about possible reasons. At the same time they are required to increase participation in further education, whilst the regular state subsidies for institutions of further education are decreasing (cf. DIE, 2008). For instance, adult educators value the target group approach of social milieus (Barz & Tippelt, 2007) as a way of increasing their security when planning programmes, their ability to react specifically to interests and barriers in further education and to analyze their previous work (cf. Tippelt et al., 2008). In this context, knowledge of the expectations of different social milieus with regard to offers in further education can be of help in promoting quality development. Here the aim is not the fulfilment of individual demands stated by single participants, but rather an orientation towards target groups on the basis of target-group profiles. Thus, to give an example, the milieu-oriented educational programmes offered within the framework of the project "ImZiel" allowed gaining from 20 to 60 percent new participants (i.e. participants who had up until then never attended the respective institution), depending on the institution and the respective courses offered (Tippelt et al., 2008). Target-group orientation is to be considered one aspect of quality and may lead to recruiting new participants.

A central implication of the results concerning participation in further education in Germany could be a significantly stronger orientation towards target groups. Further education can only create a compensating and equalizing effect if instructors work target group- and participant-oriented by taking into account pluralistic desiderata and expectations of different social groups (e.g. age groups, educational groups, migrant groups, social groups, different living situations and life phases) in planning and designing different pedagogical fields of activity (Tippelt & von Hippel, 2007). More pluralistic target groups shaped by demographic change can only be reached through an improved target group oriented planning of further education.

A uniform and universally valid profile of competences needed for working in adult education does not exist (Kraft, 2006), different technical and pedagogical

competences are required. The expertise required in the various European countries in order to ensure certain standards of quality is different, as are the qualifications required (initial education and training of adult educators) for further education (cf. Lifelonglearning UK, 2007; Milana, 2010; Nuissl & Egetenmeyer, 2009; Sava & Lupou, 2009). At the moment key competences and competence profiles (consisting of activities, context, competences) are being discussed on a European level (Buiskool et al., 2010).

In the following, target group and participant orientation is focused upon as an important competence of adult educators. This can be regarded as a cross-section competence which is relevant to just about all the micro- and macro-didactic activities of an adult educator.

Participant orientation on the micro-didactic level of the course implies that the teacher takes the experiences and interests of the participants as starting points and adapts the didactical methods to them. Target group orientation does not mean that the adult learners´ every wish is anticipated, but instead it implies finding out what both sides consider to be useful. Here the "search movements" (the German term "Suchbewegungen" was coined by Hans Tietgens) on the part of the target groups and on the part of those planning the educational programmes are addressed. The adult educators try to identify the needs and wants of the target groups. The potential participants also try to identify the appropriate programme for them. So both are "searching": whether or in what way organized further learning by adults actually takes place depends on whether the search movements by those who have more or less distinct learning needs and by those who want to mediate learning opportunities do in fact coincide. "What, on the surface of operational performances, appears as the relation between offer and demand is, from an anthropological point of view, to be understood as a search movement." (Tietgens, 1992, p. 127) Adult education materializes through a "concordance of expectations" (Tietgens, 1992, p. 67). The aim is to achieve conformity of supply and demand. The search movement by those offering training programmes is thus interpretative and it is also based on the emphatic anticipation of the potential learners´ expectations and accordingly on target group orientation.

Target group orientation is a central component of professional pedagogical-didactic activity in institutions of adult education. When planning educational programmes, adult educators must mediate between the three conditional factors of social demand, needs of the learners and pedagogical tasks or organizational aims (cf. Siebert, 2000, cf. also von Hippel, 2007); activity on the level of programme planning is thus an action of alignment and refers to processes of co-ordination (cf. Gieseke, 2006). In this, knowledge of the potential participants expectations, as it is provided by research on target groups, is important in programme planning, but it must be weighed against other conditions and expectations. Programme planning can thus be described as a field of tension created by potentially divergent forces and interests; in this, the adult educator must be able to mediate between different expectations and intentions (cf. Cervero & Wilson, 1994). Although target group orientation is a crucial value in adult education, this is also about creating a need, about fitting search movements and not purely about client orientation.

Finally one could say that target group orientation is an important competence among adult educators because it enables them to anticipate the expectations of the potential learners (and participant orientation on the level of the courses carried out). It is crucial to the professional search movement performed by adult educators in the didactic structuring of educational programmes. Target group orientation is thus also an important prerequisite for a differentiated approach to different target groups, be they

groups actively partaking in education or educationally disadvantaged groups. It is a component of the quality of adult education.
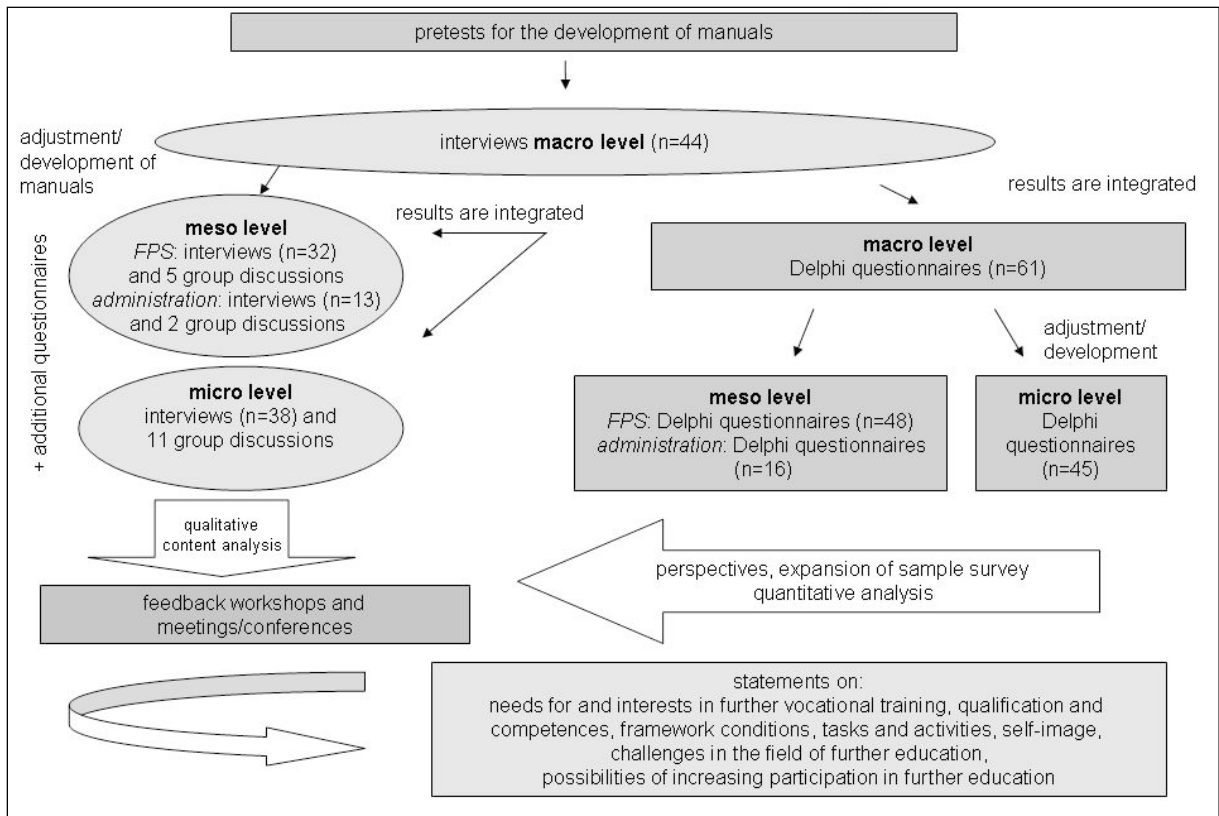

Methods and design

The results explained in the following are derived from the research project "KomWeit" (Increase in Enrolment in Further Education and Improvement of Equal and Just Opportunities through the Promotion of Competences among adult educators) (von Hippel & Tippelt, 2009).[3] In total, 127 interviews and 18 group discussions were conducted on the macro level (association management), meso level (full-time planning staff, administrative staff) and micro level (course tutors). The micro level comprises the course tutors, who constitute a heterogeneous group (e.g. with regard to their occupational status or to their subject-related training). They mostly work as teachers on the micro-didactic level. Traditionally, on the meso level, we have full-time planning staff (FPS) (also programme directors) employed by the respective institutions and whose work also comprises planning and making arrangements (meso- and macro-didactic level) (Nittel, 2000). In addition the administrative staff are also increasingly taking on pedagogical responsibilities such as counselling. On the macro level there are the heads of associations on the federal or the Laender level, the experts on further vocational training for adult educators on the level of the associations, the management level of individual institutions, as well as representatives of science. The institutional structure of adult education in Germany is varied. A high number of different institutions offer adult education programmes in Germany (like companies/employers, the community adult education centres (Volkshochschulen), (vocational) associations, trade unions, chambers of industry and commerce, commercial training institutions, churches, colleges and universities) (Nuissl & Pehl, 2004). In the project different institutions were included like the adult education centres, churches, trade unions and in-house training organizations.

The project was above all characterized by a linking of different perspectives. The research project discussed competences of adult educators and their contribution to an increase in participation in further education.

Within the framework of a method triangulation (Flick, 2004), the interviews were furthermore linked with a survey on the basis of questionnaires, carried out within the framework of a Delphi process (cf. Häder, 2002). On the basis of an iterative research process and through the combination of different methods, a deeper understanding of the research subject was achieved (figure below).

Figure 2. Research design KomWeit study

Source: von Hippel & Tippelt, 2009

Due to the theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1996) (e.g. selection of interviewees according to institution, age, period of employment, discipline, pedagogical/educational background etc.), the surveys carried out in the course of the KomWeit project are of an explorative nature, not statistically representative, but rather representative with regard to content. The aim of these studies is to draw general conclusions from specific examples by means of interpretation, i.e. not to reveal the percentage, but rather to uncover typical patterns. Both the group discussions and the interviews were transcribed verbatim and were then coded and evaluated, using the MAXqda programme (a programme for the computer-aided analysis of qualitative data). This procedure, combined with the method of reviewing the coding by means of the intercoder reliability examination (up to .94), contributes to the quality of the qualitative research (Mayring, 2002). The inter-subjective comprehensibility is therefore increased and the analysis can be documented, thus better meeting the quality criteria of qualitative research, such as procedure documentation and regulated evaluation in particular (Mayring, 2002).
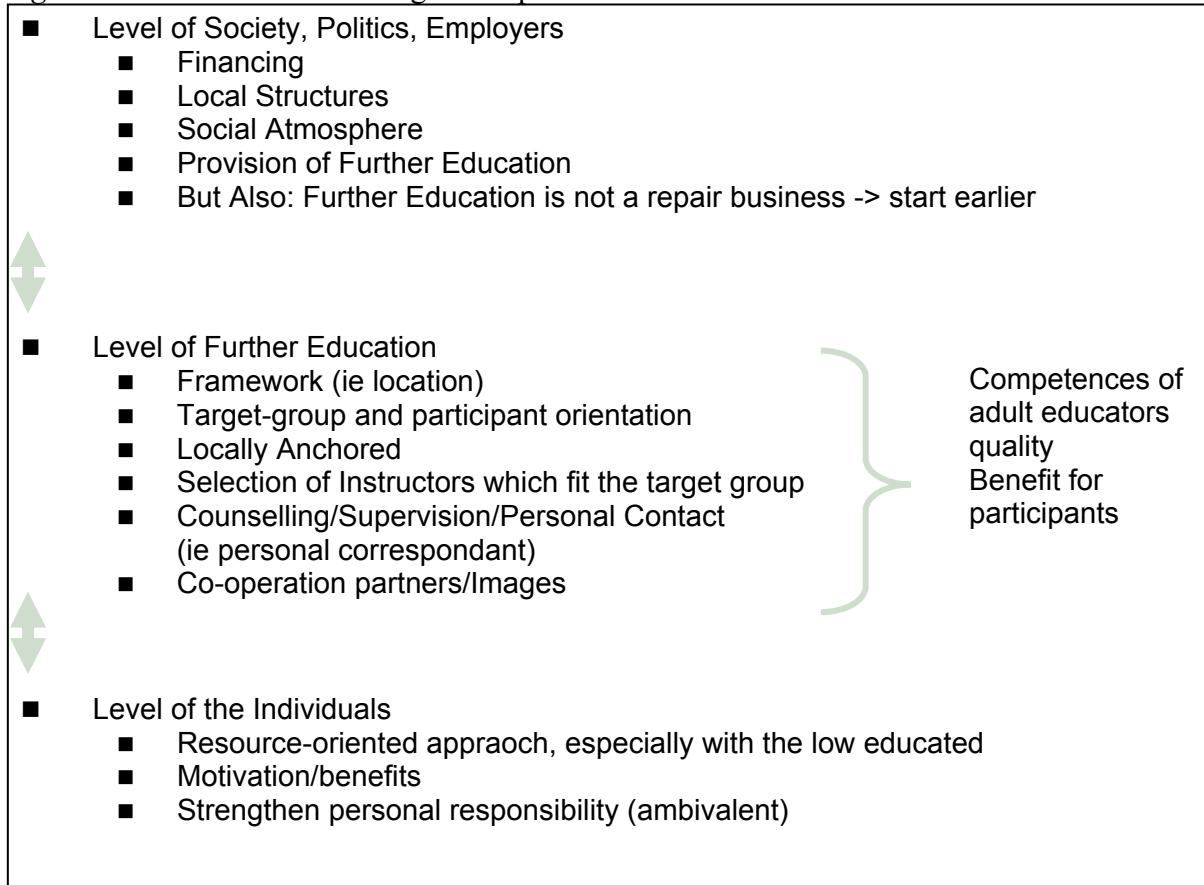
The present article analyzes, from the perspective of the adult educators, to what extent the competence of teachers in further education can contribute to an increase in participation in further education. What adult educators understand by target group orientation was also examined in this context and whether they consider reaching target groups an important topic.

Results and discussion

Various factors and their interaction

From the perspective of the responding adult educators the promotion of competences amongst their occupational group is necessary; however an increase in participation in further education cannot be reached through this alone. Only in combination with one another can the three levels (society, politics, employers; further education; individuals) (see illustration below and 1.2) lead to an increase in further education.

Figure 3. Possibilities of Raising Participation in Further Education

- **■ Level of Society, Politics, Employers**
  - ■ Financing
  - ■ Local Structures
  - ■ Social Atmosphere
  - ■ Provision of Further Education
  - ■ But Also: Further Education is not a repair business -> start earlier

- **■ Level of Further Education**
  - ■ Framework (ie location)
  - ■ Target-group and participant orientation
  - ■ Locally Anchored
  - ■ Selection of Instructors which fit the target group
  - ■ Counselling/Supervision/Personal Contact (ie personal correspondant)
  - ■ Co-operation partners/Images

  Competences of adult educators quality Benefit for participants

- **■ Level of the Individuals**
  - ■ Resource-oriented appraoch, especially with the low educated
  - ■ Motivation/benefits
  - ■ Strengthen personal responsibility (ambivalent)

Source: von Hippel & Tippelt, 2009

On the level of society, politics, and economics, the interviewees consider it to be of great importance to maintain funding as well as structures ensuring closeness to the place of residence and to strengthen the social climate in favour of further education. Without financial support it is impossible to organize educational programmes for those distant from education, - the cost of which cannot be covered by fees. Whether the personal financial responsibility of the individual should be relied upon more strongly is being discussed quite controversially in this context. The quality of institutions of further education can only be ensured through financial resources and resources of time. A decrease in public funding may lead to a dangerous "individualization of problems that have not been solved on the educational-political or institutional level (e.g. the reaching of the "disadvantaged")" (Meisel, 2003, p. 107). It must be questioned "whether, in the long run, the breadth and depth of the educational programmes offered as well as their accessibility can be ensured in face of decreasing public funding" (ibid.). Particularly the programmes for the educationally disadvantaged are cost-intensive

(Meisel, 2003). If one looks at the resource that is time, the intensification of the work load among adult educators on the meso level is immediately obvious; according to them, they do not have enough time for quality management or for long-term planning. However, in order to be able to reach target groups, surveys on their needs/needs assessments (Sork, 2005), long-term in-depth strategies as well as concepts of public relations work deduced from these are required:

> The request that we should contribute to the integration of people into the different sectors of society is distinctly aimed at people with migration background, but also at handicapped people or at the socially disadvantaged. We have to find out where they can be reached; for this, however, we basically lack a sort of general concept which would create a link with cooperation partners; what we are talking about is not only a single lecture or course but, rather, a system, that we are in dire need of (FPS, Protestant adult education).
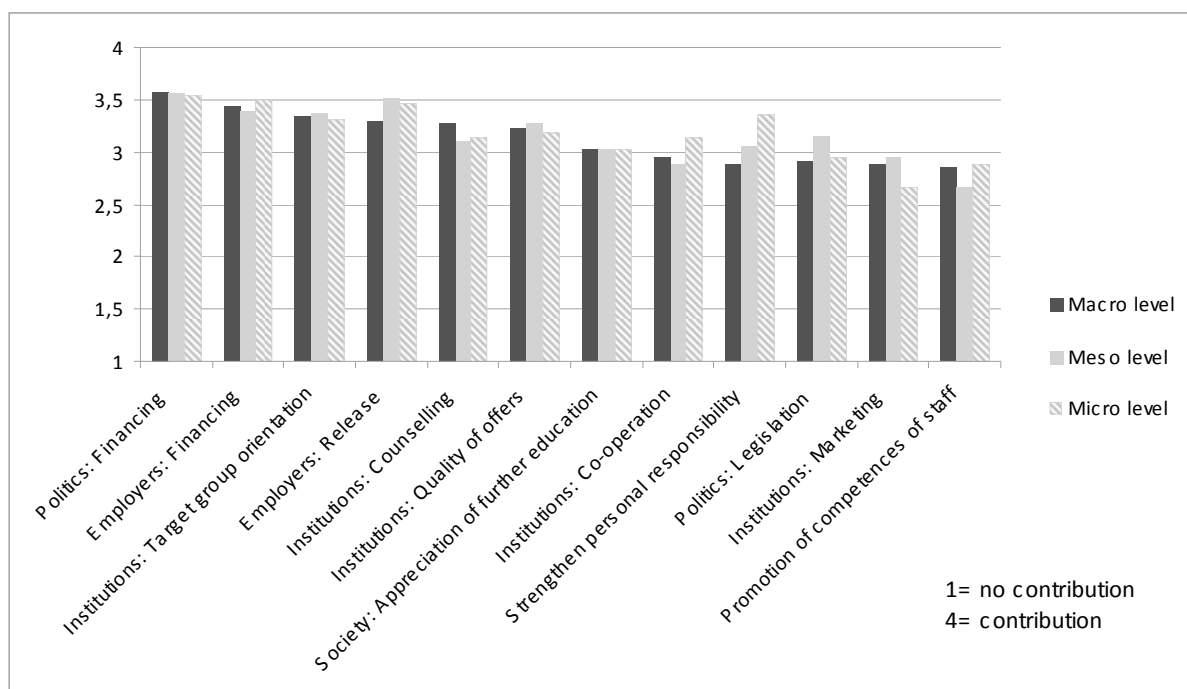
Just as the adult learner need free time to be able to learn, the adult educators need time to organize and structure learning contexts. The adult educators also need time resources in order to be able to react to new challenges and demands brought forth by the target groups:

> You simply have to take the time to think about what people really need. Not so much just sell the course and then something has been completed again but, rather, to create a bond (FPS, folk high schools/adult education centres - FHS).

Here the professional search movement of the adult educator is called upon in order to empathetically anticipate the adult learners´ expectations. Counselling and individual guidance have already been mentioned as important strategies for reaching target groups; in order to fulfil these tasks, qualified personnel and sufficient time during the working day are needed.

The following diagram, taken from the written Delphi survey, substantiates the importance of the framework conditions; thus financing is attributed the greatest significance in increasing participation in further education, followed directly by target-group orientation, the releasing of employees for further training, counselling, and the quality of the programmes offered. This again shows that the institutions´ contribution is to be seen in the quality of the educational programmes and in (potential) participant orientation (which includes counselling).

Figure 4. Impact on the increase in participation in further education – Perspective of the different levels

Data basis: macro = 59, meso = 48, micro = 43

Competences of adult educators and their contribution to increasing participation in further education

According to adult educators, target group- and participant orientation on the institutional level could contribute to the quality of further education and thus simultaneously to an increase in participation in further education. The competence of adult educators – which must be ensured through training and further education - is a crucial factor in the quality of the educational programmes offered and with regard to the benefit the participants might draw from these programmes. Institutional and individual level belong together: institutions of further education must start from the interests and the benefit-related expectations of the potential learners. The local embedding of the institutions and thus the closer proximity on the spot are regarded as important criteria: "Local community adult education establishments are best suited for providing basic facilities" (EAEA, 2006, p. 58). For instance, potential participants can better be reached through programmes which orient themselves according to the target groups´ lifeworld. All in all, the interviewees show a strong tendency to apply concepts which orient themselves according to the target groups´ lifeworld, such as concepts of social environment, lifeworld or social milieu. The interest of many experts in these concepts is grounded in their wish to find new approaches to reaching specific target groups – especially disadvantaged groups. However, trying to reach the disadvantaged is not the only challenge facing associations of further education today; they are also confronted with the much more general question of how they can work in a target group-oriented way and address specific target groups without simultaneously excluding others.

Each of the occupational groups interviewed saw opportunities for contributing to the development of quality for their own sphere of responsibility. This contribution can refer to both the "quality of education" and the "quality of the organization of the

framework conditions of education" (Ehses & Zech, 1999, p. 20). Administrative staff for instance, mentioned the choice of the appropriate rooms for the respective target groups as a good method, the planning staff on the other hand, listed the selection of well-suited course tutors, which in turn presupposes that they have enough time at their hands to really get to know and to counsel them. The course tutors in turn, saw their possible contribution to quality in a participant-oriented way of working, didactically and methodologically tuned to the respective target groups. Target-group-oriented marketing too is considered to be of significance. The interviewees regard participant orientation as a particularly important factor in promoting continuous participation in further education, for instance when migrants have had positive experiences with specific lecturers. Co-operation with different partners is perceived to be an important building block in jointly reaching target groups which a single institution could not reach, maybe because of its image. In order to better reach target groups distant from education, new co-operations are started and an aimed network of activities. Another common practice is a "compensatory cross-subsidization" within an institution, allowing the financing of educational programmes for disadvantaged groups with profitable courses for educationally active groups. The associations differ with regard to their starting positions and their strategies in the field of target group orientation.

The *Volkshochschulen* (adult education centres) as well as the confessional and political suppliers of further education are faced with the challenge of meeting their task of "reaching each and everyone". Their interest in target group differentiation is above all due to their wanting to reach new target groups – both disadvantaged and educationally active ones. In this context the question arises of how the respective image of an association or institution can be developed in the best possible inclusive way. A different picture presents itself in the case of the career-oriented associations of further education: their target groups are much more clearly defined and they consider the relation between supply and demand to be a "natural match", as one of the experts put it. From their point of view the fitting of target group and association or the letter's basic qualifying task is much more clear-cut. Their aim is to "better" reach their target groups which are already present in the institutions or companies.

Counselling and personal guidance are considered to be an important strategy by the majority of the interviewees. This is of relevance not only to those close to education, but also and above all to those distant from education:

> They need institutions that go after them! That actually call and tell them: Hello. We are here! And then someone would have to go to them and say: That's what I do. And wouldn't you like to join in?" (course tutor, Catholic adult education).

> If we are 'carers' then that also means that we have to give support, to teach how to learn, and that holds even for very private situations when someone is confronted with a whole pile of problems; we have increasingly become 'carers' […]. [Someone] who offers counselling, who, due to his specialized knowledge, his knowledge of the market, is able to give appropriate support to a client who is willing to get further education, to be a sort of guideline, a red thread. (FPS, chamber of industry and commerce [IHK])

In order to do this kind of counselling and guiding work however, one has to be technically and (socio-) educationally qualified.

Thus, from the point of view of the adult educators, target group and participant oriented quality is the central starting point for a possible increase in participation in further education. From the perspective of the participants too, the adult educators are the crucial criterion of quality (see above). The competences of the adult educators –

and thus the quality of the programmes of further education – are, according to most interviewees, the decisive factor leading to a second or further attendance on courses in further education (especially among those distant from education), - the first attendance is, so they think, more strongly decided by the framework conditions. Thus, the institutional level can influence a person's attitude towards further education – which has been shaped by earlier experiences made in further education – through the quality of the courses attended.

If one takes a closer look at the data, it becomes apparent that, throughout all levels, the qualitative and quantitative results reveal no verifiable differences according to the interviewees´ age or duration of employment or to their vocational qualifications or pedagogical background. All in all the adult educators are quite homogeneous in their perception of their contribution to an increase in participation in further education. The statements show that they do not consider themselves to be the only ones responsible for or able to bring about an increase in participation in further education. Instead their perspective reveals different approaches aimed at improving target group and participant orientation and quality on the institutional level whilst at the same time pointing to the importance of public funding and of the employers´ financial support and willingness to release employees.

Outlook

In summary one can say that adult educators consider their personal competences – and amongst these target group and participant orientation - an important component of a strategy aimed at increasing participation in further education. However, it is their opinion that the institutions are not able to achieve this on their own: the funding of further education by society and by the employers is a major prerequisite. As regards secondary contact and withdrawal/retention can be added, they consider the quality of the courses attended – which are to a great extent shaped by the adult educators – the decisive factor. From the point of view of the interviewees, target group-related competences will even gain in importance, for instance individual learning counselling and guidance within the framework of the implementation of lifelong learning.

Although the majority of the full-time planning staff are aware of their responsibility, they do not have enough time to draw up concepts for reaching target groups because of decreasing public funds (similar in other European countries, Karlsson, 2005) and the ensuing increase in their work load. The decrease in public funding and the increase in competitive procedures in the acquisition of funds for projects have led to an increase in the time and the resources needed for administrative processes, thus frequently impeding long-term strategies and perspectives for the commitment of target groups. Additionally, there is the danger that only target groups with money to spend will be addressed[4] because the set target of inclusion and equal opportunities partly contradicts the market principle of efficiency (Heuer, 2003) and because the social profitability is opposed by the financial profitability (Meisel & Nuissl, 1995). This could only be counteracted by stronger public sponsoring of institutions. All in all, a debate on aims and target groups – especially in publicly funded further education – is required on both the social and the institutional level.

What is astonishing when looking at the results is that the adult educators questioned see the macro level as being the most influential, whereas the models for participation in further education mainly focus on the micro level.

This article focused on an analysis of the perspective of the adult educators. It would be desirable for further research to empirically examine the impact of the interaction of different aspects, such as financing on the social level, target group and

participant orientation at the institutional level, motives and deterring factors at the individual level on the participation in further education. We are missing a model of participation which is able to include the meso level in a differentiated way. Two possible paths of research could help close this gap: on the one hand analysis of regional course offers including the programme planning action behind and on the other research on target groups which would include attitudes toward the meso level more than previously. Both paths of research should be combined with regard to layout and results. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches would be another possibility. Furthermore there should be a model for differentiating between first and second contact – this is an important conclusion to draw from the results at hand. Furthermore, the question of how adult educators deal with heterogeneous expectations – also of the potential learners – should be investigated. Thus professional research and research on target groups could be linked more closely in research projects of a multi-perspective and multidimensional design.

Notes

[1] Further education is defined as consisting of intentional educational activity which someone may engage in after a first phase of education, followed by a job or the beginning of a family. The present article focuses on non-formal and formal activity in institutions of adult education.

[2] In Germany access to the occupational field of adult education is not restricted. The lecturers usually work freelance and are only partly pedagogically qualified, whereas the planning members of staff, employed by the institutions, more often are pedagogically qualified, sometimes through diploma courses of studies in adult education implemented during the 1970s.

[3] The project was sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) from May 2007 until May 2009. Main cooperation partners were the member associations of the Council of Further Education – KAW.

[4] Thus, for instance, the institutions of further education surveyed by the *wbmonitor* instead focus on target groups with money to spend, such as executives, as their future target groups to be reached (cf. DIE/BIBB 2009); within the framework of the project "ImZiel" too, most of the suppliers focused on modern social groups with good purchasing power in their pilot programs (cf. Tippelt et al. 2008).

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