

Case Study for Germany ULLL

Summary of aims:

- To identify the main drivers for change in universities and explore how these impact on ULLL
- To consider the different structures of ULLL between universities and what the consequences of these structures are for implementing change in ULLL
- To identify the real practical changes being made in universities in ULLL
- To explore evaluating change in ULLL and consider how this might differ from existing approaches

In recent years, the concept of lifelong learning has acquired ever-greater importance in Germany. In 2010, 43% of the population participated in continuing education, while EU funding was running at 35%¹. Continuing education was long something of a niche area in two respects in the academic world. It tended to play a fringe role among the multiplicity of university activities whilst also occupying a rather specialised niche in the general further and higher education market. Developments in recent years like shortage of highly-skilled workers and the demographic development have brought a sea change in attitudes that have boosted the profile and the spectrum of activities offered through continuing education at universities. Universities are increasingly putting the learner at the centre of their priorities, becoming output-oriented and increasingly tailoring their services to the requirements and phases of life of the participants in their learning programmes. These formats are adapted for part-time further education and admission to universities is simplified.

The increasing importance of continuing education is also evidenced by the modifications that have been made to the relevant federal and state laws as well as to the ways in which continuing education programmes in German universities are organised. A clear-cut categorisation of the organisational forms is not possible in practice, because in addition to a centralised unit, continuing education programmes are also being developed and implemented in the faculties, for example.

Statistically, around 61% of universities have continuing education centrally positioned in their organisational structures. A further 16% of the programmes are decentralised (e.g. An-Institut, GmbH).

¹ Cf. National Education Report "Bildung in Deutschland 2010" (Education in Germany 2010) from June 17, 2010.

Strengths and weaknesses of centralised structures:	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High integration of planning, development, delivery and evaluation • Existing client base • High quality systems • Clearly defined markets • Strong customer relations • Makes involvement easy for individuals • High degree of autonomy • Focused on market niches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary focus on existing markets • Limitation on market sectors and volume • Focus on existing customers • Limited internal impact • No institutional framework for delivery • Fragmented integration • No institutional focus • Difficult to evidence by institution

Many continuing education programmes are provided by state-public bodies; there are, however, also several private providers (e.g. the German University for Continuing Education (DUW)). The central positioning of the continuing education institutions attached to the universities is also indicative of the intermediate character that these institutions tend to have. That means the centres for continuing education are neither part of the administration unit, nor part of the faculty or a department. The strength of this intermediate position lies on the one hand in the independent status of this central unit and on the other hand their representatives often also being active members of the committees and working groups of the university. The weakness of this intermediate character lies in the fragmented integration in the whole “university” system.

University policy-makers still tend to give **priority to undergraduate students**, while the teaching of continuing education tends to have a **lower significance in terms of the reputation** of academic staff.

The aspects presented show that Germany still has a high potential for development and that an **acceleration of continuing education**, particularly within the context of lifelong learning is **still needed**. An important aim should be to make the “win-win-situation” visible. Both, teacher and participants, profit from the “theory-praxis-transfer”. Teachers learn a lot from the highly motivated participants and their job experience and get valuable impulses for further investigations.

It is in the field of continuing education that the universities are implementing the EU lifelong learning strategy. In order to fulfil these responsibilities, the universities have issued a pan-

European statement on the importance of continuing education, identifying the main challenges, and presenting a 10-point programme².

Demographic Change³: More and more people are being forced to work longer in order to offset the effects of demographic change. As the information society develops, cycles of innovation are becoming shorter, and the demand for continuing education growing; the shortage of skilled professionals needs to be countered and a greater flexibility of access encouraged.

Globalisation: One of the main reasons why the successful integration of immigrants into German society and onto the job market is important is the current scarcity of skilled professionals. Continuing education programmes in the higher education sector are of crucial importance here. The question of whether the universities are operating on an international or on a national level is, therefore, one that takes on decisive importance for the question of their sustainability.

The **economics of education** are becoming an ever more important consideration: continuing education is about people and learning. Alongside its value in terms of the job market, continuing education can also be of help to people in their personal life and career choices, something that is of enormous benefit from the wider social perspective. This means that universities need to do more to open up to people and to encourage their active participation through a public science⁴ programme.

Social Inclusion: In order to prevent the gap between the different educational groups from widening further, appropriate educational opportunities need to be made available to people of all social groups, regardless of their financial circumstances. The universities are becoming increasingly proactive in the shaping of **civil society**. They are purposefully opening themselves up to the people in order to engage with them in a dialogue on the extent to which universities can and should make an important contribution to society.

The DGWF (German Association for University Continuing and Distance Education) takes this challenge seriously and has responded with its strategy on continuing education. It sees continuing education as offering an answer to the problems presented by **demographic change**. Continuing education is especially suited to the provision of the sort of educational opportunities that are tailored to the professional needs of the important target groups needed to cope with this change. Current DGWF continuing education programmes are not only directed at graduates with years of professional work experience or those in employment who have completed their professional education. For the DGWF it is important

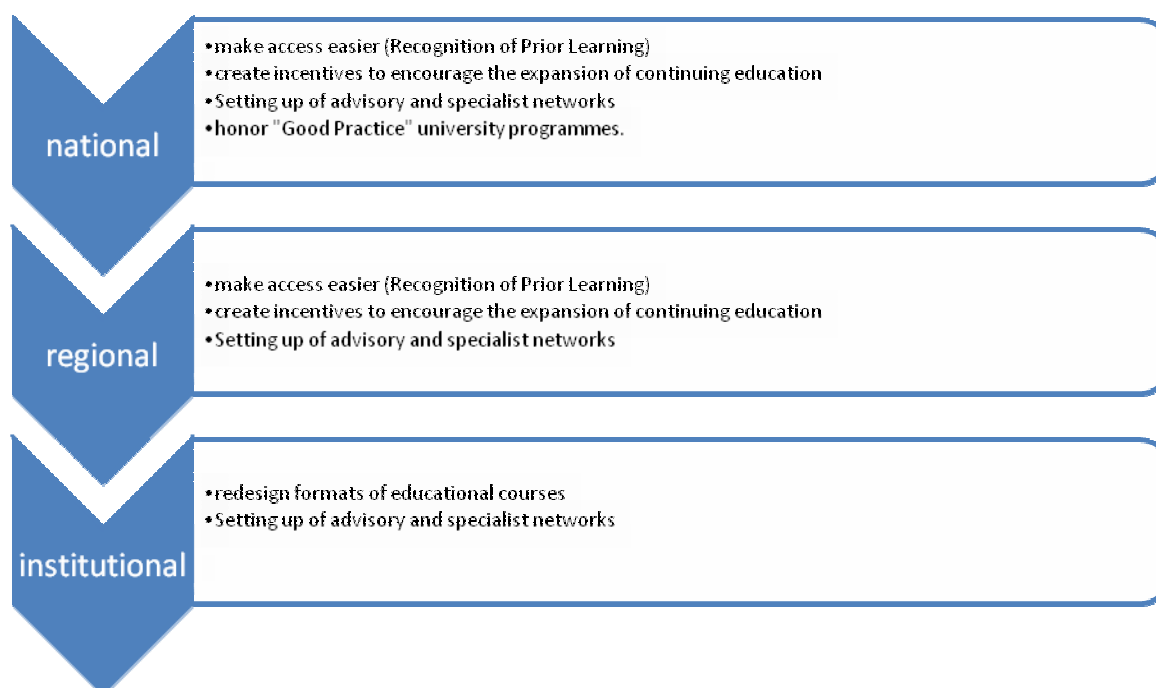
2 EUA Charter on Lifelong Learning (2008). www.eua.be.

3 Cf. National Education Report "Bildung in Deutschland 2010" (Education in Germany 2010) from June 17, 2010

4 The term public science refers to the so-called PUSH / PUR programmes, run by the universities and open to the general public in the field of Public Understanding of Science and Humanities / Public Understanding of Research.

that a balance be struck between the **economics of education**, on the one hand, and **social inclusion** on the other. In accordance with this concept, continuing education in Germany is not restricted to professional continuing education, but has rather adopted the broader perspective that is inherent in the principle of lifelong learning. The German universities are opening up and responding to a wider public interest, with courses such as those offered by the universities' *Studium Generale* (extracurricular studies), or the programmes for older people and senior citizens. Along with specialised content and key skills, the courses on offer within these two areas also provide stimuli for personal development. Due to the introduction of a special fee structure (social hardship provision), participation in these programmes is made possible for anyone not in a position to pay the full fees themselves.

Representation of the strategy for continuing education for ULLL in Germany:



For discussion:

More effort at the various social levels will be required in the future to ensure that continuing education makes its contribution to lifelong learning. Formats need to be redesigned through the individualisation of educational courses to ensure the compatibility of family and working life with continuing education provision.

- What level of flexibility is required of continuing education programmes?
- Should this be the same for all courses and all institutions?

Access has to be made easier at both national and state levels (Recognition of Prior Learning - RPL⁵).

- Why does access have to be made easier?

- What are the specific problems facing German Universities?
- Does this relate to any specific targets about participation (either in universities or in LLL)?

Steps need be taken to create incentives to encourage the expansion of continuing education as well as the general framework within which it operates.

- What incentives are needed to encourage change in universities?
- What outcomes might be set as targets in return?
- Which types of organisation encourage especially the implementation of LLL at universities and why?
- How should success be defined, and what consequences might there be if we are unable to define success?

The setting up of advisory and specialist networks would allow experts to be called in, in an advisory capacity, on certain issues and problems.

- What issues might there be that experts are needed to support?

Not least among the benefits that can accrue from an increased use of the DGWF strategy for continuing education is the positive effect it can have on university programmes including through the award of “Good Practice” examples.

- How could the positive effect be strengthened?

For institutional event: We have opted for a central Centre for Continuing Education and to develop activity in each Faculty with formal meetings between co-ordinators to ensure communication and support intra university working.

What key challenges might the co-ordinators face in attempting to respond to market demand?

References (in German):

Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (2010): Bildung in Deutschland 2010. Bielefeld

Beyersdorf, M. (2009): Empfehlungen zum Status und zum Personal von hochschulischen Einrichtungen für Weiterbildung. In: DGWF (Hrsg.): Hochschule und Weiterbildung – Praxisorientierung (pp. 93 – 99). Hamburg

Faulstich, P./Oswald, L. (2010): Wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung. Düsseldorf

Hanft, A./Knust, M./Zawacki-Richter, O. (2007): Organisationsformen und Managementstrukturen wissenschaftlicher Weiterbildung – ein deutsch-finnischer Vergleich. In: DGWF (Hrsg.): Hochschule und Weiterbildung - Organisationsformen und Geschäftsmodelle der wissenschaftlichen Weiterbildung in Deutschland (pp. 19 – 29). Hamburg

Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wirtschaft (2003): Hochschulen im Weiterbildungsmarkt. Essen